

Formulas and Rhetorical Devices used by the Apostle Paul

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By Bobby Bruno

Stereotyped formulas are those that are used by many letter writers to convey a feeling or information. Included in these formulas are the disclosure formula (information is forthcoming; the Appeal (Petition) formula (help is needed); the Rejoice formula (I'm happy for you); and the Astonishment formula (Why have you done this thing!).

The disclosure formula was used by Paul in Galatians 1:11 ("I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the Good News I have spread is not a human message" /G.W).

Paul used the Appeal formula in Philippians 4:2 ("Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement" /N.L.T).

He also used the Rejoice formula in Philippians 4:10 ("How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me" /N.L.T).

Lastly, Paul used the Astonishment formula in Galatians 1:6 ("I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are

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following a different way that pretends to be the Good News" /N.L.T).

Epistolary rhetoric utilizes different devices of speech to get your point across. These devices are called Imaginary interlocutor (an interrupting questioner; an abruptly asked leading question that the speaker will answer for himself); the Chiasm (the main point is stated and then backed away from and is then restated in back to front); the Paranesis (a letter of advisement or exhortation; how to behave in daily living.

The code of conduct.); and the Catechesis (the content of belief; what should be believed) Paul used the imaginary interlocutor device in 1Corinthians 9:1 ("Don't you agree that I'm a free man? Don't you agree that I'm an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you the result of my work for the Lord?" /GW).

Paul used the Chiasm device in Romans 10: 9-10 ("If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved" /NLT). Paul used the Paranesis device in 1 Corinthians 10:14 ("Therefore, my dear friends, get as far away from the worship of false gods as you can" /G.W). Lastly, Paul used the Catechesis device in Ephesians 5:3-4 ("Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God" /N.L.T).

Putting aside that Paul's letters were written in the style of the era he lived in, Paul, like Jesus, spoke to many people from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. He had to speak to the people in a way they could understand his message. When speaking to the unlearned, Paul had to employ a simpler language than if he were talking to the learned of Greece. By tailoring his message, he could reach more people for Christ in a time when the learned and rich ruled the world and the Romans held a tight fist over all of the territory. Being one of the learned of the day, Paul was a master with both pen and tongue. Even if he did have to write it before he spoke it, Paul made Jesus well-known through his sacrifice, courage and zeal for the Lord. His letters are unmatched by any others ever written then, or since.

References

Capes, D., Reeves, R., Richards, E. (2007) Rediscovering Paul. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

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Bobby Bruno was saved 15 years ago in a way that left him no doubt that Jesus wanted him to reach others with His great and abounding love. He started writing at the age of 12 and hasn't stopped since. He achieved Associates Degree in Biblical Studies from Ohio Christian University in early 2014.

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