

‘REFRESH THE HEARTS OF THE SAINTS’: A UNIQUE PAULINE CONTEXT?¹

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Summary

Some four times in the Pauline corpus the verb ἀναπαύω is used together with the noun πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα in the sense of ‘refresh the heart’. Through a comparison of Greek literary and non-literary sources it seems that, although each of these words is common enough, their combination in this way is particularly unusual in or before the first century AD. It would appear, therefore, that the Pauline use of the complete phrase may well, at the time, have offered a unique usage. Similarities between the four Pauline contexts shed light on Paul’s usage: ‘refreshing the hearts of the saints’ is to be seen as a positive Christian action which is highly commended by the apostle and could cross traditional social barriers.

I. Introduction

Paul uses the intriguing phrase ‘refresh the heart’ some four times.² It is a phrase which has not been widely adopted in modern, Christian circles, and therefore its meaning and contexts may well repay investigation.

It is, therefore, proposed to look at the use of the verb ἀναπαύω (with various meanings) especially where it is combined with πνεῦμα (‘spirit’) or σπλάγχνα (‘bosom’) in ancient Greek literary and non-literary sources and assess the contexts in which it occurred. The distinctive use which Paul makes of the phrase ‘X has refreshed the spirit of Y’ will then be assessed in greater detail, and

¹I am grateful to Professor I.H. Marshall, Dr B.W. Winter, Dr D.W.J. Gill and members of the University of Aberdeen New Testament Postgraduate seminar for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

²1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13; Phlm. 7, 20.

finally some conclusions regarding its possible meaning will be drawn.

II. The Use of ἀναπαύω

1. Greek Literature

The verb ἀναπαύω is found throughout the corpus of ancient Greek literature and spans a wide range of meanings.³ Frequently it is used in a military context describing rest from battle and in this sense almost becomes a military technical term.⁴ For example:

Before they came in sight of the enemy, he rested (ἀνεπαυσε) the army as many as three times.⁵

Significantly, however, ἀναπαύω is most frequently used in ancient Greek literature in medical⁶ and ecclesiastical texts.⁷

The particular objects which Paul uses in connection with the verb ἀναπαύω are πνεῦμα (referring to the human, rather than divine spirit) and the plural noun σπλάγχνα. Predictably, these nouns are also most commonly found in medical and ecclesiastical texts.

³E.g., including the following: ‘make to cease’, ‘bring to an end’ or ‘hinder something’; ‘give rest’, ‘relieve’, ‘refresh’, ‘revive’, or ‘regain strength’; ‘make to halt’; ‘bring to a close’; ‘take rest’; ‘cause to lie fallow’; ‘rest’ in the sense of the blessed rest of the dead; and ‘rest’ in the sense of ‘settle upon’ (a hebraism). Cf. O. Bauernfeind, ‘ἀναπαύω’, *TDNT*; R. Hensel and C. Brown, ‘Rest’, *NIDNTT*; Liddell & Scott, *ad loc.*; J.H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, ad loc.*; and BAGD, *ad loc.*

⁴Cf. P.T. O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (Waco: Word, 1982) 283. This may be similar to the contemporary, technical use of the phrase ‘R and R’ or ‘rest and recuperation’ for personnel in a military context.

⁵Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.1.4. Cf. also Appian, *Mithridates* 45 and Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.7.6.

⁶E.g. the writings of Aëtius, Aretaeus, Cassius Iatrosophista, Galen, Hippocrates, Marcellinus I, Oribasius, Palladius, Paulus, Rufus, Soranus, Stephanus.

⁷By analysing usage of the verb on the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae CD ROM #D, it would appear that over 57% of the approximately 4,600 occurrences of the verb are to be found in ecclesiastical writings.

In the medical texts, both the verb and the nouns are separately used in senses often quite different from the instances in the Pauline passages with which we are concerned. Furthermore, rarely in the medical texts is the verb found together with one of the nouns.

Many of the ecclesiastical writers combine the verb with one or other of the nouns, with significantly greater frequency.⁸ In the vast majority of instances (*contra* the Pauline examples), where the verb is combined with πνεῦμα, the 'spirit' is the divine Spirit and the verb is used in the sense of 'rest upon' or 'settle upon'.⁹ In the much fewer occurrences where the verb is combined with σπλάγχνα, the context is normally that of 'resting' in the bosom of Abraham.¹⁰

Those few occasions where the verb is combined with either one of the objects in a similar sense to that of Paul (*i.e.* 'refreshing the heart'), we find to be commentary upon Paul's use of the phrase.¹¹ Ignatius uses the verb in the sense of 'refresh', without either of these direct objects, on a number of occasions.¹² In one important instance, however, he does combine both verb and direct object:

I salute you from Smyrna, together with the Churches of God which are with me, whose rulers have refreshed me in every respect, both in the flesh and in the spirit (οἱ κατὰ πάντα με ἀνέπαισαν σαρκί τε καὶ πνεύματι).¹³

⁸*E.g.* Alexander of Aphrodisias, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria, Didymus Caecus, Epiphanius, Eusebius, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ignatius, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, Justin Martyr, Pseudo-Macarius, Nicephorus Gregoras, Photius, Origen, Theodoretus.

⁹This has parallels in both the Septuagint and the New Testament, as will be recorded below.

¹⁰*E.g.* John of Damascus, *Sacra parallela* 95.1469; Gregory Nazianzen, *Christus patiens* 794; *Ad Julianum tributorem exaequatorem* 35.1056.

¹¹John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ii ad Corinthios* 61.511; *In epistulam ad Philemonem* 62.701, 709 and 715; John of Damascus, *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli* 95.704, 745 and 1032; Photius, *Fragmenta in epistulam ii ad Corinthios* 594.3; Theodoretus, *Interpretatio in xii epistulas Sancti Pauli* 82.372, 420 and 877.

¹²*Eph* 2; *Smyr* 9, 10, 12; *Magn* 15; *Rom* 10.

¹³*Trall* 12.

Given that both the verb and nouns are widely used in the corpus of ancient Greek literature, some conclusions can be drawn from these findings. The verb ἀναπαύω with the particular sense of ‘refresh’ rather than ‘rest’ is comparatively infrequent;¹⁴ the verb is found much more frequently in the post-New Testament period; the greatest proportion of the occurrences are in a specifically Christian context; and Paul’s use of this combination of verb and nouns (where the sense is particularly that of refreshing the human spirit) is relatively unusual, and may even be unique in first-century or earlier Greek literature.

2. Greek Inscriptions

The verb is more commonly found in epigraphic sources with ψυχή (‘soul’) as the direct object. The majority of these occurrences are on epitaphs, mostly of Christian origin, and may be dated around the third and fourth centuries. In these instances, the ‘rest’ is clearly that of the dead, rather than the refreshment of the spirit of a living person. One example will suffice to show this common use of the phrase:

May God let your soul rest (ἀναπαύσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν) with the righteous.¹⁵

Christian gravestones from Late Antiquity also exhibited the verb (most commonly in the form ἀνεπαύσατο) with no accompanying object. Here also the verb is a euphemism for death. A number of examples of this have been found in Corinth.

A burial place belonging to Ioanes and Agathokles, brothers whom their mother Phobia bore. Ioanes died (ἀνεπαύσατο) the twenty-fourth day of May, in the sixth year of the indiction.¹⁶

¹⁴Indeed Liddell & Scott does not cite ‘refresh’ as a translation for the verb.

¹⁵Ionia, *Smyrna* 897 (fourth - fifth century). Frequently found are epitaphs dedicated by a master to his slave (αναπαυσον την ψυχην την δουλην).

¹⁶J.H. Kent, *Corinth—Inscriptions 1926-1950 Corinth: Results, viii, Part III* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966) no. 531. For similar usage compare also (some of which are fragmentary) nos. 531, 541, 545, 552, 569, 570, 574, 580, 588, 592, 599, 567, 614, 617, 627, 642, 671, 672, 673, 677, 679, 683, 685. I am grateful to Dr David Gill for drawing my attention to these instances. See also *SEG* 29.311, 313, 315-7, 319, 325-6 for other instances of use of the verb on Corinthian Christian epitaphs.

So, we find that in epigraphic sources also, the verb is relatively widely used (and, once again, often in religious, even Christian, contexts). However, the majority are post-New Testament in date, the Pauline combination of verb and noun is not found, and the sense of refreshment of the living person's heart is also absent. This would appear to confirm the suggestion that Paul's use of the verb ἀναπαύω in the sense of refresh, where either πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα is the direct object, is, at the least, unusual in a first-century context.

3. Greek Papyri

The verb is also to be found in the Greek papyri. It is occasionally used to describe fields during a fallow period,¹⁷ and it is also used of a person resting. An example of the latter is found in a fourth- or fifth-century private letter from a certain Philoxenus to his parents and uncle (in which there is an allusion to 1 Pet. 1:3). This Christian man refers to a nurse, Prophoria, who has accorded him rest (εἴτις καλῶς με ἀναπαύει).¹⁸

The vast majority of instances, however, are references to the repose of the dead. These occur in a wide variety of contexts, both Christian and pagan. In one instance, a transcript of some official proceedings brought before the Logistes, dated February or March 325, the verb is used to describe the deceased;¹⁹ another is a petition to a benefactor, dated AD 295, where the petitioner refers to the death of her mother (τὸν βίον ἀναπαυσασμένης);²⁰ and a third is a sixth-century letter of condolence which uses the verb, again in the sense of the repose of the dead:

¹⁷*P. Tebt.* 105.3 (second century BC).

¹⁸*P. Oxy.* 56.3862 l. 15-6.

¹⁹*P. Oxy.* 54.3758 l. 77.

²⁰*P. Oxy.* 8.1121 l. 12.

...like mother Eve, like Mary; and as God lives, my master, neither just men nor sinners ever suffered what you suffered; nevertheless your sins are nought. But we glorify God because it was He who gave and He that hath taken away; but pray that the Lord may give them rest (ἐναπαύσι) and may vouchsafe to you to sing among them [?] in Paradise when the souls of men are judged; for they are gone to the bosom of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.²¹

The noun ἀνάπαυσις is also used in a similar context. One interesting occurrence is in the will of a man, with Christian associations, called Flavius Pousi (sixth century). Having given clear directions regarding his property and inheritors, Flavius Pousi lays down instructions regarding his own burial:

I wish the laying out and burial of my body and my holy offices and services for the repose of my soul (ὕπὲρ ἀναπαύσεως τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς) to be conducted through the good faith of my heirs aforesaid.²²

These instances are again, for the most part, similar to those found most frequently in the epigraphic sources. That is, the usage is predominantly post-New Testament and the context is that of the repose of the dead. Close parallels to Paul's own usage, where the verb is combined with either of the nouns πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα, have not been found in the papyri.

4. Septuagint

In the Septuagint the verb ἀναπαύω is used some 71 times (almost always in the Middle voice) with a number of different meanings and contexts.

²¹*P.Oxy.* 16.1874 l. 15.

²²*P.Oxy.* 16.1901 l. 48-50.

Rest from military attack

Behold, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace (ἀναπαύσεως). I will give him peace (ἀναπαύσω) from all his enemies round about.²³

The Holy Spirit 'resting' on someone

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon (ἀναπαύσεται) him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding...²⁴

Rest from work

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest (ἀνάπαυσις); that your ox and your ass may have rest (ἀναπαύσῃται), and the son of your bondmaid, and the alien, may be refreshed (ἀναψύξῃ).²⁵

These three different uses of the verb ἀναπαύω are paralleled in wider Greek literature, and as such are not especially unusual. However, the use of the verb in conjunction with either πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα with the sense of 'refresh' again remains notably absent.

5. New Testament

In the New Testament the verb is used some twelve times (predominantly in the middle voice), most often with what we have found to be traditional pre-New Testament uses.²⁶

²³1 Ch. 22:9.

²⁴Is. 11:2. It is this use of the verb that was noted above as being reflected frequently in the ecclesiastical writings.

²⁵Ex. 23:12. The use of ἀναπαύω here parallels the use of ἀναψύχω in the same verse. If there is a difference in nuance here, it is that the former carries the sense of 'rest', where the later verb also implies some sense of 'refreshment'.

²⁶Transitively in Mt. 11:28; 1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13; Phlm. 7, 20; Rev. 14:13; and intransitively in Mt. 26:45; Mk. 6:31, 14:41; Lk. 12:19; 1 Pet. 4:14; Rev. 6:11; cf. P. Fiedler, 'ἀνάπαυσις, ἀναπαύω', in H. Balz and E. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol 1; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990) 86-7.

One of the occurrences parallels the examples above from the papyri and inscriptions where the rest is that of the dead.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest (ἀναπαύσονται) from their labours, for their deeds follow them!'²⁷

Another occurrence parallels some of the septuagintal instances where the verb carries the sense of 'settle upon', and the spirit is clearly the divine Spirit.

Blessed are you, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests (ἀναπαύεται) on you.²⁸

Additionally, however, there is a significant occurrence of the verb in the active voice (with Jesus as the subject) where the sense would appear to be that of refreshment.

Come to me all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh (ἀναπαύσω) you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν). For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.²⁹

This Matthaean citation contains, in two different forms, the promise of rest for the soul; once with the verb and once with the substantive. Although neither of the Matthaean phrases is the same as our Pauline phrase, in that the verb is not combined with either of the nouns πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα, we clearly have the possibility here of a close parallel to the Pauline instances in meaning. The background to the Matthaean saying is difficult to determine, but may shed light on whether it is a significant parallel for our purposes.

In determining the background, commentators hark back variously to the Old Testament, to Jewish eschatology and to

²⁷Rev. 14:13.

²⁸1 Pet. 4:14.

²⁹Mt. 11:28-30.

Gnosticism. The closest Old Testament parallel is that of Exodus 33:14: 'And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest (καταπαύσω σε)".' In the Exodus account, God is the one who will give to the people rest; in the Matthaean account, Jesus is the one who promises rest.³⁰ An additional parallel is found by some commentators in Jeremiah 6:16: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls (εὐρήσετε ἀγνισμὸν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν).' In this latter case, however, there are insufficient parallels in syntax and vocabulary between Jeremiah and the Pauline phrases for it to prove significant.

Eschatological overtones have been seen in parallels with Sirach 6:28 ('For at last you will find the rest [ἀνάπαυσιν] she gives') and 51:26-7 ('I have laboured little and found for myself much rest [ἀνάπαυσιν]'). Again, it is the noun and not the verb which is used and these passages are thus distinct from the Pauline examples. Parallels between Matthew 11:28-30 and Hebrews 4:1-13, where the rest is specifically the eschatological rest of the saints, would argue against contextual parallels between the Matthaean notion of rest and that in Paul's phrases.³¹

Gnostic overtones have also been detected where ἀνάπαυσις is regarded as an especially significant term, but the differences are such that this can also confidently be rejected as a contributing influence on the syntax, context and meaning of the Pauline phrase.³²

On reflection, the weight of the evidence would argue that the reference here is to 'rest' rather than 'refreshment' (the terms 'weary', 'burdened' and 'yoke' would imply this); and, additionally,

³⁰W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (vol 2; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) 287-293.

³¹J. Laansma, *'I will give you rest': The Background and Significance of the Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3-4* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1994) provides a detailed comparison of these two texts, and concludes that both are principally concerned with an eschatological rest.

³²There are numerous occurrences in the Gospel of Thomas, most significant being Gos. Thom. 60. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew* (vol 2), 288.

the Matthaean context may well be eschatological. A parallel with Paul, where the sense is clearly that of ‘refreshment’ rather than ‘rest’, with no especially eschatological overtones, can probably not be drawn.

7. Conclusion

Although only a few examples have been given here, analysis of both literary and non-literary ancient Greek sources together with the Septuagint and the New Testament enables us to draw a number of conclusions.

The verb ἀναπαύω is widely found in each of these corpora; predominantly, however, it is found in the post-New Testament period, and normally in Christian, religious contexts. In these instances, the verb most commonly is used to describe the state of the dead.

Where the verb does occur in pre-New Testament sources, the meaning is frequently one of simple rest from labour and without any specifically ‘religious’ context. There have been instances where it would appear that the verb could be translated as either ‘rest’ or ‘refresh’. Nowhere, however, have we found pre-Pauline occurrences of the fuller phrase where ἀναπαύω *clearly* carries the sense of ‘refresh’ together with πνεῦμα (referring to the human, rather than divine spirit) or the plural noun σπλάγχνα as direct objects. This lack of identical parallels to Paul’s repeated use of the fuller phrase inevitably begs questions as to the origin of the phrase or even whether it was a phrase coined by Paul? Given that the extant bodies of literary and non-literary sources are so partial, it may be that adequate solutions to these problems are impossible to achieve. We shall, however, now look in more detail at these Pauline phrases *in situ* to see whether similarities in context may not shed light on Paul’s usage.

III. The Pauline Context

Turning to the Pauline corpus, it will be valuable to look more closely at the four occasions and particular contexts where the phrase ‘refresh (ἀναπαύω) the heart (either πνεῦμα or σπλάγχνα)’ is used. Now that the rarity of this phrase has been established is it possible, by

comparing these few Pauline occurrences, to see some similarities in the four contexts in which Paul uses it?

1 Corinthians 16:18

This first occurrence of the verb (ἀνέπαυσαν γὰρ τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὑμῶν) has Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus as the subject. The context is one where Paul is highlighting for the Corinthians important qualities of Stephanas and his household. These people have demonstrated themselves to be those who have 'devoted themselves to the service of the saints' (1 Cor. 16:15), and they are those who 'join in the work, and labour at it' (1 Cor. 16:16).³³

More significantly we may well have here the names of two slaves, or former slaves, from Stephanas' household: Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:17). The name Fortunatus is frequently that of a slave or freedman, and the name Achaicus (literally 'one from Achaia') would also be entirely consistent with that of a slave.³⁴ Fortunatus and Achaicus are clearly connected in some way with Stephanas, and it would seem probable that these figures may have been his slaves or freedmen, and thus a part of his household (1 Cor. 16:15). Together they had formed a delegation from Corinth to Paul (presumably in Ephesus) and are highlighted for refreshing the hearts of both Paul and the other Corinthians. This quality deems that they are to be considered, by the Corinthian congregation, worthy of recognition (ἐπιγινώσκετε οὖν τοὺς τοιούτους).³⁵

In a letter where Paul has argued at length how the Corinthians should conduct themselves, especially as regards the legitimation of leadership (his own leadership, that of other apostolic

³³Cf. A.L. Chapple, *Local Leadership in the Pauline Churches: theological and social factors in its development: a study based on 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians and Philippians* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; Durham: University of Durham, 1984) 398-429, who gives an extended discussion of this section.

³⁴Cf. C.L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 337. G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 831, observes that it was a common enough name in Rome and goes as far as to suggest that this man may have had a background in Rome itself.

³⁵1 Cor. 16:18. Paul, apparently with some firmness, uses an imperative here.

figures and other local leadership figures),³⁶ he closes by highlighting an example from within their midst where some have earned the right to be honoured and respected. This is not, however, accorded on the basis of their secular status (although as a householder, Stephanas would appear to have been of a relatively high status)³⁷ or any ‘charismatic’ leadership quality, but out of recognition of their function within the community.³⁸

Thus we may have here people, including two of relatively low social standing, who are to be honoured for their ‘serving’ of the people, characterised in part by their refreshing of both Paul’s spirit and that of others. The anomaly of ‘servant’ figures being ‘respected’ for their labouring is made all the more stark by Paul’s insistence that these figures be submitted to (ὑποτάσσηθε) precisely because of their labour (1 Cor. 16:16). This verb implies the attribution of authority—an unexpected command in the wider Graeco-Roman context given the social status of the individuals concerned.³⁹ Those in Graeco-Roman high society often looked down upon the labourer and artisan, and it may, thus, be significant that Paul here goes against any such prejudice.⁴⁰

³⁶See the extended argument in Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: a socio-historical and exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993).

³⁷Cf. G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982) 83-96.

³⁸Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 340.

³⁹Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 338.

⁴⁰Earlier in the epistle, Paul drew parallels between the rôle of the apostle and that of the labourer (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5, 6, 9, 10, 4:12). Plutarch, by contrast, in *Pericles*, 1.4-2.1, writes, ‘while we delight in the work, we despise the workman, as, for instance, in the case of perfumes and dyes; we take a delight in them, but dyers and perfumers we regard as illiberal and vulgar folk...Labour with one’s own hands on lowly tasks gives witness, in the toil thus expended on useless things, to one’s own indifference to higher things...For it does not of necessity follow that if the work delights you with its grace, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem’. See also Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet* 33-4, who contrasts the established of society with those who work with their hands and are without status: ‘Those who take care of themselves are men of mark and wealth, holding leading positions, praised on all hands, recipients of honours, portly, healthy and robust, revelling in luxurious and riotous living, knowing nothing of labour (πρόνον οὐκ εἰδότες), conversant with pleasures which carry the sweets of life to the all-welcoming soul by every channel of sense’.

In the light of this it should, therefore, be seen as significant that we have here two people of relatively low social standing (Fortunatus and Achaicus) who are to be submitted to and honoured alongside, and for the same reason as, their householder (Stephanas) who was of significantly higher social standing. They 'deserve recognition' because they 'refreshed my spirit and yours also', and not for their secular status or lack of it. Whatever Paul explicitly means by this phrase, it is clearly a laudable action which can be carried out by Christians of any social status and is linked to the way in which these individuals served the people. It is a reference to their labour, rather than Paul's rest from labour.⁴¹

⁴¹In terms of the meaning of the phrase, R.P. Martin and R. Bultmann refer in their commentaries on 2 Cor. to H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Vol 3; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1926) 486, who, while commenting on 1 Cor. 16:18 and 2 Cor. 7:13, cite what are considered to be a number of parallels in the Jewish Talmud to Paul's use of the phrase 'refresh the spirit': *Shabbath* 152a-b: 'A certain man died in the neighbourhood of Rab Judah. As there were none to be comforted, Rab Judah assembled ten men every day and they sat in his place. After seven days he [the dead man] appeared to him in a dream and said to him, "*Thy mind be at rest, for thou hast set my mind at rest*".' *Berakoth* 28b: 'Abaye tried to *appease* R. Joseph.' *Ta'anith* 21a: 'and my *mind was not at rest* until I added, may my whole body be covered with boils.' *Aboth* 3.10: 'He also used to say: Anyone from whom the spirit of [his fellow-] creatures *derives satisfaction*, from him the spirit of the all-present [too] *derives satisfaction*. But anyone from whom the spirit of [his fellow-] creatures *derives no satisfaction*, from him the spirit of the all-present [too] *derives no satisfaction*.' *Shebbi'ith* 10.9: 'If anyone repays his debts in the seventh year the sages are *well pleased* with him. If one borrows from a proselyte whose sons had become converted with him, the debt need not be repaid to his sons; but if he returns it the sages are *well pleased* with him. All movable property can be acquired [only] by the act of drawing them; but whosoever fulfils his [bare] word, the sages are *well pleased* with him.' It is questionable whether any of these supposed parallels to 1 Cor. 16:18 and 2 Cor. 7:13 is sufficiently similar in sense or context to Paul's phrase 'refresh the spirit' to shed light on our understanding of the Pauline usage.

2 Corinthians 7:13

In this occurrence (ὅτι ἀναπέπαιται τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν), the verb appears to be used in a similar sense to that in 1 Corinthians 16:18.⁴² The noun πνεῦμα, however, is handled variously in different translations: the RSV and NRSV have ‘his *mind* has been set at rest’; the NIV has ‘his *spirit* has been refreshed’.⁴³ It can be seen that these variations in the way the noun is translated in turn affect the way the verb is handled. It is clear that Paul often uses πνεῦμα in an anthropological sense where πνεῦμα is used to denote the whole person.⁴⁴ In 2 Corinthians 7:13 it may be too restrictive to translate πνεῦμα as mind.

There is a stark contrast between the suffering and downheartedness of Paul on the one hand (2 Cor. 7:5-6) and the refreshingly, warm welcome of the young Titus on the other hand.⁴⁵ During Titus’ visit to Corinth, he is encouraged on a number of fronts: by the comfort accorded him by the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:7); by the Corinthians’ longing, deep sorrow and concern for Paul (2 Cor. 7:7); and by the Corinthians’ obedience in receiving Titus with due fear and trembling (2 Cor. 7:15). The Corinthians had so encouraged Titus on his arrival (whether by one or all of the above actions) that the

⁴²Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 832.

⁴³*Cf.* similarly R.P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Waco: Word, 1986) 240 and P.E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 278.

⁴⁴*Cf.* E. Schweizer, ‘πνεῦμα’, *TDNT* VI, 434-7; also M.E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (vol 1; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 185 with respect to 2 Cor. 2:13, ‘The word pneu'ma here means Paul’s human spirit, as synonymous with the self or person, and as the virtual equivalent of the personal pronoun’; also *op. cit.*, 493 with respect to 2 Cor. 7:13, ‘The word πνεῦμα here refers to a human faculty, the seat of one’s inward life, perhaps simply the self’. *Cf.* also V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 169.

⁴⁵2 Cor. 7:15. F.W. Danker, *2 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) 114, points out the ‘ancient international protocol’ of offering hospitality to envoys. He cites that ‘a decree issued by the deme of Oropos commended Hieron of Aigira for “displaying his goodwill and generosity in welcoming any Oropians who came to him” (*SIG* 675.14-16)’.

young man had been refreshed in spirit.⁴⁶ Here again, Paul commends the action of refreshing another's spirit. Paul had hoped that the Corinthians would treat Titus in this way, and the ensuing refreshment of Titus' spirit was confirmation that his 'boast' had not been in vain.⁴⁷

The wider context of 2 Corinthians 7:5-16 displays a tone which is both positive and reassured. As far as Paul is concerned, the Corinthian church had responded appropriately to the 'painful letter' which he had written to them.⁴⁸ Evidence of this response is the corresponding 'refreshment' which they brought to Titus' spirit. If they had not responded appropriately to Paul's letter, then their reaction to Paul's envoy might not have been so cordial.

It is interesting to note that, here in 2 Corinthians, *all* of the Corinthians are commended for their united action in refreshing Titus' spirit, whereas in 1 Corinthians it was the action of another trio which resulted in *their* own refreshment.

As with 1 Corinthians 16:18, Paul does not spell out exactly what is meant by this phrase 'refresh the heart', but neither is there any hint that the Corinthians might misunderstand him. What we do have, however, is more contextual information which clarifies the tone of the phrase. In both instances, the surrounding context has been one of particular commendation. In the first instance the phrase was 'supported' by other phrases of a positive nature.⁴⁹ In 2 Corinthians 7:13, we also find phrases of a positive nature in the surrounding context.⁵⁰ Where it was the service, indeed the labouring, of some

⁴⁶The perfect tense suggests the ongoing effect of the refreshing (*cf.* Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 279).

⁴⁷2 Cor. 7:14. *Cf.* Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 497.

⁴⁸Thrall holds that this section may have a dual purpose 'as conclusion to the unhappy matter of the offender and as preparation for chap. 8' (Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 487).

⁴⁹*E.g.* 'they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints' (1 Cor. 16:15); 'everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it' (16:16); 'I rejoice at the coming of...' (16:17); 'because they have supplied what was lacking from you' (16:17); 'such men deserve recognition' (16:18).

⁵⁰*E.g.*, 'but also by the comfort you had given him' (2 Cor. 7:7); 'so that my joy was greater than ever' (7:7); 'by all this we are encouraged. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was' (7:13); 'you have not embarrassed me' (7:14); 'and his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling' (7:15); 'I am glad I can have complete confidence in you' (7:16).

which resulted in refreshing the heart in 1 Corinthians 16:18, in this second instance it is the warm-hearted reaction to Paul overflowing in a gracious reception to Paul's envoy which results in the refreshment of Titus' spirit.

Finally, we should note Paul's use of τὰ σπλάγχνα in 2 Corinthians 7:15. It would here appear to be an alternative word, for the sake of variety, to his use of τὸ πνεῦμα in 2 Corinthians 7:13. This leads us to consider the two uses of the phrase τὰ σπλάγχνα ἀναπαύω in Philemon.

Philemon 7 and 20

Paul, in his opening thanksgiving to the letter, highlights the fact that Philemon's 'love for all the saints' (Phlm. 5) has resulted in refreshing 'the hearts of the saints' (τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαιται διὰ σοῦ).⁵¹ This warm introduction paves the way for Paul's principal request: that Philemon should welcome the slave Onesimus back as a brother (Phlm. 17). This action, if Philemon fulfils it, would result in the refreshing of Paul's own heart in Christ (ἀννάπαισόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ), much as Philemon has already refreshed the hearts of other saints.⁵²

The traditional understanding of the situation behind the text is that Philemon was a runaway slave, who may also have stolen from his master. He had been converted by Paul whilst the apostle was imprisoned. Paul then endeavours to secure not only Onesimus' return to his master but even a compassionate reception. This reconstruction,

⁵¹Phlm. 7. τὰ σπλάγχνα here is used in the same sense as τὸ πνεῦμα in 1 Cor. 16:18 and 2 Cor. 7:13. With reference to the verb and direct object, cf. E.D. Martin, *Colossians, Philemon* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1993) 258, 'These rich, multifaceted terms, used in combination, describe Philemon as a man who brings out the best in persons. He uses a gift for enabling persons to rise to increasingly higher levels of their potential in Christ. This commendable quality also shapes Paul's intent and approach in writing to Philemon'.

⁵²Phlm. 20; cf. also Phlm. 7.

however, has been questioned by some commentators on a number of grounds.⁵³ The letter nowhere explicitly states that Onesimus was a runaway and it is also the case that a slave, without technically being a runaway, could seek sanctuary in the face of bad treatment, and a negotiated return be arranged by the protector.⁵⁴ With the evidence before us, it does not seem possible to argue in favour of one view against the other. With any of these scenarios, however, the task before Paul is to secure Onesimus' return, arrange a welcome from Philemon, and gain Onesimus' forgiveness and the resolution of any debts which the slave had incurred.

If the situation here is, indeed, that of a runaway, Roman law had laid down a number of implications for such slaves and their possible punishments upon being returned.⁵⁵ The Roman jurist Ulpian records:⁵⁶

- (1) Anyone who has hidden a runaway slave is guilty of theft.
- (2) The Senate has decreed that no runaways must be allowed onto country estates or be sheltered by the estate managers or agents of the landowners, and has laid down a fine; but if anyone restores such runaways to their owners within twenty days or brings them before the authorities, their previous behaviour is to be overlooked.
- (3) Any person who apprehends a runaway slave has an obligation to produce him in public;
- (4) and the authorities are very properly required to guard them carefully to prevent them from escaping.

⁵³See I.H. Marshall's summary in K.P. Donfried and I.H. Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993) 177-9.

⁵⁴*Cf.* again I.H. Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*, 178 and J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 304-5. See also, J. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon and Christian Slave-Ownership', *NTS* 37 (1991) 163 who cites a number of scholars including J. Knox and S. Winter. Barclay, himself, holds to the more traditional interpretation on the grounds that the absence of any mention of runaway is easily explained by a tactfulness on Paul's part.

⁵⁵E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 187.

⁵⁶Digest 11, 4.1 (cited by T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* [London: Croom Helm, 1981] 190).

- (7) Carefully guarding them may even include chaining them up.
 (8) They are kept under guard up to the time when they can be taken before the Prefect of the Vigiles [the police at Rome] or the provincial governor.
 (9) Their names and distinguishing features and the names of the persons whom they may claim as their owners should be submitted to the authorities, so that the runaways can be more easily recognised and dealt with [the term 'distinguishing features' here includes scars]; and this also applies if details are posted up in writing in a public place or building.

There are numerous reports in the papyri of runaway slaves, for this was by no means a rare occurrence. One third-century papyrus deed, cited below, is a request that a friend might go in search of a fugitive slave. The penalty of harbouring a runaway is also highlighted.

Aurelius Sarapammon also called Didymus, a citizen of Oxyrhynchus,...and Athens, victor of the whole cycle of games, of the rank of excellency, president for life of the xystus, and as I am styled, to Aurelius..., and as you are styled, of the said city of Oxyrhynchus, greeting. I appoint you by this my instruction as my representative to journey to the most illustrious Alexandria and search for my slave called ..., aged about 35 years, with whom you too are acquainted... and when you find him you are to deliver him up, having the same powers as I should have myself, if present, to..., imprison him, chastise him, and to make an accusation before the proper authorities against those who harboured him and demand satisfaction.⁵⁷

By way of further example, another papyrus records a runaway slave who was also guilty of stealing from his master.⁵⁸

⁵⁷*P.Oxy.* 1643.

⁵⁸*Phlm.* 18 would seem to suggest that Onesimus had in some way stolen from his master, although Lohse argues that running away, in itself, constituted a debt (*Colossians and Philemon*, 204).

Flavius Ammonas, *officialis* on the staff of the praefect of Egypt, to Flavius Dorotheus, *officialis*, greeting. I order and depute you to arrest my slave called Magnus, who has run away and is staying at Hermopolis and has carried off certain articles belonging to me, and to bring him as a prisoner together with the head-man of Sesptha. This order is valid, and in answer to the formal question I gave my consent. I, Flavius Ammonas, *officialis* on the staff of the praefect of Egypt, have made this order.⁵⁹

In the light of the Roman legal position, Wiedemann writes, concerning the letter to Philemon:

When a runaway slave called Onesimos joined the circle of the Apostle Paul, awaiting trial at Rome, there could be no question of Paul's committing the crime of harbouring the fugitive. To reconcile the runaway Christian to his Christian master Philemon, Paul needs all the diplomatic finesse he can muster.⁶⁰

If Onesimus was not a runaway, the situation is still one where Paul needs to appeal that Onesimus be received warmly (Phlm. 17). If Onesimus were to be given the kind of reception that would be accorded to Paul, that would be regarded as an act of 'refreshing the heart' of Paul. Philemon is requested to do the right thing in this situation. Paul argues that he himself, as apostle, will lay down his rights in *demanding* that Philemon fulfil this request (Phlm. 8-9).

As a householder and slave owner, Philemon can be understood to have been a 'well-to-do' Christian.⁶¹ We know that he offered hospitality to the church in Ephesus,⁶² and it may be that such generosity is referred to in Philemon 6.⁶³ By extension, although it

⁵⁹*P.Oxy.* 1423.

⁶⁰T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 191.

⁶¹E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 186; cf. also Dunn, *Philemon*, 300-1. Cf. also Phlm. 16.

⁶²Phlm. 2. Here, as with Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, and M. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) *ad loc.*, rejecting the thesis of J. Knox that this is the letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) and that Archippus, not Philemon, was in fact the master of Onesimus.

⁶³The translation of this verse is clearly problematic, but cf. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 208-9 renders it '(I pray) that the liberality which is the expression of your faith may become effective in the experience of every good thing'; also J.B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*

can only be supposition, it may be that it is Philemon's generosity and hospitality which has resulted in the hearts of the saints being refreshed.⁶⁴

Philemon has already refreshed the hearts of the saints, and the way he treats Onesimus, when the slave returns, may be another act of refreshment of the heart. With regard to 1 Corinthians 16, it was argued that 'refreshing the hearts of the saints' was an action which crossed social barriers. A relatively wealthy man together with two much lowlier figures were able, by their service, to refresh the hearts of the wider community and Paul himself. Here we have the situation where a householder and slave owner is known for his generosity and love, indeed for the way in which he refreshes the hearts of the saints. Additionally, the welcome which he accords to this much lowlier figure, the returning slave, will result in the refreshment of Paul's own heart. Again, this action crosses traditional social barriers—barriers in this highly stratified society which, in the light of the generally accepted punishments of either runaway slaves or thieving slaves listed above, were considerable.

The second similarity we find in the contexts of Paul's use of the phrase is this. In all four instances, the context surrounding Paul's use of the phrase is both positive and complimentary. In the first instance of the phrase in the letter to Philemon, the recipient is praised by Paul for his love (which has given great joy and encouragement) and his faith (Phlm. 5, 7). In the second instance, the context includes words and phrases such as 'welcome', 'benefit', and 'confident of obedience'.⁶⁵

(London: Macmillan, 1897) *ad loc.*, 'your generosity, your willingness to share your goods which springs from your faith'.

⁶⁴G.B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) 220, cites E.F. Scott, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948) *ad loc.* who suggests that the occasion of Philemon's generosity may well have been the earthquake of AD 60.

⁶⁵Phlm. 17, 20, 21.

ἀναψύχω — A Pauline synonym?

The verb ἀναψύχω occurs in 2 Timothy 1:16 in a way apparently synonymous with our Pauline phrase ('May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed [ἀνέψυξεν] me').⁶⁶ The verb occurs much less frequently than ἀναπαύω in the Greek literary corpus, and carries a variety of meanings.⁶⁷ Schweizer argues that the basic sense is 'to cool and refresh by a breath'.⁶⁸ It was used to refer to the influence of fresh air in the healing of a wound.⁶⁹ It could also be used of either spiritual or physical refreshment.⁷⁰ We came across, above, the verb's usage in the Septuagint (Ex. 23:12) with the sense of refreshment.

In 1 Timothy 2:16 the specific reason for the refreshing is unclear. It may simply be the physical refreshment of the imprisoned Paul through the provision of food or clothes.⁷¹ It is clearly a commendable act (2 Tim. 1:16-18), but the context is not clear enough to suggest that it is a direct synonym for the non-physical refreshment implied in the Pauline phrase we have looked at.

ἀναπαύω in early English Translations⁷²

It is interesting to note that not until 1611 with the King James Version of the Bible did 'refresh' come to be a single English translation across all four occurrences of the Greek phrase in the New Testament. The Latin Vulgate contrasts with the Greek and uses two

⁶⁶I am grateful to Professor I.H. Marshall for drawing my attention to this occurrence in 2 Timothy. The transitive verb also occurs in certain recensions of Rom. 15:32 (D G lat) in place of συναναπαύομαι (cf. 'ἀναψύχω' in H. Balz and E. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 95). Cf. also the use cited above of the verb ἀναψύχω alongside that of ἀναπαύω in Ex. 23:12 (LXX).

⁶⁷Cf. Liddell & Scott, *ad loc.*, ('cool', 'refresh', 'revive', 'rest', 'dry off', 'recover' and 'relax').

⁶⁸E. Schweizer, 'ἀναψύχω' in 'ψυχή κτλ.', *TDNT* 9, 663-4.

⁶⁹Hippocrates, *De Fracturis* 25.

⁷⁰Homer, *Odyssey* 4.568 refers to the refreshing effect of the West Wind on the men. *P.Oxy.* 1296.7 (third century) refers to straightforward relaxation.

⁷¹Cf. B. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 196-9.

⁷²I am especially grateful to George Wieland for his very helpful suggestions which prompted me to add this section of the article.

verbs in the Pauline phrases (*reficio* in three of the four instances and *requiesco* in the remaining instance).⁷³

The Wycliffe Bible of 1380, which was largely based on the Vulgate, had 'refresh' only in 1 Corinthians 16. The Tyndale New Testament of 1534 (largely based on one of Erasmus' Greek texts of the New Testament) and the Great Bible of 1539 (heavily dependent on Tyndale's New Testament) had 'refresh' in only 2 Corinthians 7. The Rheims Bible of 1582 (which was heavily dependent on the Vulgate and contained many latinisms) had 'refresh' in 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 7 and Philemon 20. It cannot be demonstrated from this that the Vulgate was particularly influential in the emergence of 'refresh' as a popular English translation in the Pauline phrase.

IV. Conclusions and Implications

Having examined the four Pauline occurrences of the verb, we can now draw some conclusions regarding the context of the phrase and seek to answer some general questions regarding the meaning of the phrase: Is Paul referring to 'rest' or 'refreshment'? Is it subjective or objective? Do these findings have any implications for a revived usage of the phrase in modern, Christian communities?

Although the verb is by no means unusual, Paul's use of the fuller phrase has proved certainly unusual. Pre-Pauline direct parallels to the phrase in the available literary and non-literary sources could not be found. Even after Paul, however, the phrase does not appear to be widely adopted independently of the Pauline texts.

At the same time, there are notable consistencies between the four instances where the phrase occurs in the Pauline corpus. In each of the four instances, he does not refer to physical rest (as in rest from labours); the sense is somewhat more of a refreshment of the heart,

⁷³1 Cor. 16:18: 'For they refreshed (*refecerunt*) my spirit and yours also'; 2 Cor. 7:13: 'because his spirit has been refreshed (*refectus est*); Phlm. 7: 'the hearts of the saints are refreshed (*requieverunt*) by you'; Phlm. 20: 'refresh (*refice*) my heart in Christ'. A third verb (*refrigero*) is used in Rom. 15:32 for 'I might be refreshed' (συναναπαύσωμαι) and 2 Tim. 1:16 for 'he refreshed' (ἀνέψυξεν).

spirit or inner being; this refreshment is brought on by the actions of others, not by his own actions, or indeed his own lack of action (physical rest), nor indeed by God's action.⁷⁴ Nowhere does Paul urge that 'refreshing the hearts' of others is an action which should be emulated by others; but in each instance the actions which brought about or would bring about the refreshment are strongly commended. Furthermore, this action was one which could cross traditional social class barriers. It could be caused by the action of a slave to wealthy citizens and by the action of a wealthy citizen to a slave.

This ethical praxis is consistent with Paul's understanding of Christianity—the actions towards one's fellow-believers are fundamental to true discipleship. A repeated corrective through 1 Corinthians is that the actions of each believer should be done with the express intention of building up the wider body of believers, in contrast to the divisive reactions which seemed to epitomise the community.⁷⁵ The trio, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, together with the Corinthians and Philemon are all commended warmly for doing precisely this.

The rarity of the phrase in the wider ancient world and the particular connotations which are implicit in Paul's phrase together highlight the uniqueness of an important feature of early Christianity. There was no religious precedent for the concept of the refreshment of the lives of fellow adherents in pagan Corinthian or other Graeco-Roman religions. Where participation in pagan cults was largely self-seeking in motivation, Paul's phrase draws attention to a distinctive in this new religion—all of one's actions should be directed to the benefit of others.

These conclusions suggest interesting parallels between the contexts of these four verses. Are we any closer, however, to determining a more specific meaning of the phrase? This refreshment

⁷⁴The lack of peace of mind through the failure to locate Titus in 2 Cor. 2:13 (οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἀνεσιν τῷ πνεύματί μου) and the lack of physical rest in 2 Cor. 7:5 (οὐδεμίαν ἔσχηκεν ἀνεσιν ἢ σὰρξ ἡμῶν) do not parallel our phrase sufficiently closely.

⁷⁵1 Cor. 8:10; 10:23; 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26.

would appear to be subjective in that it relates to the feelings or emotions of the subject rather than objective, relating to the nature of the action which is taken and quite independent of the individual's perceptions. It refers to the resulting effect of an action on one person's spirit by another person. We have seen from the examples that Paul cites that the initiating actions can be quite different.

In modern Christian circles the phrase might, then, be used to describe the resulting refreshment of one person's spirit, heart or inner being brought about by the actions of another person—for example, the effect on the recipient's spirit of a display of generosity, magnanimity, a warm welcome, or some good news. (The use of the words spirit, heart or inner being distinguishes the action from one which merely affects the body, for example physical rest.) The phrase is less concerned with the objective action in itself, but more with the subjective effect of that action on the person's spirit.

Where 'refreshing the hearts of the saints' appears to be a phrase which Paul may well have coined, it is certainly an action which he commended. As such 'refreshing the hearts of the saints' is both an action which the church today should seek to encourage and also a Pauline phrase which it would do well to revive.