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# Giving with the mindset of Christ

A study of Paul's response to the Philippian gift

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In memory of Grandpa,  
Who knew how to be brought low  
and how to abound

## Abstract

After receiving a gift from the church in Philippi, Paul sends a letter back with their messenger Epaphroditus. Paul's response is filled with joy and longing for the Philippians. In his writing he expresses his gratitude for their support. But there seems to be a tension in this response. In face of the gift, he states his content in having little or much. How can Paul express his gratefulness for their support and simultaneously indicate that he was fine without their gift?

I will seek to understand how Paul perceives the Philippian's gift. I will suggest that Paul's dealing with the gift is best understood in light of the Christ event narrated in 2:6-11. Central in the narration is the dichotomy of exploiting and emptying found in 2:6-7. Here Paul is putting Christ as the supreme example to which we are to let our minds be transformed by. I suggest that the way they are to obtain this mindset is not to re-enact the Christ event. Rather Paul shows through his autobiographical section (3:2-11) that through is the encountering with the Christ event which enables him to obtain the mindset of Christ. I am also convinced that it will give a help reading of 4:10-20 when Paul speaks directly of the Philippian's gift.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Biblical quotations are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), unless otherwise indicated. Quotations from the Greek New Testament are taken from Nestle-Aland's 28<sup>th</sup> edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 *The state of research*

After receiving a gift from the church in Philippi, Paul sends their messenger Epaphroditus back accompanied by his letter. His response is filled with joy and longing for the Philippian (Phil 1:3-4, 8; 4:1, 10). In his writing he expresses his gratitude for their support (1:7). He lets them know that after receiving their gift, he now has plenty (4:18). He states how it was good that they sent him the gift (4:14). But there seems to be a tension in this response. He mentions that there was something lacking in their gift (2:30). Likewise, he can come across as nonchalant towards the gift when he states his content in having little or much (4:11-13). How can Paul express his gratefulness for their support and simultaneously indicate that he was fine without their gift? Even more, Gerald F. Hawthorne points out that Paul does not make use of εὐχαριστεῖν, when he speaks of their gift.<sup>1</sup> Is Paul guilty of being ungrateful, the worst of all traits should you believe Seneca, a contemporary to Paul?<sup>2</sup> The aim of this thesis is to examine this question. Understanding Paul's perception of their gift.

This tension referred to as a "thankless-thanks"<sup>3</sup> is for G.W. Peterman not an indication of his embarrassment in accepting gifts, rather it displays his sacrificial view on their gift.<sup>4</sup> Paul views their support not as a gift to him, but a sacrifice to God. Therefore, he can point to God as the one who will reciprocate.

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<sup>1</sup> The lack of a verb to express thank you in 4:10 – 20, is by many scholars described as a «thankless thank». E.g., Joachim Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief* (Herder Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1968), 173. And Marvin Richardson Vincent, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the epistles of the Philippians and to Philemon* (xiv, 201 p.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 146.

<sup>2</sup> Seneca also situated in 1. century Greco-Roman world. He wrote a work on gift exchange. He wrote from a stoic philosophical tradition, but we can also deal with his work in the way that it shows in some way how people practiced gift exchange. Or believed how it should be done. Cf. John MG Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017), 45-48.

<sup>3</sup> "Thankless-thank" David Briones, "Paul's intentional 'thankless thanks' in Philippians 4.10-20," 34, no. 1 (2011): 47-69. p. 48-49

<sup>4</sup> See Gerald W Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving* (vol. 92; Cambridge University Press, 1997), 156-60.

Another attempt to investigate Paul's dealing with gift-exchange is done by David E. Briones.<sup>5</sup> Through a study of Paul's financial policy towards the Corinthians and Philippians, he wants to clarify why Paul accepts gifts from Philippi, but not from Corinth. Briones sees two principles which governs this affair. The first being that Paul does not accept gifts from the churches he at the times minister to. Secondly, he makes a case that Paul operates with a divine economy. In this view, any gift-exchange contains three parties, the giver, receiver and God as the origin and completer of all gifts. Paul can accept an offer from the church in Philippi and because they have a proper understanding of God as the ultimate giver. As the source of all gifts God is thereby the rightful receiver of one's gratitude. In Paul's view the congregation acts as a broker for this exchange. The reason for accepting the gift from the church in Philippi, but not from the church in Corinthians, stems from the latter's lack of recognising God as the ultimate giver. Thereby he writes against scholars who believes it to be rooted in a fear of entering a patron-client relationship with the congregation.

The most recent approach to gift-exchange in Philippians stems from Mark A. Jennings.<sup>6</sup> His effort is to show that the whole letter fits in with the single purpose of persuading the church to continue their support for Paul's mission.<sup>7</sup> Their gift to him brought by Epaphroditus is taken to be a token of their partnership with Paul.

When discussing the concept of gift-exchange and especially in Pauline litterateur, you cannot avoid mentioning John M.G. Barclay. He has brought considerable contribution to understanding Pauline theology and especially to the concept of grace, through his book *Paul and the gift*. He explores different contexts of gift giving (spanning from Greco-Roman context to Jewish context). With this in view he analyses Paul's letter to Romans and Galatians and presents a new perspective on how Paul talks about grace. A key component of his view is Paul's emphasizing of the incongruity of grace that is given through the Christ event.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> David E Briones, *Paul's financial policy: a socio-theological approach* (vol. 494; A&C Black, 2014), 30-34.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Jennings points to Lohmeyer, who was the first modern scholar to propose a single purpose case for the Philippians (Lohmeyer, E., Hahn, F., Koch, D., & Meyer, H. (1974). *Der Brief an die Philipper* (Nach dem Handexemplar des Verfassers durchges. Ausg. ed., Vol. Abt. 9, 1). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht). Jennings 2018, 2-4. Mark A Jennings, *The price of partnership in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians: "make my joy complete"* (vol. 578; Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 2-4.

<sup>7</sup> See Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>8</sup> See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 491.

## 1.2 My proposal

I will seek to understand how Paul perceives the Philippian's gift. I will suggest that Paul's dealing with the gift is best understood in light of the Christ event narrated in 2:6-11. Central in the narration is the dichotomy of exploiting and emptying found in 2:6-7.<sup>9</sup> Here Paul is putting Christ as the supreme example to which we are to let our minds be transformed by (2:5). Being transformed to the mindset of Christ is tied to a recalibration of the worth system in the believer, exemplified by Paul in his autobiographic section (3:2-11).<sup>10</sup> This is a theme that I will suggest runs through the entire letter. I am also convinced that it will give a help reading of 4:10-20 when Paul speaks directly of the Philippian's gift.

## 1.3 Methodology

I will use Historical-critical method including lexical, grammatical and historical analysis to examine the texts. Texts will be chosen based on the theme of exploiting and emptying/giving, and the subject of mindset (both when uses *φρονέω* and when he put forward examples to follow). Examining Philippians 4:10-20 is of course essential to the task.

In assessing the opponents, I will make use of the method of "mirror-reading". Here I will use Barclay's seven criteria to detect opponents:

"(1) type of utterance (e.g., assertion, denial, command, prohibition, all of which function differently); (2) Tone (the kinds of urgency or lack thereof in the various types of utterance); (3) *Frequency* (an occasional remark does not seem to carry the same weight as those items to which Paul returns again and again); (4) *Clarity* (we can mirror-read with confidence only those statements that are reasonably clear); (5) *Un-familiarity* (with due cautions imposed, we may consider the presence of unfamiliar themes in a letter a reflection of the unique situation to which it is addressed); (6) *Consistency*

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<sup>9</sup> ἀρπαγμὸν is here translated exploiting and ἐκένωσεν as emptying.

<sup>10</sup> "Recalibration of the worth system" is a phrase inspired by Barclay's title to part III of his book Paul and the gift. See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*.

(unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, one should *assume* one type of opponent or argument); and (7) *Historical plausibility*.”<sup>11</sup>

In chapter two I will introduce the topic of gift-exchange. Further I present Barclay’s findings as to how a gift can be perfected in a multitude of ways

In chapter three I look into the Pauls history with Philippi, the dating and occasion for the letter, its theme and unity.

In chapter four I will analyse Paul’s treatment of the Philippian gift using the taxonomy provided by Barclay. Here I am interested in unraveling the tension between on one side being content (4:11-12) and not desiring their gift (4:17), whilst on the other side affirming that their gift has indeed met his needs (4:16, 18).

In chapter five, I will make a case that the tension can be resolved by Paul’s referral to the Christ event. I maintain that this event is spoken of directly in the Christ hymn (2:6-11), but also through Paul’s biographical section (3:2-16). I suggest that this event is of key importance as his whole worth system is recalibrated through this meeting with Christ Jesus. I advocate that Paul want’s the same transformation to take place in the Philippians, by encouraging them to let them be shaped by the mindset of Christ. I understand this mindset, as Paul puts it forward, as evolving around the axis of exploiting and emptying found in 2:6-7. I suggest that this kenosis movement is found not only in Christ, but also in Paul and his co-workers who are put forward as role models for the Philippians.

The recalibrating of worth system is what I understand to be the grounds for Paul’s treatment of the gift. To back up this claim I will focus in on what Paul describes as valuable contrasted with what is worthless. Hopefully this will give help reading of the gift section.

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<sup>11</sup> Fee uses makes use of John M. G. Barclay’s method. Here I am citing Fee in his reference to John M. G. Barclay, “*Mirror-reading a polemical letter: Galatian as a test case*,” *JSNT* 31 (1987) 73-93.: Gordon D Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 7.

## 2 Cultural context: Gift-giving

Before diving straight into the letter, we have to lay a foundation to which we can discuss the dynamic act of exchanging gifts.

In modern era Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) is regarded as the most influential researcher on the topic of gift-giving.<sup>12</sup> As an anthropologist his academic work involved using data from ethnographers working around the Pacific Rim (Western seaboard of America and Canada; Melanesia; the Polynesian Island). Using his knowledge of ancient culture and language and ethnographical evidence, he made a hypothesis about the core characteristics of an archaic society. His contribution was providing an analysis which interpreted the gift-system as the glue which holds the whole archaic society together. Gifts in this context refer to more than a pure material gift but includes favours and services that one part performs for another. Either it be physical gifts like food or money, or services like providing protection or nursing.

Mauss make out three movements in gift-exchange: “The obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to return.”<sup>13</sup> Together they make out what he defines as “total services”.<sup>14</sup> He views this as an institution within which gift exchange takes place. As member of a group, either it be family, a tribe or society, you are partaking in this institution. What follows is more than just to simply reciprocate the presents you receive. In addition, there exists obligations to give and receive. Being a part of a group brings about the reason for giving, since that is the tie which binds you with others, and forms communities. Rejecting to give, declining to forward invitations or similar gestures, is actively to avoid building friendship. At the same time the unwillingness to receive signals hostility because “things are never completely detached from those carrying out the exchange.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, rejecting the gift is rejecting the giver. Likewise, failure to return violates the very bonds holding the group together. This is

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<sup>12</sup>Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 12.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 13. Barclay points to Marcel Mauss, *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies* (Routledge, 2002), 16-17, 50-55.

<sup>14</sup> Mauss, *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 16-18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 42. Rejecting a gift will be regarded as rejecting the giver, since the gift can't be wholly separated from its sender.

not limited to not reciprocating but includes instances when counter-gifts are smaller than the originals.

In the face of modern Western culture these transactions are not regarded as gifts, seeing that there exists an obligation to return. This responsibility seems like a contradiction to the nature of gifts, which are supposed to be free. The point Mauss makes is not that gifts are just another name for trading; a case where X is exchanged for Y, rather, they were a part of a gift-economy of total services. His study of archaic types of society shows that the distinction between gifts and trade is not a rigid structure. The structures in these archaic type societies have a gift-dynamic of total services where there is no border between the self and their property. When giving, you will also give yourself with the gift. The gift-economy was total in the sense that exchanging goods was not done through contract liked trading, but through gift giving. These transactions were both disinterested and interested at the same time. Giving was done both freely and disinterested but was simultaneously loaded with interest and obligation. As Mauss indicates when referring to the Trobriand society:

These concepts of law and economics that it pleases us to contrast: liberty and obligation; liberality, generosity, and luxury, as against savings, interest, and utility—it would be good to put them into the melting pot once more. We can only give the merest indications on this subject. Let us choose, for example, the Trobriand Islands. There they still have a complex notion that inspires all the economic acts we have described. Yet this notion is neither that of the free, purely gratuitous rendering of total services, nor that of production and exchange purely interested in what is useful. It is a sort of hybrid that flourished.<sup>16</sup>

The modern western clear distinction between gift-exchange on the one hand, and trading on the other hand, stems from the Greco-Roman world. “For it is precisely the Romans and Greeks, who, perhaps, following upon the Semites of the north and west, invented the distinction between personal and real law, separated sale from gift and exchange, isolated the moral obligation and contract, and in particular, conceived the difference that exists between rites, laws, and interests.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>17</sup> Mauss, *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, 69.

## 2.1 Greco-Roman world

Narrowing in on the context that Paul lived in, we shall survey the complexity that surrounds giving in the first century Mediterranean world. The stress is on complexity as there was no uniformed way of giving. Obviously in the Greco-Roman world there was many practices and traditions bonded with giving.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, there are certain characterizations that are more connected with gifts in the 1. century Greco-Roman world.

One of the fundamental aspects of this is the expectation of reciprocating of gifts.<sup>19</sup> This obligation that we find in archaic societies is recognized as vital for relationship between humans but also between deities and their subjects. The anticipation of a return was embedded in the culture as you can find many sayings expressing the important of reciprocity. “One hand washes the other”, “Give something and get something” and “one favor always begets another” are three such examples.<sup>20</sup> Returning gifts are undoubtedly important for maintaining relationships. Moreover, they establish ties of obligation between individuals that provided security. When one person shares with a friend in need, he can expect a helping hand when he is in need at a later stage.

Gift exchanges were not brought about by strict calculation, as it would be considered a cold and hostile way of treating a friend.<sup>21</sup> But that does not mean that each part did not assess the worth of the gifts. The receiver had to have an awareness of the value since the gift always had to be reciprocated. To break loose of the bond brought by the gift, an equal gift of value had to be returned.<sup>22</sup> It would be even better if the return exceeded the initial gift and consequently putting the other under obligation. No doubt people had to choose wisely to whom they parted gifts with. Not wanting to initiate exchanges with people who can shame you through out-

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<sup>18</sup> For literature on this topic see amongst other S. von Reden, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1995), and essay found in C. Gill et al., eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 26.

<sup>21</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 25-28. 25-28

gifting you, or “robbing” you of value by not being able to reciprocate. In short, the gift ought to be given in good spirit, but also discriminately.

From a modern viewpoint it seems like a thin thread divides the financial sphere from the sphere of gift-exchange. Illustrating this matter is the usage of debt language when thanking for a gift. Even though a favour has been bestowed, the recipient speaks of being in debt and letting the benefactor’s name what he wants in return.<sup>23</sup> An example of such practice is shown by Ps.-Demetrius who writes to his benefactor: “if you wish anything that is mine, do not write requesting it, but demand a return favor. For I am in your debt”.<sup>24</sup>

“The closer the relationship, the more a friend could be sure that he would never fail to win any favour he asked of me”.<sup>25</sup> (Barclay 28-29.)

As mentioned earlier this reciprocity structure is not limited to human relations, but it is also an essential part of Greek religion. As Barclay puts it: “Fundamental to the structure of Greek religion is in fact the acknowledgement of the gods as benefactor (to nations, cities and individuals), distributing their favors (χάριτες) with appropriate discrimination, while humans, in prayer, in dedicatory gifts, and, above all, in sacrifice, participate in the reciprocatory cycle of gifts.”<sup>26</sup> Initially this system could be perceived as utilitarian, because there exist this reciprocity ethos of “I give that you may give”. But that will miss the mark on how to understand the reciprocity system. Similar to gifts between friends, sacrifices to the deities were not regulated by strict calculations. There was no formal bond where a sacrifice of X would produce a return of Y. Just like dealing with other human agents, the gods were recognized as agents who could reciprocated as they saw fit. That meant that there was no guarantee that honour or gratitude granted to a deity would generate the desired return, or any return at all.

Lucias Anneus Seneca, also situated in first century Greco-Roman World, has written the fullest discussion on gifts that has survived the centuries. Through his work *De Beneficiis*, he explores what he sees a key component of the mechanisms of societies. His project does not limit to mapping out the system. He also shares his vision for how it should function. Guiding his reader

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 25-28. See footnote for specific source.

<sup>24</sup> See A. J. Malherbe, ancient epistolary theorist (Atlanta: Scholars press, 1988), pp. 40-41.

<sup>25</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 28-29.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 27.

in how to deal properly with benefits. The benefactor and beneficiary both share the responsibility to partake with a virtues attitude.

“His treatise *De Beneficiis* should be read in a combination of three ways: (i) a selective restatement of largely common assumptions about gift-reciprocity; (ii) an intelligent analyses of the problems of gift exchange; and (iii) the provision of distinctively stoic solutions to those problems, aimed at keeping the system of benefit exchange operational for the good of all.”<sup>27</sup>

What is his distinct stoic dialect in reciprocity? Like other thinking (around giving) gifts should be given voluntary to worthy recipients.<sup>28</sup> Gifts are distinguished from loans in that only the latter could be paid back.<sup>29</sup> The specific Stoic contribution to this topic is a different value system. An assessment of a gift does not hinge on the value of the material (or service), but on the goodwill of the benefactor. In other words, more important than the content is the attitude it is given with. A benefaction given with goodwill are better because they are likelier to create gratitude in the recipient. Without this kind of acknowledge the initiator would be less apt to repeat the gesture. Thereby the system of gift-exchange will not be upheld. Hence, the imperative to give discriminately to the recipients who will be grateful. This means that you should avoid giving to wealthy people who does not need your gift. Furthermore,

The primacy of the attitude of the giver over the content of the gift is related to the Stoic priority of *animus* over *res*. (a sentence about *res* and *animus*). A gift well given is not measured by the size of the return, but by the virtue of gratitude. The precedence of virtue means that the only interest you should have when giving is the benefit of the other. Not being concerned by receiving a return. For Seneca the honourable should be pursued for no other reason than itself (ben 4.9.3). This is Stoic in the way that it is saying that you should not be affected by wealth and treasures, but by character and virtue. (ben 4.9-11.).

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<sup>27</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-49.

<sup>29</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Gift-Giving and Friendship: Seneca and Paul in Romans 1-8 on the Logic of God's Χάρις and Its Human Response," 101, no. 1 (2008): 15-44. P 19.

## 2.2 Perfecting grace<sup>30</sup>

What is distinct about a gift? How can we differentiate a gift from other transactions? Or to use Barclay's words, "What makes it a gift, rather than a loan, a sale, a tax, or a salary? Is there a quintessential or perfect gift?"<sup>31</sup> If so, we should expect God to be a giver of perfect gifts. Obviously, that is what we refer to when we speak of God's grace in terms of "free grace", "pure grace" or "sheer grace".<sup>32</sup> God, being "the most perfect entity", will by nature be the most gracious giver. Admittedly, we deal with the tendency to push concepts to the extreme or absolute form when they are related to God. This illustrates the tendency to draw out a concept to its endpoint, in the effort to make out the essence of a term. In result, we are also distinguishing it from other similar concepts. "To ask what something is "by definition" invites its expression in an absolute or "pure" form."<sup>33</sup>

However, in our search for essence of a gift, we must be aware that a definition can also be used for rhetorical or ideological purposes, as Kenneth Burke rightly points out.<sup>34</sup> An example given by Barclay is that a way of discrediting an academic could be done by characterizing their contribution as "purely academic".<sup>35</sup> By drawing out the adjective "academic" to its extreme, you are implying that it is impractical or irrelevant to the ordinary life. Applying rhetoric in this manner, involving extremes and absolutes, serves to polarize and divide concepts which could have been very much compatible. An example of this could be found in the ongoing immigration debate in Norway, where some can assign other as "true Norwegian" or "Norwegian, Norwegian", as a contrast to plainly Norwegians. Here the first group refers to ethnical Norwegians, the genuine identity bearers, whereas the latter group are not recognized as proper Norwegians. This goes to show that perfections can serve an ideological function. On this Barclay writes, "One way to legitimate oneself as the bearer of a tradition, and to disqualify others, is to appropriate to oneself the "true" and "proper" meaning of a traditional concept,

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<sup>30</sup> This whole chapter is indebted to the approach in Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 66-78.

<sup>31</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 66.

<sup>32</sup> See *Ibid.*, 66-70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> Barclay cites Burke. See *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ibid.*, 68.

such that other are not simply limited in understanding but are fundamentally in error: what they mean by X is non-X, once it has been defined in a particular, “perfect” form.”<sup>36</sup>

The same mechanism is at work when someone declares something as “pure grace”. Barclay recognizes that when people expand on the notion of grace, they draw it out in different ways, signifying various aspect. For instance, Jacques Derrida reckons that a gift can only truly be a gift when it is not reciprocated.<sup>37</sup> If a gift is returned in any kind, it will cease to be gift-giving and rather be defined as an exchange. A different approach is held by Seneca who rather than to perfect the unreciprocated gift, considers the supreme benefaction of the gods as the ideal to upheld. The gods have no boundaries or lack of resources and thereby gives to everyone all the time. The belief is that the gods give some of their gifts indiscriminating to everyone because some gifts cannot be given only to the worthy (wind, rain, sun, etc.). So, instead of perfecting the unreciprocated gift, he perfects the gift as universal and unmerited. Hence, it is crucial to be conscious of the diversity in what is stated in "pure grace", "sheer grace" or similar expressions, when studying gift giving. Failure in this will lead to misreading, generalization and a flat reading of grace and gift-giving.

Barclays contributes to this field with the identification of six different ways of perfecting grace.<sup>38</sup> He acknowledges that “gift-giving is a multifaceted phenomenon” and that “gift or grace can be perfected in multiple ways.”<sup>39</sup> How a gift is perfected depends on which facet of gift-giving that is emphasized. One aspect is the focus on the givers attitude. Here the interest is in purest motives such as benevolence and its kind. Another aspect is centred around the gift, its quantity or quality. A third stray concerns the relation between the giver and the recipient. Since grace can be expanded in many ways, it cannot be determined in one single way. Moreover, there is no necessity that perfecting one facet involves the perfection of others. As we now turn to the six common perfections of grace, we must not regard them as a unity but as separate strings. Cords that can be played individual or combined with others. Barclay reminds us of the rhetorical and ideological usage of a definitions when he notes following: “Rival

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>37</sup> See Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 70-75.

<sup>39</sup> quote?

claims to maintain or defend the principle of “grace” may turn out to constitute not different degrees of emphasis, but different kinds of perfection.”<sup>40</sup>

1. *Superabundance*. This first way of perfecting grace has to do with the magnitude of the gift. While a gift can vary in form and how it is handed over, superabundance is about emphasizing its scale: “The more excessive and more all-encompassing the gift, the more perfect it may appear.” Generally, this is thought to be a prominent feature when superiors pour out goods onto the more disadvantaged. An example could be leaders in the Greco-Roman world who give out excessive gifts to their subjects. Specifically, this is said about the gods who, accordingly to Seneca “exercise their profuse and ceaseless generosity” (Ben 1.1.9). Barclay can hardly imagine divine gift-giving existing without this perfection. Though it is not central to what is commonly expressed as “sheer grace” or “free gift”.

2. *Singularity*. Here the matter is not the gift itself, but the heart behind it. Perfecting this aspect is about narrowing in on the purest motive for the gift, namely the benevolence of the giver. Especially in the Greek philosophical tradition, this was thought to be characteristic of the gods. Deities were believed to only cause good, due to their nature of being entirely good. In comparison, the Judeo-Christian tradition had a more problematic view on this stance. Stressing this singularity would mean that God could not judge and bring justice since this involves punishing evil.

3. *Priority*. Time is of the essence in this case in the sense that chronology matters. “the focus lies on the timing of the gift, which is perfect in taking place always prior to the initiative of the recipient.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, the giver is not responding to a request but is acting freely based on her generosity. As the giver has not been provoked by any means, it is considered a “free gift”. Emphasizing this dimension set forth an asymmetrical relationship between the giver and the recipient, since it is better to give prior, then to get even. Illustrative of this is a parents relationship to their children or even more, God as the source of all life.

4. *Incongruity*. Accentuating this feature means avoiding the typical discrimination that complied with standard gift-giving in the antiquity. While the custom was to favour worthy

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 71.

recipients who will return fitting gifts, the admirable deed in this case was to refrain from any consideration of the beneficiary's worth. "a perfect gift could be figured as one given without condition, that is, without regard to the worth of the recipient."<sup>42</sup> Following the examples of the gods, Seneca believed we should not be too selective in whom we trust our gifts with. They give to everyone indiscriminating from their riches, although there are some restrictions here. As noted earlier, some gifts cannot be given only to the worthy (rain, wind, sun, etc.), but has to fall on everybody. Seneca presumes that they were only intended for the worthy (Ben. 4.28). Still, Barclay regard the incongruity of a gift as "*supremely excellent precisely because it does not take account of prior conditions.*"<sup>43</sup>

5. *Efficacy*. "Turning to the effect of the gift, a perfect gift may also be figured as that which fully achieves what it was designed to do."<sup>44</sup> Gifts generate social bonds between the involving parts.<sup>45</sup> Kind acts can spark off similar gestures in others. More significantly, a gift of life itself give rise to a tighter bond to the giver. This could be said of a saviour of another one's life, or to the parents who gave birth and fostered their kin. By bestowing life upon another, it brings about the very foundation of life with all its possibilities. Above all this could be stated about God, as the creator, sustainer and even the agency which foster kind acts in human beings. Dragging this perfection to an endpoint will in effect diminish human responsibility and lay all on God.<sup>46</sup>

6. *Non-circularity*. Finally, we shall examine the stance which identifies gifts to be those who escapes reciprocity. According to this viewpoint a gift can only truly be a gift, when it avoids any return, that be material or immaterial (gratitude or honour). As previously mentioned, this is a fairly modern concept and not one that was common in the antiquity. Meanwhile Barclay recognize that this is not completely unheard of in the antiquity, "Because the gift could never guarantee a return, a gift might always remain unreciprocated or fruitless: the use of the adverb

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>45</sup> See Ibid., 31.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine is an example of a theologian whose focus on divine agent and the efficacy of grace, reduces human agency to nothing. See Ibid., 74.

δωρεᾶν in the sense “in vain” or “to nil effect” (e.g., by Paul in Gal 2:21) testifies to that possibility”.<sup>47</sup>

### 3 Paul’s letter to the Philippians

#### 3.1 Paul and the Philippians.

Paul and the church in Philippi had a long-standing relationship at the time of composing the letter. Paul being the one who founded the church during his second mission trip recorded in Acts 16:11-40.<sup>48</sup> There, on the Sabbath, they meet a group of “God-fearing” women by the river. Normally Paul would have gone to the synagogue, but there was none in Philippi. The first conversion happened when Lydia and her household were baptized. Lydia who was a prominent figure, became the household which Paul and his companions stayed while in Philippi.<sup>49</sup> We do not know exactly how long they stayed, but we learn from the account in acts, that it was caused by the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. As they were met opposition after Paul casted out a demon out of a girl. They get out of jail by the intervention of God, which in turn spurred another set of conversions.<sup>50</sup> After they left Philippi, we learn of that their relationship continues on through sharing in giving and receiving.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>48</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 26-28. I trust the account of Paul’s dealing in Philippi as reported in Acts. Following the reasons Fee states: Two of Paul’s letter speak of incidents in relations to Philippi: In 1 Thess 2:2 Paul reports that “but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition”. Further Phil 4:15-16 tells of when Paul first left Macedonia: “You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once.”. both these accounts go well alongside the narration given in Acts.

<sup>49</sup> The companions were at least Silas and Luke.

<sup>50</sup> An interesting note here is that Hellerman sees a parallel between the Christ narration of 2:6-11 and Paul and Silas fate in their first visit to Philippi. Both refuses to exploit what is theirs (Paul not stating that he is a Roman Citizen), Both suffered and were humiliated, and both suddenly got vindicated. See hilippi upon the Composition of Philippians 2: 6–11," (2010): 85-102.

<sup>51</sup> This we can learn from the letter to the Philippians (4:15-16). But also in the Corinthian correspondence we hear of the great role model the Christians in Philippi are in giving: 2 Cor 8:1-5. There Paul states that the Christians in Philippi are giving voluntarily according to their means, “even beyond means”, “they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us”.

### 3.2 Paul's situation

When composing this letter Paul is in prison. This is apparent as he four times in the opening of the letter states how he is in chains (1:7, 13, 14, 17). Exactly where Paul's imprisonment is, he does not state.

Traditionally the placing of the composition of the letter has been Rome (ca. AD 60-62).<sup>52</sup> Fee believes that the internal evidence points to Rome. The reasons being that Paul speaks in 1:13 of "the whole imperial guard".<sup>53</sup> But this could also refer to a governor's palace out in the provinces. Another suggestion is Ephesus (ca. AD mid 50-s) A third held view is Caesarea (ca. AD 59-60). We do not know of any "imperial guard" in Ephesus. This however it not the case for Caesarea. There it exists an "imperial guard". But another question is then posed: why does Paul write "that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ" (1:13)? Could he not just say "the imperial guard", rather than "the whole imperial guard". This implies that the palace was of quite a size, and therefore not fitting of Caesarea.<sup>54</sup>

Another obstacle to overcome in determining the provenance is the distance the messengers had to travel for the correspondence to occur. Some say the distance between Rome and Philippi being too great for number of travels to happen.<sup>55</sup> say that the distance between Rome and Philippi. If that should be the case, then it rules out Caesarea which is a far greater distance

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<sup>52</sup> See Joseph H. Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," (*Exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament*; Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2015), 3-4. The dating for the suggestions of Rome, Ephesus and Caesarea all stem from Hellerman.

<sup>53</sup> Gk. *πραιτωρίω*. The word does not need to refer to the imperial guard in Rome. It could also be used of one in a province. Therefore, it does not exclude other places of origin. It is made evident through texts like mark 15:16 and Acts 23.25, neither speaking of the emperor troops in Rome. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 34-37.

<sup>54</sup> The palace in Caesarea would not involve that many people for it to make sense to speak of it being the whole. "The whole", is more fitting to describe a significant number, making it likely that it is referring to Rome. Likewise, the greeting to the saints of the "emperor's household" support Rome as providence. The reason being that Rome it the only place where we know that members of significant families, were Christians. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 36.

<sup>55</sup> The distance between Rome and Philippi being approximately 1300 km. it is reckoned with that the correspondences needs five travels to and from. The shortest distance being between Ephesus and Philippi.

from Philippi. To summarise, the evidence points most to the provenance of Rome for the letter to the Philippians.

### *3.3 Purpose and form of the letter*

The immediate occasion for the letter to the Philippians is the gift which Paul has received from them.<sup>56</sup> It was given through Epaphroditus, their messenger. In returning Epaphroditus back to Philippi, Paul uses the opportunity to form a letter which he can send with him. From the letter itself, we can suggest some elements which were on his mind when composing this letter. The first being an acknowledgment of their gift. Second being exhorting the Philippians to stand together, in the gospel, not being intimidated by them (1:27-30).<sup>57</sup> And further to stand together in unity having the same mindset (2:1-4)<sup>58</sup> The opposition that the church in Philippi meet is believed to be related to the “highly Romanized sociopolitical environment.” in Hellermans words.<sup>59</sup>

Philippi was an imperial colony founded by Octavian and Antony in 42 BC. Archaeological finds from the site reveal a socially stratified population obsessed with status markers such as Roman citizenship, public office, and prestigious titles. Persons of every class competed with their peers for these coveted titles and offices, which the victors then displayed in “résumé form” on inscription erected throughout the colony.<sup>60</sup>

In light of this, Paul has to warn the Philippians not to partake in this “race of honour”. The danger present in Philippi is that the Roman honour culture could oppose the gospel. Meaning This stood in stark contrast with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Paul makes clear in his

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<sup>56</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 4.

<sup>57</sup> “you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.” (1:27-28)

<sup>58</sup> Fee makes a point out of that Paul Exhorts them to “stand firm” (1:29-30) and “have the same mindset” (2:1-2), and repeats it again in (4:1-3) which is the end of hortatory section concluding it. He believes them to frame the two hortatory sections of the letter. The section who also bears similar language and theme.

<sup>59</sup> Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

narration of the Christ given in (2:6-11). There it is highlighted the humility and obedience of Christ.

Another occasion in view is the emperor cult which was very much present in the colony of Philippi. Fee writes about it in these terms:

In a city like Philippi this would mean that every Public event (the assembly, public performances in the theatre, etc.) and much else within its boundaries would have taken place in the context of giving honor to the emperor, with the acknowledgment that (in this case) Nero was “lord and savior.” Which is precisely the place where believers in Christ could no longer join in as “citizens of Rome in Philippi.”<sup>61</sup>

The Christ narration (2:6-11) effectively draws the Philippians to oppose this kind of cult, which proclaim Nero as “lord and savior”. Instead, their allegiance is to Christ as they are citizen of another domain. Hence, they are to proclaim Jesus as Lord. (2:10-11).

We can then say that both Hellerman and Fee suggest that there exist an outer pressure present in Philippi, which affects the Church. Causing them to suffer at the hand of their pagan neighbours (1:27-30). Another cause for unrest is some internal quarrelling. Two women are named.<sup>62</sup> I final purpose that we shall draw attention is the call for advancing the gospel. Fee suggest that this is the main cause. His argument is that if Epaphroditus had not been there, he would have sent Timothy. Why? Because he intended to send Timothy to them anyhow as we learn from 2:19-24. “All of which suggest that in the end, the real purpose of the letter lies with the phrase “your progress in the faith” (1:25), which for Paul ultimately has to do with the progress of the gospel, both in their lives and in their city.”<sup>63</sup>

What then is the form of the letter? Loveday Alexander has made a case for the Philippians to be a “family letter” by undergoing an empirical analysis of a series of family letters.<sup>64</sup> She finds that they share a common pattern. A form which she structures in seven points:

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<sup>61</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> In 4:2 we learn about the struggle between Euodia and Syntyche: “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”

<sup>63</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander, *Letter-forms*, 88-98. Referred to by Fee, 3-4 and Witherington, 19-20.

1. Address and greeting [1:1-2]
2. Prayer for the recipient [1:3-11]
3. Reassurance about the sender and his affairs [1:12-26]
4. Request for the same about the recipients [1:27-2:18; 3:1-4:3]
5. Information about the movements of intermediaries [2:19-30]
6. Exchange of greetings with third parties [4:21-22]
7. Closing health and wishes [4:23]<sup>65</sup>

While there are similarities between the form of “family letter” and the Philippians, they don’t align themselves completely as 3:1-4:9 and 4:10-20 does not fit in this scheme.<sup>66</sup> But that does not exclude it from being classified as a “family letter”, since the “form” of the letter is something that is discovered by scholars, and not a pre-existent form.<sup>67</sup> Thereby I see the letter to the Philippians as to be a family letter. Being full of Paul’s sentiments. Sharing his eruptions of joy and likewise his outcry. Through the letter he speaks of their affairs and his own, sharing personal stories. Evident in the letter is his sincerity in his concern for them.<sup>68</sup> Likewise

### 3.4 Outline

1. Introductory matters (1:1-11)
  - a. Address and greeting (1:1-2)
  - b. Prayers and thanksgiving (1:3-11)
2. Paul’s situation (1:12-26)
  - a. The present – for advance of the gospel (1:12-18a)
    - i. The gospel advances inside and outside prison (1:12-14)

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<sup>65</sup> Fee puts in brackets which corresponds to the Philippians: Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> See *Ibid.*, 3 n. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Example of this is to be found in the opening of the letter: “I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you” 1:3-4. Likewise calling them his beloved: “I want you to know, *beloved*, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel,”. Similar in chapter 4: “Therefore, my *brothers* and *sisters*, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my *beloved*.” 4:1. My italics. Notice here also how he states that they are his joy, crown whom he long for.

- ii. The gospel advances outside prison despite ill-will (1:15-18a)
  - b. The future – for the glory of Christ and the good of the Philippians (1:18b-26)
    - i. Paul’s ambition – that Christ be glorified (1:18b-20)
    - ii. The desired outcome – to be with Christ (1:21-24)
    - iii. The expected outcome – reunion in Philippi (1:25-26)
- 3. The Philippians’ situation: Exhortation to steadfastness and unity (1:27-2:18)
  - a. The appeal to steadfastness and unity (1:27-30)
  - b. The appeal renewed – unity through humility
  - c. The example of Christ
    - i. As God he emptied himself (2:5-7)
    - ii. As man he humbled himself (2:8)
    - iii. God has exalted him as Lord of all (2:9-11)
  - d. Application and final appeal (2:12-18)
    - i. General application – an appeal to obedience (2:12-13)
    - ii. Specific appeal – For the world’s and Paul’s sake (2:14-18)
- 4. What’s next? Regarding Paul’s and their “affairs” (2:19-30)
  - a. Timothy and Paul to come later (2:19-24)
  - b. Epaphroditus to come now (2:25-30)
- 5. Their “affairs” again (3:1-4:3)
  - a. The appeal against circumcision (3:1-4)
  - b. The example the example of Paul (3:4b-14)
    - i. There is no future to the past (3:4b-6)
    - ii. There future lie with the present – knowing Christ (3:7-11)
    - iii. The future is also future -attaining resurrection (3:12-14)
  - c. Application and final appeal (3:15-4:3)
    - i. Application – having a mature mindset (3:15-16)
    - ii. Appeal and indictment (3:17-19)
    - iii. Final appeals to steadfastness and unity (4:1-3)
- 6. Concluding matters (4:4-23)
  - a. Concluding exhortations (4:4-9)
    - i. A call to Christian piety and peace (4:4-7)
    - ii. A call to wisdom -and the imitation of Paul (4:8-9)

- b. Acknowledging their gift: friendship and the gospel (4:10-20)
  - i. Their gift and Paul's "need" (4:10-13)
  - ii. Their gift as partnership in the gospel (4:14-17)
  - iii. Their gift as a fragrant offering (4:18-20)
- c. Closing greetings (4:21-23)<sup>69</sup>

### 3.5 *The integrity of the epistle*

Many scholars believe that the epistle consist of several letters of documents.<sup>70</sup> Reumann is a representative of the many who hold this position (of a partition theory). Believing that the letter to the Philippians consist of several documents. They find problematic transitions between the different parts of the letter. One of them is the transition in 3:1. However, there are no textual evidence for this. Further, I am not convinced that the letter transitions are as problematic. I find that they build well with each other. Fee criticises the partition theory asking why a potentially redactor would leave the sections which supposedly breaks of the letter unnatural. For example, in 3:1 "Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord."<sup>71</sup> Another argument for the partition theory is that the gift that has occasioned the letter is not mentioned before the end of the letter. This is unthinkable for some, who will see this as a separate letter. This view believe that this letter begins with "I rejoice in the Lord greatly" (4:10).<sup>72</sup> The objection to this stance will be made clear when we are to investigating the gift in chapter 4 and 5.

Concurring with Fee "The ultimate reason for rejecting this hypothesis is that the various parts of our current letter hold together so well as one piece."<sup>73</sup> Supporting this is that the opening prayer (1:3-11) predicts the themes that are to be find later in the letter.<sup>74</sup> Another point is that

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<sup>69</sup> This outline is borrowed from Fee, without many alterations. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 54-55.

<sup>70</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 3.

<sup>71</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 21-22. Fee further points out that it makes little sense that λοιπόν, which is repeated again in 4:8 is evidence of multiple letters. For as he makes a point of, it is never explained how the repetition can make little sense if it written by Paul, but make perfectly sense if it is a product of someone else.

<sup>72</sup> If not stated otherwise, I make use of NRSV.

<sup>73</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 22-23.

<sup>74</sup> Among the anticipation that Fee point out it the following: Partnership in the gospel (1:4-5) is anticipating the partnership in giving and receiving (4:10-20). The language of love is pointing ahead to the exhortation of 1:27-28. The longing in 1:7 points to 4:1 "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved."

the two major hortatory section is held together by (a) linguistic<sup>75</sup> and (b) by two paradigmatic narration, namely that of Christ (2:6-11)<sup>76</sup> and Paul (3:4-14). They share the same exhortation to be shape by the paradigm of the Christ event.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, traces of this paradigm will be found throughout the letter.<sup>78</sup>

## 4 The gift in chapter 4.

When diving into the topic of gift which Paul attends to in the last part of his letter, I shall first (1) place the section in context of the letter. See how this part fits in with his thought line. Then (2) I will seek to understand how he acknowledges their gift. What is his immediately response and how does it inflict their relationship?

*<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced<sup>79</sup> in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.*

*<sup>15</sup> You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. <sup>16</sup> For even when*

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<sup>75</sup> For example the both use the phrase “have the same mindset”.

<sup>76</sup> The authorship of Phil 2:6-11, widely referred to as the “Christ hymn”, will be dealt with in chapter 5.1.1. Already I can reveal that I believe it not to be a hymn, but treat it as a narration which tells the story of the Christ event.

<sup>77</sup> This case will I make in chapter 5.

<sup>78</sup> This case will also be made in chapter 5. Especially in 5.3 and 5.4.

<sup>79</sup> NRSV reads rejoice. I choose to read it as a genuine aorist. See note 50.

*I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The gift that occasioned the letter, is only first addressed directly here at the end of the letter. However, this is not the first time it has been brought up. The first reader of this letter would know that his acknowledgement of their gift has already been implied prior to this. In the opening he talks of partnership (κοινωνία) in the gospel (1:5). How they hold him in their hearts (1:7) and being partakers in grace (συγκοινωνούς). In addition, when he brings up their messenger Epaphroditus (2:25-30), he speaks of him ministering to Paul's need (2:25) and trying to make up for what the Philippians could not offer in their service to him (2:30).

Peterman notes there are parallels between the opening and the closing section.<sup>80</sup>

Εὐχαριστῶ (1:3), χαρᾶς (1:4)	Ἐχάρην (4:10)
κοινωνία (1:5)	ἐκοινώνησεν (4:15)
φρονεῖν (1:7)	ἐφρονεῖτε (4:10)
περισσεύη (1:9)	περισσεύειν (4:12 [2x]), περισσεύω (4:18)
πεπληρωμένοι (1:11)	πεπλήρωμαι (4:18), πληρώσει (4:19)
καρπὸν (1:11)	καρπὸν (4:17)
Ἰησοῦ (1:11)	Ἰησοῦ (4:19)
δόξαν (1:11)	δόξα (4:20)

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<sup>80</sup> Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving*, 91-92.

Peterman makes three points out of this parallel:<sup>81</sup> (1) It show that Paul’s mention of their gift was not an afterthought. As he is anticipating it already in the opening. (2) Further it shows the importance of “κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον”, which he believes is most significant for Paul. (3) It proves the point that letter both open and closes with a reference to the gift.

## 4.1 Acknowledging the gift

### 4.1.1 Rejoicing in the Lord

10 Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως

Upon receiving their gift Paul’s immediately response is to rejoice in the Lord (4:10).<sup>82</sup> He even announces how he greatly<sup>83</sup> rejoiced in the Lord.<sup>84</sup> Prior to this Paul has already expressed his rejoice over the advancement of the gospel through is imprisonment (1:18). Further, he exhorted them twice to rejoice in the Lord (3:1; 4:4). Now he demonstrated the same virtue that he wishes to see in them by rejoicing in the Lord.

ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν,

Paul’s reason for joy is stated<sup>85</sup> to be their renewed concern (φρονεῖν) for him. It is most welcomed by Paul, as the adverbial expression “at last”<sup>86</sup> underlines. This indicates that there has been some time since the Philippians has seen to his need.<sup>87</sup> Not that this should be interpreted as Paul has impatiently waited for them to show their concern for him, and now they

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>82</sup> Gk. Ἐχάρην. I choose to read it as a genuine aorist (I rejoiced), and not an epistolary aorist (I rejoice). The first is preferred over the latter since the source of his joy is an incident in the past when he first received their gift. For discussion on Ἐχάρην, See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 428.

<sup>83</sup> Gk. μεγάλως.

<sup>84</sup> Gk. μεγάλως (“greatly”) is a NT Hapax legomena. See Ibid., 428.

<sup>85</sup> Gk. ὅτι, I take this clause to be a noun clause, giving the content for Paul’s rejoice. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 255.

<sup>86</sup> Gk. ἤδη ποτὲ.

<sup>87</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 429.

finally prove it.<sup>88</sup> The following sentences clarifies this: The word ἀνεθάλετε translated as revived, has a botanical reference. It is used of trees and flowers “bursting into bloom again” after a period of dormancy.<sup>89</sup> As the forest come alive again during the spring, their relationship in giving and receiving is revitalised through the gift. How long since they last partook exchanging services, we cannot know for sure, but it is reasonable to believe several years has gone by.<sup>90</sup>

Even though there has gone some time since their last interaction, Paul affirms their dealings. He speaks of their ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, translated as concern for me (Paul). Usely φρονεῖν means thinking, having a mind or mindset about certain things. In this instance with the paring of the preposition ὑπὲρ, it intensifies the verb to mean more than to just “think about”; it conveys caring and concern. Thereby, Pauls perceives their support to be more than just thoughts. The Philippian's care for him is made evident through their gift. Joseph Hellerman believes the usage of φρονεῖν to be deliberate. It is a key verb of this letter used to urge the church to be of the same mind (2:2), having the same mind as Christ (2:5) or to think about things as Paul does (3:15-16). By using φρονεῖν about the Philippians’ concern, Paul includes their deed among the commendable conduct listed above. The mindset that he exhorts them to exhibit is already at display (at least partly), in sending Epaphroditus to him.<sup>91</sup>

ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαιρεῖσθε δέ.

In case they misunderstood and thought Paul was chiding them for holding back on him, he makes his intent clear. Fee makes two grammarly points to back up this understanding: The first has to do with ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ, which he takes as a reference to their concern.<sup>92</sup> The expression

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<sup>88</sup> Some take this to be a disapproval of the Phillipians; see e.g., Brian J Capper, "Paul's dispute with Philippi: understanding Paul's argument in Phil 1-2 from his thanks in 4.10-20," 49, no. 3 (1993): 193-214. “Paul’s tone is virtually condescending, where his gratitude should overflow,” 207.

<sup>89</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 429.

<sup>90</sup> Due to the interval between the places Paul traveled a messenger had to travel a great distance to convey gifts to him. Hence the time gap. Whether he was traveling freely, or in his current situation in imprisonment, there was likely not to often the Philippians had the opportunity to partake in giving and receiving with Paul. Cf. *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>91</sup> With this I do not believe Paul thinks the Philippians already fully attained the desired mindset. Then the exhortations would not be necessary (thinking especially of the exhortations in 3:12-17; here, even Paul admits that he has not fully attained it).

<sup>92</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 430.

picks up the infinitive “to be concerned” and intensifies it (“indeed you were concerned”).<sup>93</sup> Second, the verbs ἐφρονεῖτε and ἠκαιρεῖσθε are imperfects which implies a continuity to the action. Thereby, there is a continuousness in their concern for Paul, at the same time as there was an ongoing shortage of opportunity to demonstrate it.

#### 4.1.2 Being in need in the first place?

11 οὐχ ὅτι καθ’ ὑστέρησιν λέγω, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι ἀνάγκης εἶναι.

What follows is a further elaboration of how Paul receives the gift brought by Epaphroditus. Already he has assured them of their good stand with him, despite the long break in their relationship. Now he follows up with “Not that”<sup>94</sup>, marking another perspective on this matter. For contrary to what one should believe, Paul is not “referring to being in need”. Even though he finds himself in a distressed situation, his joy is not caused by receiving the gift in itself (a gift that would provide for necessities like food to eat).<sup>95</sup>

In maintaining his independence of the church, he comes across as indifferent to their gift. This attitude of self-reliant and the lack of an explicit thank you in response to their support, has led to scholars describing it as a “thankless thanks”.<sup>96</sup> We will return to this question more in the next chapter when we discuss different ways to perceive this gift. But already, there is a point to be made about this matter. The “need” Paul is speaking of is translated from ὑστέρησιν<sup>97</sup>, a word which is only elsewhere in NT found in Mark 12:44 of the widow casting her “mite” out of “penury”.<sup>98</sup> It can be linked with ὑστέρημα in 2:30. The latter speaks of what was lacking in the Philippians service to him. The difference between -ησις and -ημα lies in that the former

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<sup>93</sup> The phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ has been translated in different ways due to its ambiguity. I choose to follow Fee’s interpretation of the phrase. For an overview of different explanations of the construction, see Hellerman, “Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament,” 255-56.

<sup>94</sup> Gk. οὐχ ὅτι.

<sup>95</sup> The government did not provide for the prisoners, meaning they were reliant on support from their network of family, friends and neighbours to supply them with food and similar necessities. The Philippian gift was most likely a big sacrifice for them. See Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 276, 431.

<sup>96</sup> For a good introduction on the question of a “thankless thanks” see Briones, “Paul’s intentional ‘thankless thanks’ in Philippians 4.10-20.”

<sup>97</sup> ὑστέρησιν (acc- sg- fem.) is from ὑστέρησις, “the condition of lacking that which is essential” (BDAG 1044b).

<sup>98</sup> See Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 431, n. 33.

expresses a verbal idea, whilst the latter denotes a concrete expression.<sup>99</sup> “Thus, Paul is not here referring to a specific expression of need, but to “being in need”.”<sup>100</sup> A understanding of the sentence would then be; “in speaking this way, it is not my personal ‘need’ which sets the standard for what I say.”<sup>101</sup> From this, Fee assume that the “lack” in 2:30 is not about the gift itself. Rather it is of their presence that he seeks, which Epaphroditus tries to make up by. This assumption is backed up by Paul clarifying that his joy had not basis in the gift in itself (the reason for his joy is not explained before 4:14-17).

Instead of wording out the cause for his joy he unfolds why he is not in the state of “being in need”; “For I have learned to be content with whatever I have.”. Is Paul exhibiting a Stoic position? The adjective *αὐτάρκης* is a word central to Stoic and Cynic moral philosophers.<sup>102</sup> It is the ultimate goal in Stoic tradition to “live above need and abundance in such a way as to be “self-sufficient”, not meaning that one is oblivious to circumstances, but that the truly *αὐτάρκης* person is not determined by such.”<sup>103</sup> Cynics however, reached their goal of self-sufficient and a state of unaffectedness of the exterior world, through eliminating their possessions.<sup>104</sup> Pauls remark of his contentment is more alike to a stoic philosopher. Seneca for instance, asserts that “the happy man is content with his present lot, no matter what it is, and is reconciled to his circumstances”.<sup>105</sup> While there exist these similarities, Paul utter phrases no Stoic person would do. Such as his emotions that seep through the letter (joy when thinking of them (1:3-4) and over receiving their gift (4:10), his speaking of sorrow upon sorrow (2:27)<sup>106</sup>). More significantly is his proclaiming “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (4:13). This contrasts the Stoic notion of looking into yourself. Paul’s strength is found outside of him, in Christ.

12 οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν· ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν μεμύημαι, καὶ χορτάζεσθαι καὶ πεινᾶν καὶ περισσεύειν καὶ ὑστερεῖσθαι·

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<sup>99</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 257-58.

<sup>100</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 431, n. 33.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 431, n. 33.

<sup>102</sup> See *Ibid.*, 431-432.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

<sup>104</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 258-59.

<sup>105</sup> Hellerman citing Seneca (*De vita Beata* 6), Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 259.

<sup>106</sup> Gk. λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην.

In verse 12 Paul flesh out what he means with being content. He knows what it is to have little and to abound. A knowledge which entails more than a lived experience. The verb οἶδα carries with it the meaning of “to be able”.<sup>107</sup> Thereby his knowledge is not limited to lived experience, but he knows how to live appropriately whatever the circumstance he encounters.<sup>108</sup> ταπεινοῦσθαι (to have little) is the same word used of Jesus in 2:8<sup>109</sup> in his humbling of himself.<sup>110</sup> “for Paul, this verb not only indicates “poverty”, but embraces a way of life similar to that of his Lord (2:8; cf. Matt 11:28)”.<sup>111</sup> Contrasting this lifestyle is the lifestyle of περισσεύειν (to have plenty). περισσεύειν denotes to abound so that you have more than enough.<sup>112</sup> It is used again in 4:18 when speaking of how after receiving their gift, “have more than enough”.

In the next sentence he reverses the order saying that he has “learned the secret of well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.”. Matching οἶδα in the previously sentence he now tells how he has μεμύημαι (learnt the secret) of living through the whole spectre of wealth and poverty.<sup>113</sup> An effect of the repetency through verse 12 is that it Paul makes it apparent that he was not interested in their gift *per se*.

13 πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με.

In verse 13 we come to the ultimate grounds for his contentment. Namely the strength he gets from the Lord.<sup>114</sup> With this he finishes his digression in how he was not actually in need of their gift. “The secret of Paul’s independence was in his dependence on Christ.”<sup>115</sup> Being content is for Paul not accepting everything that happens and trying to stay unaffected by it. Rather he

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<sup>107</sup> BDAG 694a.

<sup>108</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 259.

<sup>109</sup> ἐταπεινώσεν.

<sup>110</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 432.

<sup>111</sup> A lifestyle that he describes in several of his letters; 1 Cor 4:11-13; 2 Cor 6:4-5; 11:23-29; cf. 2 Cor 4:8-9. Ibid., 433.

<sup>112</sup> “To have such an abundance as to be more than sufficient- "to have (much) more than enough, to have overabundance.” L.N., 57.24.

<sup>113</sup> Fee notes that this passage makes goes against Cynics in that Paul is not communicating that he is better of with nothing, but that he can manage both with much and with little. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 433.

<sup>114</sup> ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με. (“in the one who strengthens me”), it is not worded out who the agent whom gives Paul strength, it is certainly intended to be Christ, given the great number of “in Christ” language in this letter, and that it follows Paul’s Christ centeredness. Some manuscripts have Χριστῷ but those are later scribes (F G Ψ Maj syr, Jerome). See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 426.

<sup>115</sup> Gerald F Hawthorne and Ralph P Martin, *Philippians, Volume 43: Revised Edition* (Zondervan Academic, 2018), 266.

assures the Philippians that through Christ, he can face the changes of life, whether to a lowlier life or to a more bountiful living. “All things” refers here to the variety of circumstances and predicaments Paul has found himself in.

### 4.1.3 Affirming the partnership

14 Πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει.

Following the reassurance of his well-being regardless of their favour, Paul returns his attention to their gift. In using the conjunction *Πλὴν* (in any case), the subsequent sentence links up again with the reception of their gift. It is an adversative, and functions to “breaking off a discussion and emphasizing what is importance”<sup>116</sup>. So, even though Paul finds his fulfilment in the Lord, and thereby is not lacking, he still considers what they have done to be a good deed.<sup>117</sup>

Looking more closely, it is their willingness to share in his trouble that he finds praiseworthy. By employing *συγκοινωνήσαντές* Paul returns to the language of opening letter (1:7). In that instance it was about them sharing in grace. Then it was used in affirming that both in his imprisonment and in his defence of the gospel, the Philippians participate in the grace with him.<sup>118</sup> Similar to the case of 4:10-14, Paul grounds his joy (1:3-4) in the partnership they share with him.<sup>119</sup> Their affection for him is evident for Paul, as he writes how they hold him in their hearts. (1:7).<sup>120</sup> Likewise, 4:14 tells of the closeness of their relationship, in that they shared “*μου τῇ θλίψει*”.<sup>121</sup> Speaking of the affliction caused by his imprisonment, Paul includes them by saying they also participate with him in the distress. By sending Epaphroditus to Paul, the

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<sup>116</sup> BDAG 826a.

<sup>117</sup> Fee sees the affirmation of their action being good because it shows their concern, and not because of the gift itself. It is not before 4:18 that he acknowledges the good of the gift. Moreover, he finds the English translation too bland to recount the phrase (*καλῶς* could also mean “beautiful, pleasant, noble, splendid”). See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 437-38.

<sup>118</sup> Gk. *συγκοινωνούς*: «Sharers of the same grace as myself» (BDAG 952d).

<sup>119</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 262.

<sup>120</sup> I follow NRSV which reads the phrase *διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶς* as “because you hold me in your heart.” It is also possible to render it “because I hold you in my heart.” It depends on *με* or *ὑμῶς* is the subject of *ἔχειν*. I think the context justifies *ὑμῶς* as the subject, as it better aligns with how the church is partakers with him, in prison and defense of the gospel. Cf. Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 26.

<sup>121</sup> *μου* is a vernacular possessive, used rarely by Paul. This indicates that Paul employs it with intent. Fee see this usage as a way of emphasizing the togetherness with Paul in the suffering. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 184, 439.

Philippians themselves were willing to share with him, undeterred by their own suffering.<sup>122</sup> It was an expression of their participation in proclaiming the gospel.<sup>123</sup> An honourable act in Paul's view.

15-16 οἴδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππηῖοι, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι, ὅτι καὶ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκη καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δις εἰς τὴν χρείαν μοι ἐπέμψατε.

Paul continues to make us of the language from the opening section, referring to “the early days of the gospel”.<sup>124</sup> A section which underlines their mutual participation in working for the gospel. This time, Paul brings into discourse the sharing of “the matter of giving and receiving”. He makes them remember how it was from the very start, when he first came to Philippi during his second mission trip.<sup>125</sup> Already when he left them, they began to exchange goods and services with each other, supplying Paul with means to carry out his work for the gospel.<sup>126</sup> He further commends them by make known that at that time, they were the only church who would partake in the act of giving and receiving. What's add on even more to this acknowledgement, is that he highlights how they even sent help when he arrived at Thessalonica.<sup>127</sup> His first stop even before leaving Macedonia. And that they did so several times. With the remark of “no church” and “except you alone”, Paul accentuates how particular the relationship between the Christians in Philippi and himself is.<sup>128</sup>

Although Paul has expressed his contentment regardless of the gift (4:11-13), he now confirms that their gifts indeed has met some of his needs.<sup>129</sup> In this case he does not use the same word

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<sup>122</sup> Paul tells of the Philippians suffering in 1:29-30; 2:17.

<sup>123</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 263.

<sup>124</sup> Correlates to 1:5; “sharing in the gospel from the first day until now”.

<sup>125</sup> Fee sees likeness between the Paul's instruction to “remember”, and how Seneca thinks giving and receiving should look like: “In the case of a benefit... the one should straightway forget that it is given, the other should never forget that it was received” (Ben 2.10). In this case, Paul is reminding them of their deed, as he should never forget it, and it is ill-judged by the Philippians to bring it up. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 439 n. 11.

<sup>126</sup> «The phrase likely refers to Paul's ministry in Corinth, when Christians from Macedonia supported Paul (2 Cor 11:8-9; Acts 18:5)”. Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 263.

<sup>127</sup> Philippi and Thessalonica are cities in the Macedonian province. The latter the being the largest. The distance between them is approximately 145 km. While it was a considerable trip, it was a minor one compared to travelling to Corinth or Rome. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 445.

<sup>128</sup> In the next chapter we would look more closely at this relationship. Discussing how Paul perceives their bond. Exploring contexts to understand their ties.

<sup>129</sup> This instance he speaks of their gifts when he first was in Thessalonica. He also admits that their latest gift filled (at least somewhat) his needs (2:25).

for “need” as in 4:11; *ύστερησιν*, but *χρείαν*<sup>130</sup>, a more common word for “need”.<sup>131</sup> *χρείαν* is picked up again in 4:19 where God will all their “needs”.<sup>132</sup> We will return to discuss how Paul treats the reciprocity of the gift.

17 οὐχ ὅτι ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα, ἀλλ’ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν.

Once more it is stressed how he did not seek the gift. He interrupts his line of thoughts with another moderation to his acknowledgments.<sup>133</sup> His reciting of their history of giving and receiving should not be interpreted as a manner of appealing for more help. Different this time from 4:10-11, is that he refers to it as a gift.<sup>134</sup> Using *δόμα*, he speaks more directly of the matter.<sup>135</sup> The clause *οὐχ ὅτι* (not that), specified in the first instance how to understand his circumstance and need.<sup>136</sup> This time it serves to identify his wishes for them. He seeks<sup>137</sup> not their gift, but “the profit that accumulates to your account”.<sup>138</sup> Paul speaks in metaphor about their spiritual growth.<sup>139</sup> This aligns itself with the desire Paul already has expressed in 1:9-11 (praying for their love to grow richer and being fruitful) and 1:25 (expectation of their progress in faith). Participating with Paul in exchanging gifts is a good deed which produce fruit<sup>140</sup> that will increase to their eschatological reward. Meaning that by giving to Paul, partaking in the grace with him, sharing in the distress, they would produce fruit which accumulates to their reward at the coming of Christ.<sup>141</sup> Admittedly, in dealing with the gift, Paul is more interested in how it serves as evidence of their “spiritual health”, rather than how it aids his “physical health”.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *χρείαν*: That which is lacking and particularly needed - "need, lack, what is needed". L.N. 57.40.

<sup>131</sup> The See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 446 n. 30.

<sup>132</sup> See *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>133</sup> As in 4:11 he uses *οὐχ ὅτι* (not that). See *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>134</sup> When addressing their gift in 4:10-13, he speaks of their concern. Now he speaks more directly about it, calling it a gift.

<sup>135</sup> τὸ δόμα. “The term was used for a wide range of gifts and services, particularly in the context of friendship.” Hellerman referring to Marshall, Emity “in Corinth”, 223-24: Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 266.

<sup>136</sup> See *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>137</sup> Gk. *ἐπιζητῶ*. Used both about how he does not “seek” their gift, but do “seek” the accumulation to their account.

<sup>138</sup> A more literal translation of *ἀλλ’ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν* is “but I seek the fruit that increases into your account”.

<sup>139</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 447.

<sup>140</sup> Gk. *καρπὸν* is used in 4:17 being the thing that increases to their account.

<sup>141</sup> For Paul, they are his eschatological reward (2:16, 4:1). See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 447.

<sup>142</sup> See *Ibid.*, 448.

#### 4.1.4 A fragrant offering to God

18 ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα καὶ περισσεύω· πεπλήρωμαι δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν, ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας, θυσίαν δεκτὴν, εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ.

Finally, Paul is admitting fully their gift to him. Since 4:10 Paul has been talking about their relationship and his current situation, speaking of their concern and their history of giving and receiving without talking openly of the current gift. Now, he is treating the gift which occasioned the whole letter. He states how he has been “paid in full and have more than enough”. ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα “paid in full” could be interpreted as a receipt in a commercial sense; “Here, then, is my receipt for a sum paid in full”.<sup>143</sup> The context being their internal history of giving and receiving. Here, Paul is emphasising the superabundance of their gift. A gift that that meets all his needs, so now he has more than enough.

Although Paul highlights the overflowing of their gift, there is also a possibility that Paul to understand “paid in full” in relation to Paul’s contentment in 4:10-13. No matter how large or small their gift was, it was more than enough, since he has learned to be content with whatever he has.<sup>144</sup> Both solutions give sense, and it is difficult to render one out. Paul speaks of how he περισσεύω (abound) after receiving their gift. It is the same verb used in 4:12 about how he has learned to live in abundance.<sup>145</sup> He even speaks of being fully satisfied.<sup>146</sup> Still, it could very well be that he went hungry due to a small size of their gift. If we are to rely on the Thessalonian correspondence, it reports of how he “worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you” (1 Tess 2:9)<sup>147</sup>. This was the case even though the Philippians sent him help for his need more than once (4:16) when he first stayed in Thessalonica. A conclusion to the size of their gift would only resort to speculation. “Perhaps Paul intended to elicit both

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<sup>143</sup> BDAG 102c. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 266-67.

<sup>144</sup> “The combination ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα was used among Stoic writers as a near equivalent for αὐτάρκης.” Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 267.

<sup>145</sup> 4:12 περισσεύειν: Verb, pres. act. infin.

<sup>146</sup> Gk. πεπλήρωμαι πληρόω Verb 1 sg. perf. pass. indic.; L.N. 35.33: To provide for by supplying a complete amount - "to provide for completely, to supply fully.". "To be fully provided for " may be expressed as " to have all that one needs."

<sup>147</sup> 1 Tess 3:8 Reports the same story.

themes.”<sup>148</sup> In any case, the importance for Paul lies not in the gift *per se* as he has underlined several times.

In fact, Paul views their gift to be a fragrant offering to God. He swaps a commercial metaphor for the one of worship; “Paul suggest that the ultimate recipient of their service to Paul is none other than the living God”.<sup>149</sup> Their gift is to be understood as a fragrant offering<sup>150</sup> for God. The words *ὄσμην εὐωδίας* is frequently used about offering throughout the OT, about Noah’s offering (8:21), in relation to Israel’s cult (Exod 29:18, 23, 41; Lev 1:9, 13).<sup>151</sup> Moreover, it is used about Christ (Eph 5:2; 2 Cor 2:14, 16).<sup>152</sup> This idea is repeated by using *θυσίαν* (sacrifice), a word associated with sacrifices in the ancient religions and also used in the OT about animal and grain sacrifices. Hellerman draw attention to the spiritualizing of the word already happening in the OT; “a crushed and humbled spirit” (LXX Ps 50:18-19 [EVV 51:16-17]), is pleasing to God. In NT the kind of sacrifices that could be included in “Spiritual sacrifices” is sharing of possessions (Hebr 13:16) and the worshippers’ entire life (Rom 12:1). Their gift to Paul, is therefore to be seen as an offering directed to God. Paul ensures them that God finds their offering, acceptable and pleasing.<sup>153</sup>

Fee sees Epaphroditus taking on a priestly role in this imagery.<sup>154</sup> Paul has already spoken of Epaphroditus ministry as a “priestly service” (2:25-30). The image being Epaphroditus as a priest, bringing forth a sacrifice on behalf of the church. A fragrant offering which is to be burnt and thereby producing an “aroma” that is pleasing to God. Thus, the success of the gift is not determined by it meeting any needs but are pleasing to God. The image corresponds to Paul’s own declaration of what he seeks in v. 17.

19 ὁ δὲ θεός μου πληρώσει πᾶσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

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<sup>148</sup> Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 267.

<sup>149</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 449.

<sup>150</sup> Gk. *ὄσμην εὐωδίας*.

<sup>151</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 268.

<sup>152</sup> Language used of Christ offering: “gave himself up for us”, “a fragrant offering” and “sacrifice to God”.

<sup>153</sup> “Acceptable and pleasing”: Gk. *θυσίαν δεκτὴν*.

<sup>154</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 451-52.

With this, Paul concludes the subject of their gift, which started by “rejoicing in the Lord” and now finishes by placing the responsibility of reciprocity on God.<sup>155</sup> He announces that God is the one who will satisfy their every need. In effect, Paul detach himself from the responsibility of returning in kind (which was the etiquette of exchanging gifts) and promises that “my God” is the one to uphold the reciprocity. As Paul’s “need” (4:16) have been “fully satisfied” (4:18), now the Philippians need will be fully satisfied.<sup>156</sup>

In doing so he is commending the Philippians for their good deed. I will further not her that the lack any *Εὐχαριστῶ* dos does not imply that Paul is not grateful.<sup>157</sup> For there between friends did not utter the words thank. It was not the norm in friendships. Therefore, a lack of *Εὐχαριστῶ* suggest that Paul and the Philippians perceived their relationship as a friendship. This will in turn lesser the seemingly tension between the content and joyful which Paul expressed at the same time.

What exactly is the “need” which will be filled? The verb *πληρώσει* is in future tense which some read together with *ἐν δόξῃ* (in glory) as an eschatological fulfilment.<sup>158</sup> Just like the gift produced an eschatological reward, their needs are to be fulfilled in glory. This understanding depends on reading *χρείαν* different then three verses earlier.<sup>159</sup> Given the context of a material gift that span from 4:10-18, the phrase *πᾶσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν* (every need of yours) must also include material needs as Fee points out.<sup>160</sup> The clause *πᾶσαν* is an addition which can seem unnecessary.<sup>161</sup> Unless Paul wants to include every aspect of their needs, both their material needs, and spiritual needs. This point is backed up by the fact that they are to be satisfied “according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus”. A phrase which underlines the abundance and extensiveness of the fulfilment of their needs. The generous description of the Philippians gift

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<sup>155</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 452-53.

<sup>156</sup> *χρείαν*, is used in 4:16 of Paul needs that they met. And now about the needs of the Philippians. *πληρώσει* 3 sg. fut. act. indic. From *πληρόω* “to make full”, BDAG 828a. It is used both in 4:18 about how Paul is fully satisfied by their gift, and now in 4:19 about how God will fully satisfy them.

<sup>157</sup> Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving*, 158.

<sup>158</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 452 n.12.

<sup>159</sup> The “needs” which Paul is referring to in 4:16 is obviously his material needs. See Briones, “Paul’s intentional ‘thankless thanks’ in Philippians 4.10-20.”, 61.

<sup>160</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 452-53.

<sup>161</sup> Why not just write “your needs”?

in the previously verse, is exceedingly surpassed by the depiction of Gods return. A return which not only is from the wealth of God himself but is in proportion to his wealth.<sup>162</sup>

20 τῷ δὲ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ ἡμῶν ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

A natural response to the riches of glory in Christ, which God graciously will give them, is a doxology.<sup>163</sup> He praises God who now is not only “my God”<sup>164</sup>, but “our God and Father”.

## 5 The mindset of giving

maybe argue here that the mindset that Paul set forth is defined in 2:6-11. (Fee 191)

### 5.1 The mindset of Christ (2:5-8)

#### 5.1.1 Context of the passage.

The passage at hand narrates in a beautiful way, the life, death and exaltation of Christ Jesus. With its somewhat poetic nature and its exalting view of Jesus, this pericope has been viewed as a hymn.<sup>165</sup> This was an almost unanimous agreement among scholars from the time Lohmeyer proposed it early 20<sup>th</sup> century until recent decades (often holding the hymn to be an insertion).<sup>166</sup> Lately this consensus has been challenged, calling into question the supposedly

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<sup>162</sup> BDAG 512c; «according to». See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 270.

<sup>163</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 455.

<sup>164</sup> 4:18

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 192-94.

<sup>166</sup> Lohmeyer proposed this in his book *Kyrios Jesus: Ernst Lohmeyer, Kyrios Jesus : eine Untersuchung zur Phil. 2,5-11* (vol. 1927-28:4; Heidelberg: Winter, 1961). He holds the view that the pericope was an pre-Pauline hymn. Other again believes that it is a post-Pauline composition, added to the letter by an editor. See Årstein Justnes, "Un-Pauline Paul? Philippians 2.6-11 in Context," 86, no. 1 (2012): 145-59. 145.

hymn characterization and un-Pauline language.<sup>167</sup> Going forward I will treat this passage as a the rest of the letter in assuming that Paul fashioned it by his terms and wishes.<sup>168</sup>

It is recognised that the passage can be divided in two parts: v. 6-8 and v. 9-11. The first part pertaining Christ's self-humbling and part two his exaltation.<sup>169</sup> The former part is to be examined as it concerns itself with the mindset of Christ.<sup>170</sup>

*<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>171</sup>*

This pericope is set at the beginning of the hortation part of the letter. Paul has given an account of his circumstances (1:12-26) and now turns his attention to the Philippians' situation (1:27-2:18). In this section Paul put forth two concerns in the opening sentence (1:27-30) which drives the whole: "(1) concern for the Philippians' steadfastness and unity, (2) in the face of opposition and suffering."<sup>172</sup> Whereas the last section (1:12-26) was primarily narrative, this section is an

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<sup>167</sup> Among scholars who oppose a hymnic stance are Michael Peppard, "Poetry, 'Hymns' and 'Traditional Material' in New Testament Epistles or How to Do Things with Indentations," 30, no. 3 (2008): 319-42.; Benjamin A. Edsall and Jennifer R. Strawbridge, "The song we used to sing?: hymn 'traditions' and reception in Pauline letters," 37, no. 3 (2015): 290-311.; Gordon D Fee, "Philippians 2: 5–11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?," 2 (1992): 29-46.; And Årstein Justness, "Philippians 2: 6-11 as a christological psalm from the 20th century," (2017): 410-24.

<sup>168</sup> Yet, if it were the case that these verses constitute a hymn, Morna Hooker advocates effectively that it at least should be regarded as Pauline: "For even if the material is non-Pauline, we may expect Paul himself to have interpreted it and used it in a Pauline manner.": M.D. Hooker, "Philippians 2:6-11", *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 152.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 194-96.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 194. Christ being the active part of v. 6-8 in his self-humbling. In 9-11 Christ is the passive part as God is the one who exalts his Son. Since the subject to examine is the mindset elicited by Christ, I will focus on v. 6-8.

<sup>171</sup> Considering the pericope as a narrative text, I cite it here without regard to a hymnic structure.

<sup>172</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 155.

imperative one.<sup>173</sup> Centre of this section lies the story of Christ, put forth as *the* example of mindset which the Philippians should have.<sup>174</sup>

The immediate context of this pericope is an exhortation for unity in humility to be of the same mind (2:2)<sup>175</sup> and having the same love<sup>176</sup>. The following verses expand on what the implications this has for the Philippian community. Involving to not look “your own interest, but to the interest of others” (2:4).

*Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,*

Linking the call for unity and humility with the example of Christ is the imperative sentence: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (2:5). For the third time since he started addressing the Philippians’ situation, he has made use of the word *φρονεῖτε*.<sup>177</sup> Two times in 2:2 and now in here in 2:5. The latter points back to the former verb and its’ elaboration through 2:2-4.<sup>178</sup> This attitude or way of thinking is something he wants them to have in themselves<sup>179</sup> in their community. Now, *φρονεῖτε* is further qualified by the clause *ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* “which [was] also in Christ Jesus”. In the passage that succeeds Paul describes the desired attitude he wants his readers to ascertain to. An attitude that is found in the story of Christ Jesus, humbling himself, becoming a man and taking on the cross.

### 5.1.2 Who was in the form of God

*ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων*

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<sup>173</sup> “Of the 14 verbs in this section, 10 are imperatives, while 4 others are implied imperatives (στήκετε, 1:27; φρονήτε, 2:2; γένησθε and φαίνεσθε, 2:15).” Ibid., 156, n. 6.

<sup>174</sup> See Ibid., 156.

<sup>175</sup> Gk. φρονήτε.

<sup>176</sup> Gk. ἀγάπην.

<sup>177</sup> In 2:2 he uses φρονήτε, 2 plur. pres. act. subj. and φρονοῦντες, pres. act. part. masc. plur. nom. Whilst in 2:5 the verb is in imperative; φρονεῖτε 2 plur. pres. act. imp.

<sup>178</sup> Τοῦτο is referring to the φρονεῖτε that has been mentioned in the verses before. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 107.

<sup>179</sup> Gk. ἐν ὑμῖν. Could also be “among yourselves”. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 108.

With the opening “who<sup>180</sup>, though he was in the form of God”, the narrative of Christ is taken all the way back to his pre-incarnated.<sup>181</sup> Here Christ is the one who was *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* “in the form of God”. *μορφῇ*<sup>182</sup> is a much-debated word. It is both used here about “God”, and in the next verse about *μορφῇ δούλου* “form of a slave”. One cannot translate these two clauses independently of each other. A translation has to render meaning in both contexts. Fee believes that *μορφῇ* in this context has a dual usage: it characterizes both the reality of being God, and it conveys the act of Christ becoming human expressed through a metaphor “took on the form of a slave”.<sup>183</sup> He takes “form” to be understood not as “the external features by which something is recognized, but of those characteristics and qualities that are essential to it. Hence it means *that which truly characterizes a given reality*.”<sup>184</sup> Even though he settles on the word “form”, he renders the meaning to be best translated by NIV: “Who, being in very nature God”. Another position is held by Hellerman who contests an understanding of *μορφῇ* as “nature”.<sup>185</sup> Part of his argument is the lack of evidence in Hellenistic Greek to support the reading of “nature”. Rather the majority of instances *μορφῇ* and its cognates denotes “outwards appearances”.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore he points to the usage of *μορφῇ* in Jesus’ transfiguration *μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν* (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2). To say that Jesus has gone through an ontological transformation during the transfiguration is to stretch the text too far. Hence the word should not denote any change in the inner being, but relates to an outward state. Hellerman argues convincingly that *μορφῇ* has to do with the outward appearance of something. This begs the question does Paul only intended to say that Jesus had the appearance of God? Hellerman himself thinks not and understands the clause to convey Christ’s “preincarnated social status publicly marked out by his clothing appropriate to his divine rank”<sup>187</sup>. A statement that does

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<sup>180</sup> Gk. ὅς. The relative pronoun links the imperative φρονεῖτε, with the narrative of Christ.

<sup>181</sup> Not all agree that this verse speaks of the pre-incarnated or pre-existence of Christ. Things that supports this case is among other that (1) ἐκένωσεν “he emptied himself” makes little sense if it speaks of Jesus as already human, (2) that the same person who “was in the form of God” and being “equal with God”, later is said to “be made/born into human likeness” and (3) “and being found in human appearance” stands in contrast with “who being in the form of God”. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 202.

<sup>182</sup> *μορφῇ* is only found in NT here and in Mark 16:12. This makes it difficult to determine what Paul intends with this wording.

<sup>183</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 203-05. For Fee this is confirmed further by the next clause which speaks of equality with God as something not to ἀρπαγμὸν.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 204. Italics is Fee's.

<sup>185</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 109-11.

<sup>186</sup> BDAG, 659c: “Form, outward appearance, shape”

<sup>187</sup> Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 110.

not exclude a divine understanding of Christ but focuses on the expression of his being rather than the state of it.

### 5.1.3 Avoiding exploitations

*οὐχ ἄρπαγμαδὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,*

Those who read the first clause to speak of Christ's inner reality or outer expression, will also understand this next clause in separate ways. So, for Fee τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ "equal with God" is taken to underline the ontological state of Christ, repeating what the first line said. That Christ was in a state of being equal to God.<sup>188</sup> In his own words:

Back then to Paul's point with this "not" clause, which is twofold (= two sides of a single concern). First he is picking up on, and thereby reaffirming, what he said in the initial participial phrase, that Christ before his incarnation was "in very nature God"... Paul intends the infinitive phrase ("to be equal with God") to *repeat in essence the sense of what preceded* ("being in the form of God").... Second, Paul is thereby trying to set up the starkest possible contrast between Christ's "being in the form of God" and the main clause, "he emptied himself".<sup>189</sup>

In contrast, Hellerman will not understand this to speak of ontological matter, but rather reflect a rank or position.<sup>190</sup> He register that Paul deploys language which is similar to other ancient sources who "...associate the idea of equality with God with the rank or position of a king or emperor."<sup>191</sup> In these parallels between a ruler and god, the comparison relates to the rank of the individual. A rank "which entitles him either (a) to receive public honor or (b) to exercise authority."<sup>192</sup> There are no indication that these texts points to an equality of substance or nature. Rather it is kings who exercise godlike power or are to receive public honour just as the gods.

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<sup>188</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 204-09.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208. Italic is Fee's.

<sup>190</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 111-13.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

To understand the meaning of “equality with God” we have to see it in light of the rest of the clause. The verb *ἠγήσατο*<sup>193</sup> is the same used in 2:3 about “regarding other as better than yourselves”, in this instance in is about Christ not regarding equality with God to be *ἀρπαγμὸν*. Just like *μορφῆ*, the literature on this word is substantial, due to the difficulty in determining its meaning. *ἀρπαγμὸν* is only found here in NT, and scarcely outside NT.<sup>194</sup> Its cognate *ἀρπαγή* is found three times in NT (Matt 23:25; Luke 11:39; Hebr 10:34) and is rendered as “robbery”, “a seizing” or “booty”. The noun *ἀρπαγμὸν* could be understood in a negative sense with “booty”<sup>195</sup>, or in a more positively with “a piece of good fortune, windfall, prize, gain”<sup>196</sup>. Most scholars agree that it is to be taken in the latter meaning.<sup>197</sup> Yet, there remain a question if *ἀρπαγμὸν* refers to “(a) something already possessed in his preincarnate state, i.e., something that has “already been seized and is waiting to be used” ... or (b) something that “has not yet been appropriated”<sup>198</sup>.”<sup>199</sup> The consensus, with a few exceptions, believes it to be the former that renders best meaning in this passage. That Christ’s equality with God was something that he already possessed but choose not to exploit. This interpretation suites itself best with a non-substantial take on “equality with God”, where it deals with Christ position and not is inner being. For as Hellerman asks: “How does one exploit one’s essence?”<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, it is easy to see how Christ could have exploited his position to exercise power in his own interest’s.

Through this narration of Christ’s self-humbling to the cross, Paul effectively draws a distinction between the emperor cult and gods whom the Philippians were familiar with, and Christ who did not seize his own advantages.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore he is putting forward Christ as the one example to follow. *οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν* corresponds to “not look to your own interest” in 2:4. As he has urged them to have a *φρονῆτε* “mindset”, which *ἠγούμενοι* “regards” other as better than yourselves, he now has repeated his appeal to have a *φρονῆτε* “mindset” which Christ has, who

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<sup>193</sup> ἠγήσατο 3. sg. aor. mid. indic. From ἠγέομαι. BDAG, 434b: «think consider, regard».

<sup>194</sup> See Jerry L Sumney, *Philippians: a Greek student's intermediate reader* (Hendrickson Pub, 2007), 46.

<sup>195</sup> BDAG, 133c.

<sup>196</sup> BDAG, 133c.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 112. “Robbery” does not fit this context because, how can anybody rob God of his position or status?

<sup>198</sup> BDAG, 133d. English translations which implies this is “a thing to be grasped” [RSV, NASB, ESV].

<sup>199</sup> Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 112.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>201</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 208-09.

did not *ἡγούμενοι* “regard” being equal to God as something to be used to his own advantages. Grasping and seizing one’s benefits is in sharp contrast with the act of kenosis that the next verse deal with.

#### 5.1.4 kenosis

*ἀλλ’ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφήν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι ἐύρεθείς ὡς ἄνθρωπος*

Verse seven starts off with the conjunction *ἀλλ’* which contrast the *οὐχ* of verse six, marking that it is not this... but this.<sup>202</sup> Instead of *ἀρπαγμὸν*, Christ *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν* “emptied himself.”<sup>203</sup> *ἐκένωσεν* plays on *κενοδοξίαν* in 2:3 in that Christ chose to empty himself, rather than to live for himself and just receive “empty glory”.<sup>204</sup> It displays the mindset of Christ, being not concerned by grasping and chasing empty glory, but rather choosing to empty himself. It represents a dichotomy between *ἀρπαγμὸν* and *ἐκένωσεν*. Not seizing on your own advantages but emptying yourself. The kenosis movement does not necessarily entail that Jesus became less of a deity or got rid of something that he possessed. Fee argues against those who think this is a necessity.<sup>205</sup> The reason being that *ἐκένωσεν* does not need a genitive qualifier that states what he empties himself of, only that he emptied himself. The modifier to *ἐκένωσεν* is given with the modal participle that follows *μορφήν δούλου λαβὼν* “taking the form of a slave”. Thus, the emptying is not referring to Jesus losing something, but is a metaphor for the implications of incarnation, namely a lowering of rank and status.<sup>206</sup>

The next two clauses contain a participle which further explains *ἐκένωσεν*.<sup>207</sup> They depict the actions which happens simultaneously with the emptying. First being *λαβὼν* in *μορφήν δούλου λαβὼν*. It elaborates on how Christ “emptied himself”, by “taking the form of a slave”. As stated

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<sup>202</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 113-14.

<sup>203</sup> By using the reflexive pronoun *ἐαυτὸν* (3. masc. sg. acc.), it is indicated that it was Christ himself who emptied himself.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 114. *κενοδοξίαν* (*Noun. fem. sg. acc.*) exist of *κενός*, *δοκέω*.

<sup>205</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 210-11.

<sup>206</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 114-15.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 114-115. Both participle is a nom. sg. masc. aor.: *λαβὼν* is act. from *λαμβάνω* and *γενόμενος* is mid from *γίνομαι*.

above, this phrase is a parallel to “was in the form of God” in 2:6. The focus is not on the inner reality of Christs’ being after the incarnation. Christ did not become the nature of a slave. Like verse six which talks about the equal status Christ has to God, he now has the status and rank of a slave. Peter Oakes summarizes: “Between being like God and being like a slave, there is the widest status gap imaginable by Paul’s hearers. Paul is saying that for Christ to become human meant that deep a drop in status.”<sup>208</sup> Through the incarnation Christ took on the “form of a slave”, possessing the position of a person without rights, privileges or any other advantages.<sup>209</sup>

The second participle is *γενόμενος* in, *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος*. Christ did not become “an actual slave”, but he became an actual human being.<sup>210</sup> The first phrase refers to the change of status effected by the incarnation, whilst the second reflect the ontological reality of Christ becoming human. The relation between these two clauses is that the latter further modifies the former.<sup>211</sup> It clarifies in what way Christ “emptied himself”, “taking the form of a slave” by “being born in human likeness”. The imagery is carried on further with the expression *καὶ σχήματι ἐρέθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος*<sup>212</sup>, shifting the focus back on the exterior features with the word *σχήματι*.<sup>213</sup>

*ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου,*

Next verse launches the final step in Christ’s kenosis from being in the form of God, to dying on the cross. The emphasis is moved from the attitude of Christ in verse six (*ἡγήσατο*), to expand on the implications this mindset had for Christ, resulting in actions of *ἐκένωσεν* and *ἐταπείνωσεν*.<sup>214</sup> These expressions does not simply refer to an attitude, but as shown with

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<sup>208</sup> P Oakes, "Philippians: From People to Letter (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 110)," (2001). 196.

<sup>209</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 213.

<sup>210</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 115. Pace Fee who says that “form of a slave” set out the true nature of his incarnation and the second phrase “being born in human likeness” states the factual side. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 213. When speaking of the nature of Christ’s incarnation, I find it more convincing to speak as Hellerman does: That the ontological change is in Christ becoming human.

<sup>211</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 196.

<sup>212</sup> This time *ἄνθρωπος* is in sg vs. plural in the clause before. In doing so, Paul emphasizes the human nature of Christ. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 116.

<sup>213</sup> *σχήματι* (neut. sg. dat.) functions similar as *μορφῇ* in verse verse 6, meaning form, outward appearance. See *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>214</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 116.

ἐκένωσεν, it implies a lowering of status and giving up one's advantages. The clause ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν "he humbled himself" denotes the same voluntary nature of Christ's descension as in ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν.<sup>215</sup> Both clauses are modified by a participle. In the latter instance ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν is followed by a narration of how he humbled himself, "by becoming obedient to the point of death". The object of Christ's obedience not stated, which can indicate that the emphasize is not on the object of obedience but the act itself.<sup>216</sup> It reflects the language of the near context in a call to humility and unity (2:2-4) and a of obedience (2:12-13).<sup>217</sup>

θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

This last phrase "even death on a cross" concludes part one of the passage. It connects with the preceding verse in that it modifies the previously clause.<sup>218</sup> The obedience until death was the death of a cross. By using the conjunction δὲ, the clause intensifies the means of Christ's death.<sup>219</sup> Not focusing on the exhausting pain or the burden of a bearing the sins of the world. Instead, the attention is centred around "the social stigma of the crucifixion, as a status-degradation ritual designed publicly to shame the crucified individual and all who would associate with him."<sup>220</sup> This aligns itself with the rest of the narration when it comes to language and theme. The link between δούλου and σταυροῦ is apparent for a person living under the Roman era. Crucifixion was widely known as the death of a slave.<sup>221</sup> No doubt this was something a Philippians reader would recognize. Therefore, it was a complete scandal for the one possessing the status of God, to experience the cruel and humiliating death on a cross. Citing Hellerman: "As a crucified slave, Christ has reached the utter nadir of his apparent descent into social oblivion."<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> They both use the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτὸν (masc. sg. acc.). See Sumney, *Philippians: a Greek student's intermediate reader*, 48.

<sup>216</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 117.

<sup>217</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 216.

<sup>218</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 195-96.

<sup>219</sup> δὲ could also function to introduce an explanatory sentence. See Sumney, *Philippians: a Greek student's intermediate reader*, 48.

<sup>220</sup> Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 117-18.

<sup>221</sup> So much that it came to be a technical expression for the death of crucifixion. See *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

In narrating the story of Christ, Paul is not bearing in on the implications Christ's obedience has for the Philippians, but on the ramification for Christ himself. Paul draws out this kenosis movement of "emptying himself" until the death on a cross. In doing so Paul is not lingering on the saving effect of the Christ event.<sup>223</sup> The passage continues with God's exaltation of Christ (2:9-11). The one who has humbled himself down to the lowest has been brought up and given the highest honour. If Paul wanted to teach the Philippians about the soteriological effect this event had, we should have expected him to comment on this in the surrounding of this passage. However, this pericope is enclosed in an exhortation section, where Paul urges them to them behave and think in certain ways.

Paul is effectively setting forth a paradigm for the Philippians. Christ being the archetype of this paradigm of declining to exploit in favour of emptying oneself out. It is a dichotomy of evolving around exploiting and self-emptying. This pattern found in Christ, is the behaviour that Paul wants the Philippians to adopt (2:5). Just as Christ declined to exploit his privileges but decided to empty himself. So must the Philippians also do, not regarding their status or privileges as something they should exploit according to their own interest. Rather they are urged to empty themselves, being prepared to take on the role of a servant for the sake of the other. All this in obedience to God.

Going forward I will suggest that Paul is expanding on this paradigm, unfolding the impact it has for himself, his co-workers and the Philippians. In speaking of himself (and his friends), Paul establishes models for the Philippians to follow. To find support for this, I will seek to find a link in theme and language between the paradigm of Christ and the examples that Paul provides. Paying attention to any resemblance of language from the Christ-narration. Language that that convey meanings of value and status.<sup>224</sup> In addition, the interest is in instances where Paul uses *φρονέω*, *ἡγέομαι* and cognates to inform of the desired attitude or behaviour. We shall begin with investigating Paul's autobiographical portion in chapter three.

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<sup>223</sup> With Christ event I mean the event that took place through Jesus' incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection.

<sup>224</sup> Especially interested in *φρονέω* and *ἡγέομαι*,

## 5.2 Transformation to a Christ-like mindset

### 5.2.1 From Saul to Paul (3:2 – 11)

In chapter three Paul shares biographical details about himself when he draws the Philippians' attention to their opponents.<sup>225</sup> In doing so he utilizes his own experience and emphasizes how the Christ event has shaped those. He warns the readers to be aware of “the dogs” and “evil workers” and those who “mutilate the flesh!” (3:2), and reasons by offering a better story.<sup>226</sup> He writes against these opponents by stating that it is “we who are the circumcision, who boast in Christ Jesus”. Whereas Paul can exhibit the Jewish identity markers which the opponents speak of (3:4-6), he will rather count them as nothing compared to knowing Christ (3:7-8). In similar fashion, Paul would lay aside his own righteousness in favour of the one received in Christ (3:9). He wants to know Christ even if it means sharing in his suffering and death (3:10). His hope is that he then may attain the resurrection from the dead (3:11).

The narrative offered here traces the effect of Paul's encounter with the Christ event.<sup>227</sup> Contrasting the opponents he frames his former advantages in seven items: (1) “circumcised on the eighth day”, (2) “a member of the people of Israel”, (3) “of the tribe of Benjamin”, (4) “a Hebrew born of Hebrews”, (5) “as to the law, a Pharisee”, (6) “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church” and (7) “as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”<sup>228</sup> Fee observes that of the seven items described, the first four recount the status given him through birth, while the last three items list the position he obtained through his achievements.<sup>229</sup> Although he has “no

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<sup>225</sup> Most likely the opponents are “Judiazers”. It is difficult to know if Paul speaks of the same group in 2:15 and 3:18-19, or if they consist of several groups. I will return to this topic when I examine the mindset of the adversary. Fee suggests that 3:2 speaks of a group of Jewish Christians who want to “Judaize” the Philippians. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 293-97.

<sup>226</sup> Just like the recounting of his Damascus experience in the letter to Galatians, Paul is using his own story to demonstrate the shift of paradigm that took place in the Christ event. I refer here to the paradigm shift that took place in Paul's life on the road to Damascus. It is referred to in Galatians 1-3 where Paul, as Barclay states, “relativizes the previously cultural capital” and “refuses the pre-constituted system of worth”. Seeing the practice of circumcision and law-abiding in light of the Christ event. See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 362-400.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Dorothea H. Bertschmann, “Is There a Kenosis in This Text?: Rereading Philippians 3:2-11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn,” 137, no. 1 (2018): 235-54. p. 240.

<sup>228</sup> For an survey over the seven items, see Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 305-10.

<sup>229</sup> See *Ibid.*, 305.

confidence in the flesh” Paul shows the Philippians that if he were to compete with these “Judaizer”, he would have won at their game.<sup>230</sup> It is pointless for Paul to compete in this game as he counts all this as loss because of Christ (3:7).<sup>231</sup> This picks up the declaration of boasting in Christ Jesus and having no confidence in the flesh. For Paul, the proper circumcision is not that of the flesh (“mutilating the flesh”), but of the heart (“who worship in the Spirit of God”). Paul’s identity is no longer centred around Jewish religious practice but is now centred around Christ. Essentially for Paul is not his heritage or his achievements but his relation to Christ.

### 5.2.2 Paul’s kenosis?

Do we in this passage detect a kenosis similar to that of Christ? Should we perceive Paul’s readiness to regard his advantages as nothing, in the light of the kenosis in 2:6-11? Through literary methods we can recognize that the passages 2:6-11 and 3:2-11 shares some of the same vocabulary: *συμμορφιζόμενος* and *θανάτω* in 3:10 corresponds to *μορφήν* and *θανάτου* in 2:6-8.<sup>232</sup> The narration of Christ and Paul further shares a similar pattern setting up their status and benefits, before refusing to exploit them.<sup>233</sup> Both could boast of their initial status (Christ being in the form of God and Paul representing the personification of a zealously Jew). Despite this, they both *ἡγέομαι* “regard” their benefits as something they should not use to their own advantage. Yet, the trajectory of the two stories does not fully match.<sup>234</sup> The difference being that Christ and Paul had their own two separate reasons for not regarding their advantages as something to exploit. Christ did so out of his character, putting the needs of others before his

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<sup>230</sup> As Paul states, he has reasons for being confidence in the flesh. Gk.: *καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί*. See *Ibid.*, 302-3.

<sup>231</sup> Gk. *ἡγοῦμαι* (*ἡγέομαι*) 1. sg. pres. mid. indic. *ἡγοῦμαι* occurs three times in the short span of the verse 3:7-8. It appears twice in relation to the Christ narration: *ἡγούμενοι* 2:3 “regard others as better than yourselves” and *ἡγήσατο* in 2:6 “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited”. We shall look more into the resemblance of language between 2.6-11 and 3:2-11 in the next two chapters.

<sup>232</sup> See Bertschmann, "Is There a Kenosis in This Text?: Rereading Philippians 3:2-11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn." p. 237. Bertschmann has written an article where she examines if there exist a kenotic in Phil 3:2-11.

<sup>233</sup> See Paul S Cable, "IMITATIO CHRISTIANORUM," 67 (2016): 105-25. p. 116.

<sup>234</sup> Pace Cable who regards the trajectory of the two stories to be similar, only diverging with the difference in initial status. He puts the kenosis of Paul prior to “knowing Christ”, which has the result of turning upside down the chronological of the story. Cable, "IMITATIO CHRISTIANORUM." p. 116-117.

own (2:3-4), emptying himself out (2:7).<sup>235</sup> Paul on the other hand renounces his advantages because of Christ (3:7). It is not a voluntary act of kenosis, giving up one's privileges. For as Bertschmann argues convincingly: "The moment of renunciation expresses a fierce gesture of discarding prior values, triggered by the "knowledge of Christ." This knowledge is the all-surpassing gain that effects the nullification of past achievements and values. This has no parallel in Christ's own humble self-emptying."<sup>236</sup> Through the enactment of the Christ event on Paul, the priority of grace is in focus. It was by a graciously act of God that Paul is enabled to know Christ and thereby enacting the mindset of Christ. Or in the words of Bertschmann: "This reading resists the attractive shortcut from Christology to ethics and instead reminds us that, before there is "acting" in Christian ethics, there is always "being acted upon."<sup>237</sup> No doubt the example of Paul still stands. He still functions as a role model which the Philippians should follow (3:15-17). The reason being that he enacts the efficacy of the Christ event. Being an example of one who is transformed by the Christ event. Paul now manifests the mindset of Christ, that was brought about by a graciously encounter with Christ. Not yet displaying the mindset of Christ fully, but he is striving onwards to obtain it, because Christ Jesus has made him his own (3:12).<sup>238</sup>

### 5.2.3 Recalibrating the worth system

Instead of labelling 3:2-11 as Paul's kenosis movement, it is more precise to name it a recalibration of worth system. In these verses Paul is giving an account for his reconstruction of his value system initiated by an encounter with the Christ event. A reconstruction that involves a deconstructing and reconstruction of identity. As we have noted, Paul is not rejecting

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<sup>235</sup> Christ not living for himself, which entails empty glory (κενοδοξίαν), but chooses to empty himself out (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν). See chapter 5.1.4.

<sup>236</sup> Bertschmann, "Is There a Kenosis in This Text?: Rereading Philippians 3:2-11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn." p. 253.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>238</sup> While Cable differs in understanding the trajectory of the stories of 2:6-11 and 3:2-11, he is sharing the same stress on the primacy of Christ. He speaks of this in terms of primary and secondary model. "Therefore, Paul sees himself not as a primary, controlling example in his own right, but as a fellow struggler with the Philippians toward the goal of Christlikeness." Cable, "IMITATIO CHRISTIANORUM." p. 117.

his Jewish heritage when setting up a polarity between his “confidence in the flesh” (3:4) and “knowing Christ Jesus” (3:8). He admits that he, even more than the “Judiazers”, could “have confidence in the flesh”. As Bertschmann observes: “what the Judaizing missionaries advocate was fully owned by Paul, either by birth or by performance: circumcision, an unblemished Jewish genealogy, Pharisaic zeal for the law to the point of persecuting the church, and blamelessness on the law’s own terms”<sup>239</sup>. Paul was in possession of all this and could still make use of it. He knows that he could take advantage of his benefits elevating himself. However, Paul decides to regard those assets and merits as loss “because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus” (2:8). The former goods are to be regarded as *ζημίαν* “loss” and *σκύβαλα* “rubbish”, not because he considered them inherently bad, but because they are rendered meaningless in face of knowing Christ.<sup>240</sup> Paul is not driven to Christ because of any realisation of hollowness in his previously life. “He proposes a radical change of paradigm by which God in Christ uproots people from their prior identities and relocates them in the precarious eschatological identity of the Christ event.”<sup>241</sup>

One can make the case for several strands of grace to be visible here. First, the priority of grace as Paul is first being “acted upon”. It is not Paul who create for himself a new identity, deciding that the former is not sufficient. On the contrary, it is God who relocates him, supplying a new identity. Second, the efficacy of grace in that “knowing Christ” is the trigger which enables this transformation of identity. It provides Paul with the footing which from he can press onward. Allowing him to pursue the mindset of Christ (3:8-14). Third, the superabundance in grace is expressed through contrasting “loss” and “gain” between Paul’s former and present life: “I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8). Even though knowing Christ involves sharing his suffering and death (3:10), knowing Christ is a far greater gain (cf 2:21; 3:10). This is further confirmed by the linkage between grace and suffering given in chapter 1: “For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well” (1:29).

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<sup>239</sup> Bertschmann, "Is There a Kenosis in This Text?: Rereading Philippians 3:2-11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn." p. 236.

<sup>240</sup> See Ibid., 246-47

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 253.

Furthermore, the act of Christ can be understood as an incongruous gift, recalibrating the system of worth.<sup>242</sup> The gift replaces the former system of worth with a new one. Barclay sees this recalibration of worth to be urged by Paul in the letter to Galatians.<sup>243</sup> Just like the Philippians, the Galatians are confronted by a “Judaizing” of their faith. Opponents who advocate the circumcision and practice of Torah.<sup>244</sup> Hence the recalibration of worth is in that case, the gift of Christ given incongruously to a former system of worth. A system which required the cultural capital of being a Jew and “keeping the Torah”. Anyone who wants to practice the Torah is therefore “denying the essence of the Christ-event as an unconditioned gift”.<sup>245</sup> Likewise, in Philippians Paul is demonstrating through his own life, that the replacement of the worth system does not hinge on any former cultural capital.<sup>246</sup> The Christ event which recalibrates his worth system, is a gift bestowed regardless of any worth of the recipient. He does not mention any impact his former identity has for this to take place. The gift is incongruous as it looks apart from any previously held worth system and presents a new one rooted in the Christ event. For Paul there is a tremendous mismatch between his former and current worth system. In Paul’s own words: “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (3:7-8).

Paul’s intentions in 3:2-11 is not to instruct the Philippians in ethical matters. Instead, he is speaking of the soteriological effect the Christ event has for Paul. He is commenting on the grounds which the ethical instructions are given. That is an identity rooted in Christ. Any conformity to Christ suffering and death has its origin in this.<sup>247</sup> Thus, the relocation of identity comes prior to any exhortation. A relocation which centres around Christ, seeing the true treasures to be found in Christ. His mindset is one transformed by Christ. From this vantagepoint, Paul can be content no matter the circumstances (4:11-13). “The secret of being

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<sup>242</sup> This can be seen as a parallel expression to the “relocating of identity as Bertschmann uses. I will use them almost interchangeable, depending on the context and what I aim to say.

<sup>243</sup> See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 388-400.

<sup>244</sup> See *Ibid.*, 288-89.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>246</sup> He counts the former cultural capital as rubbish. The gift of the Christ event is given prior to and regardless of any action done Paul, as we have seen.

<sup>247</sup> See Bertschmann, "Is There a Kenosis in This Text?: Rereading Philippians 3:2-11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn." p. 247-48.

well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need” (4:12) is taught through an encounter with the Christ event. The system of worth becomes Christ centred, thus all one’s treasures is now found in Christ.

### 5.3 *The mindset of the adversary*

Paul’s mindset is starkly contrasted with that of the adversaries mentioned in this letter. We have already seen how Paul problematises the “Judiazing” group who “mutilate the flesh” (3:2). He cautions the readers to *Βλέπετε*<sup>248</sup> “beware” of the group who boast in their flesh.<sup>249</sup> In his effort of warning the Philippians, Paul makes plain the mindset which are undesirable and destructive (in effect putting up a warning sign). He contrasts it with what is admirable and good that are to be found in the models he put forth. We are to survey both the unfavourable and the favourable examples, recognising the mindset which they exhibit and how Paul uses their examples to guide the Philippians. First, we are to start with the negative examples before we in the next chapter look at the commendable examples.

Then we need to detect where in the letter Paul writes about the opponents. Fee make out five different texts where opponents are mentioned:<sup>250</sup> (1) 1:15-17 Paul writes about those who “proclaim Christ out of envy and rivalry”, “intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment”. Here Paul is apparent that Paul is referring to opponents who are in close approximation to himself. (2) In 1:27-28 Paul are in turn writing about the opponents present in Philippi. Who the Philippians are not to be intimidated by. (3) In (2:21) Paul is speaking of

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<sup>248</sup> Βλέπετε (βλέπω) Verb 2. plur. pres. act. impera. “watch, look to, beware for” (BDAG, 179a-d). Βλέπετε is used both about the κύνες “dogs”, the κακοὺς ἐργάτας “evil workers and the ones who κατατομήν “mutilates”.

<sup>249</sup> Although, it is not explicitly stated that the opponents boast in their flesh, it is implied. When Paul says that we (meaning Paul and the Philippians) represents the circumcised, “who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus”. Is the ones who put “no confidence in the flesh”. The implication being that the “judiazers” are the one who put their confidence in their flesh, by advocating for circumcision. See Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 302-03.

<sup>250</sup> To find the opponents in the letter, Fee uses the method of “mirror-reading”. He make us of Barclay’s seven criterions to detect opponents. They are set out in the method chapter (1.3). here I will give a short recap: (See chapter 1.3 for a fuller description.) “(1) type of utterance); (2) Tone; (3) *Frequency* ; (4) *Clarity*; (5) *Unfamiliarity*; (6) *Consistency*; and (7) *Historical plausibility*.” Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 7. I will also refer to the list of opponents that Fee make out. Ibid., 8-10.

all those who “are seeking their own interest, not those of Jesus Christ”. Unclear of who these opponents are, it is at least clear that they are not in Philippi, since they are contrasted with the example Timothy gives. (4) In 3:2-3 Paul warns: “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!”. As mentioned previously, Paul is warning the Philippians about a group of “Judiaziers”. (5) In 3:18-19 Paul talks of the “enemies of the cross of Christ” who he mentions with tears. “Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.” Again, the group lacks any concrete hallmarks which we could determine them by.

Out of the five texts, (3) and (4) are not to be examined in the following section. (3) Since it has been dealt with already and (4) since the reference is short and unclear (with reference to what kind of group it points to), it will be dealt with when we take for us the example of Timothy.

In 1:15-17 Paul sets out two kinds of people. They both preach the gospel both the difference is in their attitude.<sup>251</sup> One preaches out of “envy<sup>252</sup> and rivalry<sup>253</sup>”, the other “from goodwill”. To see the dissimilarities between these two groups F. Thielmann will help us:

#### **The rivals**

Preach Christ (vv. 15,17)

Out of envy and rivalry (v. 15)

And selfish ambition and pretence (v. 17)

Supposing (v. 17)

That they thus cause trouble for Paul  
in chains (v. 17)

#### **The colleagues**

Preach Christ (v. 15)

Out of goodwill (v.15)

And love (v. 16)

Knowing (v. 16)

That Paul is where he is to defend the  
gospel (v. 16)<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 47.

<sup>252</sup> Gk. φθόνον (masc. sg. acc.).

<sup>253</sup> Gk. ἔριν (fem. sg. acc.). «ἔριν is always used in NT of “disputes that endanger the Church”». Hellerman citing H. Geisen *EDNT* 2.52d) see Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 48. Fee points out that the paring of ἔριν and φθόνον «occurs together elsewhere in the vice lists of Gal 5:20-21 and Rom 1:29.» Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 119.

<sup>254</sup> Witherington adapts this from Thielmann, *Philippians*, p. 61. See Ben Witherington III, *Paul's letter to the Philippians: A socio-rhetorical commentary* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 81.

As we can see, the two groups preach the gospel in contrasting ways. The rivals possess all the negative traits, acting out of envy and rivalry, doing so with selfish ambition and pretence. All this to cause trouble for Paul. Together their traits add up to an unfavourable attitude which stand against the mindset of Christ. In comparison, the colleagues enjoy all the traits that joins the mindset of Christ. Being that they act out of goodwill in accordance with love. It is apparent for any reader of this letter, which sentiment is the desired one. Surprisingly for Paul, he rejoices anyhow, as the gospel is being preached regardless of the motivation.<sup>255</sup>

In 1:27-28 Paul is exhorting the Philippians to live in “a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ”. They are to “standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.” In this instance it is the opponents of the Philippians Paul is speaking of. He mentions that they now “are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.” (1:30). For the Philippians it is obvious what Paul is referring to. We have to resort to guessing. A qualified suggestion is presented by Fee who think Paul is alluding to the oppression from Roman citizens.<sup>256</sup> Philippi being a roman colony, was made up by both Roman and Greek citizens. Fee suggest that the through the emperor cult that was present in the public gatherings, the Christians of Philippi was pressured on the matter of allegiance (who did the Christians owe their allegiance to?) The equation of the Philippian’s struggle, with the one Paul experience at the moment, could mean that they both faces opposition from the Roman empire. In contrast with the opponents surrounding Paul (1:15-17), we are not informed by what kind of mind or behaviour opponents of the Philippians have. Only what should be important for them is to stand together, in one spirit, striving together with one mind, for the faith of the gospel.

In 3:18-19 Paul writes about those living “as enemies of the cross”. Paul says further of them that “Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things”. This description has spurred many suggestions to whom Paul is

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<sup>255</sup> I do not believe that Paul maintaining a position where the attitude does not matter. This stands in sharp contrast with the rest of the letter. Especially thinking the importance of a desired mindset that goes throughout the letter. Rather the joy is rooted in that the gospel is preached. Paul is willing to suffer under these rivals, because in doing so he suffers for the sake of the gospel. Cf. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 124-25.

<sup>256</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 167.

talking about.<sup>257</sup> Proposing opponents like those already present in the text of 1:15-17, 1:27-28, the “Judaizers” in 3:2-4 or deciding some other adversary. In this search for an adversary, the most fruitful suggestion is that it speaks in generic terms of anyone who walks contrary to the way of the Cross, the way which Paul has shown through is personal narrative earlier in this chapter.<sup>258</sup>

Yet, this search is perhaps best left in the background for the interest in Paul’s rhetoric throughout these verses. Karl Olav Sandnes advocate this: “The key to a proper understanding of this passage and vv. 18–19 in particular is not the presence of opponents, but Paul’s rhetoric.”<sup>259</sup> By examples and contrast-patterns, he instructs the Philippians to live accordingly to their identity as heavenly citizens. Instead of concerning the discourse about the opponents, Sandnes suggest that Paul draws on the *belly-topos*<sup>260</sup>, contrasting the lifestyle of belly-devotee, who practice the Epicurean self-love, with the instruction to be ready to empty oneself out. Paul warns of a conduct which is wasting their citizenship for the sake of one’s own comfort and pleasure. Who represents the opposite of true friendship, not putting others interest ahead one’s own. Thereby they display the antithetic of the examples given by Paul and his friends. The belly-worshippers denies the cross as they oppose any kind of suffering.<sup>261</sup> The cross being the utmost representative of suffering, is therefore an enemy to them (as they are to the cross). In Sandnes own words: “belly-worshippers do not wage war against selfish desires and are accordingly unprepared for the labours which necessarily precede the future vindication and

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<sup>257</sup> Fee list up many possibilities that Scholars have proposed. Both that Paul is talking about opponents inside the universal church and outside of it. Both being part of the Philippians church and standing on the outside. See *Ibid.*, 367. Hellerman for instance, believes them not to be a part of the Philippians church, as Paul would not speak of πολλοὶ “many” when directed at this small church who he previously has commended. But they consider themselves as Christians as Paul would not likely be moved to tears over pagan opponents. See Hellerman, “Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament,” 215-16. While Witherington don’t close the possibility that Paul is speaking in general terms of Christians who does not conform to the way of the cross, he is proposing that Paul refer to the “Judaizers” as in 3:2-4. See Witherington III, *Paul's letter to the Philippians: A socio-rhetorical commentary*, 215.

<sup>258</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 374-75.

<sup>259</sup> Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and body in the Pauline epistles* (vol. 120; Cambridge University Press, 2002), 162.

<sup>260</sup> Sandnes draw attention to three ideas concerning Belly-topos: “(1) Belly-devotees are concerned only with earthly things and the pleasures of the moment. In this way they constitute a contrast to the athletes whose life is oriented to do what their goal and purpose require of them. Athletes thus lead a purposeful life; Paul urges his converts to follow their example. (2) Belly-devotion involves shameful living, usually associated with sumptuous meals accompanied by excess in eating, drinking and love-making. A figurative extension of these physiological needs is well attested, and Paul makes use of it here. (3) Belly devotees are not reliable citizens to whom questions of the common good can be entrusted. Always seeking an easy life, they are not prepared for the necessary costs of being a citizen. Epicurean self-love and true citizenship are incompatible.” *Ibid.*, 162-64.

<sup>261</sup> See *Ibid.*, 162.

transformation of the heavenly citizens.”<sup>262</sup> The Philippians are exhorted to not be like these people who worship their belly, only setting their mind on earthly things, and only seeking what satisfies the need of their own belly. Instead, as heavenly citizen they are to imitate Paul who was ready to conform to Christ’s suffering and death trusting that Christ will “transform the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory” (3:21).

To summarize our short survey: Through these contrast-patterns of the adversaries and role models, Paul is urging the readers of the letter to subject themselves to the pattern of Christ. Warning them of a conduct of self-interest and immediately satisfaction that comes from earthly things. Not occupying themselves with satisfying their own bellies. Rather they should strive together<sup>263</sup> imitating the example found in Paul, exhibiting the mindset which puts the interest of the other ahead of oneself, being ready to conform to suffering and death of Christ.

#### ***5.4 Giving an example, Paul and his co-workers as role models***

Having given an account for Paul’s encounter with the Christ event (and in that his transformation) and surveyed the contrasting mindset present in the adversaries, we will now look more closely at the positive examples Paul provides his readers. Role models put forward for the readers to imitate. The notion here is not a mimicking of actions but taking the ideal (the mindset of Christ) and applying it to their own behaviour.<sup>264</sup> A helpful guide to Paul’s usage of examples in his exhortations is given by Cable:

Paul frequently appeals to examples in his letters. In the most explicit cases, Paul encourages his readers to ‘imitate’ or ‘become imitators’ (μιμέομαι or γίνομαι + μιμητής), or to follow a τύπος (‘example’), most commonly with the apostle himself as the example. The *concept* of imitation in Paul, though, is more pervasive than the

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>263</sup> Gk. Συμμιμηταί (masc. pl. nom.) consist of σύν and μιμέομαι. “fellow imitator” (BDAG, 958a). Phil 3:17. It is only used in Gk. Literature. See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 212.

<sup>264</sup> Cable cites A. A. Brant notes in ‘The Place of Mimesis in Paul’s Thought’, *SR* 22 (1993), 297. See Cable, "IMITATIO CHRISTIANORUM." p. 107, n. 13.

explicit *vocabulary* of imitation. In some cases, Paul uses neither the μιμέομαι word group nor τύπος but still appears to be calling for the following (or the avoiding) of an example. For instance, we can discern appeals to example in Paul's exhortation to 'honour' certain types of people, or in his exhortations to 'watch carefully' (σκοπέω) certain others. In other cases, Paul's literary presentation of groups or individuals, including himself, implies that such people serve as examples.<sup>265</sup>

We have already noticed how Paul communicate value and urging the Philippians to act or think in certain ways.<sup>266</sup> Now we are to observe how Paul make us of himself and his co-workers Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples. We shall start with Paul, who we earlier have observed. Then it was in the interest of establishing a notion of a recalibration of worth system in Paul.<sup>267</sup> This time we will look further outside the pericope of 3:2-11.

#### 5.4.1 Paul – rejoice in face of opposition

Paul repeats through his letter how the readers are to use him as a role model. Writing how they should "join in imitating me" (3:17) and "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me" (4:9).<sup>268</sup> No doubt Paul has little problems with using his life and experience as examples for the readers.

In 1:12-26 Paul is offering a report of his circumstances to his readers. What can come as a surprise, given his imprisonment, is how he perceives the situation. He rejoices, that his imprisonment has actually contributed to the spread of the gospel. (1:12-14) This reveals Paul's system of worth, as his joy over the progress of the gospel supersede any ill feelings he has over

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<sup>265</sup> Cable, "IMITATIO CHRISTIANORUM." p. 108. The italics are the authors.

<sup>266</sup> In chapter 5.2 I have sought to show that Paul puts forward a worth system centred in and by Christ. Likewise in chapter 5.3 I have suggest that Paul informs and exhort the Philippians through honouring some conduct and warning against others. They go to show that Paul uses the concept of imitation in several instances in this letter (I think of 1:15-18, about Paul and his opponents; 2:19-24, about Timothy as we soon shall investigate; and 3:2-11, about Paul's autobiographical story.)

<sup>267</sup> In chapter 5.2 I seek to establish this idea that through the graciously act of Christ, Paul's whole system of worth is relocated in Christ. This is communicated by Paul through a narration of his life.

<sup>268</sup> In 4:9 when Paul encourages the Philippians to follow his example, he even promises that in doing so, the God of peace will be with you.

his impoverished situation. Similar, Paul is not deflected by ill doers who take advantage of his strained circumstance. On the contrary, he is rejoicing because these persons are still preaching the gospel, being tools for the progress of the gospel.

Furthermore, Paul is hard pressed between his desire to be with the Lord, and his eagerness to help the Christians in Philippi. For him being with the Christ is so much better, even though it entails his death. Nevertheless, the ruling which prompt him to choose to stay is the interest of the other. Paul is thereby putting his need in second to the Philippians need. Since he considers it is better for them that he comes to help them progress in faith. This anticipates the exhortation to “look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” (2:4). A theme which is to be found also in the Christ narration (2:6-11) and the rest of the letter.

In 2:17 Paul speaks of him being “poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith”. He speaks with the imagery of OT sacrifice about his effort for the Philippians. That they may progress in faith. The metaphor is that of a Levitical priest, who minister the worship in the temple.<sup>269</sup> Doing so on their behalf. Even more, Paul is also the libation, which is to be poured out on the ground as the practice was.<sup>270</sup> He does not want his effort to be in vain but hopes that the Philippians will hold “fast to the word of life” (2:16). These imageries form a depiction of Paul emptying himself out, in the effort for the progress of the Philippian’s faith.

#### 5.4.2 Timothy seeking the interest of Christ

*<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> All of them*

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<sup>269</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 251-54. Fee suggest it to be a OT metaphor, not that of pagan cult. Thinking that they libitation and sacrifice refers to them both suffering in each way (1:27-30).

<sup>270</sup> See Hellerman, "Philippians : exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament," 139-40. There could be several ways to understand what the image of libation and sacrifice. Witherington suggest that the sacrifice of the Philippians is their gift to Paul (4:18). Then the libation of Paul is the smaller sacrifice which is to be poured over the lager sacrifice offered by Philippians. Witherington III, *Paul's letter to the Philippians: A socio-rhetorical commentary*, 164-65.

*are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.* <sup>22</sup> *But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.* <sup>23</sup> *I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me;* <sup>24</sup> *and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.*<sup>271</sup>

In this section Paul is preparing the Philippians for the a visit from Timothy.<sup>272</sup> By stating that he *οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχω ἰσόψυχον* “has no one like him”, Paul is elevating Timothy, in effect grabbing the reader’s attention to what comes next. That is, no one else is so concerned in the welfare of the Christians in Philippi as Timothy. This echoes Paul’s urging to “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.” (2:3). Just like Paul, Timothy is displaying the mindset that is to be found in Christ. Indeed, this is supported by the following verse. Here, Paul writes about *οἱ πάντες* “all of them”, as in the group who could not match Timothy in his affection for the Philippians. They are “seeking their own interest, not those of Jesus Christ.” By setting up a contrast-pattern, it is implied that Timothy is seeking not his own interest, but “those of Christ.”<sup>273</sup> It is unclear who these people who seeks their own interest are, but they serve as a contrast to Timothy, promoting him over all the others.<sup>274</sup> What adds further to this is that Timothy has proven his worth (2:22). As he has served with Paul, the gospel. Thus, Timothy is demonstrating that for him the gospel has precedence over all other things.

### 5.4.3 Epaphroditus risking his life for Christ

<sup>25</sup> *Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my need;* <sup>26</sup> *for he has been longing for all of you, and*

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<sup>271</sup> I cite the whole pericope as it does not take up much space in comparison to the passages of Paul in 1:12-26. And I see the benefit of reading it as a whole. The same goes with the pericope about Epaphroditus in chapter 5.4.3.

<sup>272</sup> The statements about Timothy in these verses functions as a “letter of commendation”. Even though Paul is not sending the letter with Timothy, as Epaphroditus is carrying out that, Paul is preparing them that he also will send Timothy to them. See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 262-63.

<sup>273</sup> Yet again we are finding the act of regarding other as more important, putting their needs in front of one’s own. (2:3-4).

<sup>274</sup> The contrast is given with the conjunction *δέ*, which contrast Timothy with *οἱ πάντες* “all the others” in (2:1).

*has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup> He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. <sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup> Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honor such people, <sup>30</sup> because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.*

Paul has found it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi and sends him with this letter. In this section Paul is giving an account for the movement of the intermediaries, namely their messenger Epaphroditus.<sup>275</sup> Paul is inserting “a letter of commendation” of their own messenger. Something that “regularly appears in letters from the Greco-Roman period to “introduce” the bearer of the letter to the one(s) addressed.”<sup>276</sup> As strange as this seems, we get to familiarize ourselves with Epaphroditus, observing the qualities which Paul praise him for.

While Epaphroditus is the messenger to Christians in Philippi, he is introduced by Paul as his brother, co-worker and fellow soldier. Similar to Timothy, Epaphroditus has been full of concern for his fellow Christians in Philippi. In his duty as the messenger of Philippi he almost died. Epaphroditus is risking his life to minister for the needs of Paul. In doing so, Paul states that he is doing the work for Christ. Thereby Epaphroditus almost becomes a martyr while performing the duties which was laid upon him. All this amount to a new reckoning of Epaphroditus. The Philippians should now see him as a role model, as he is risking his life for the sake of Christ.<sup>277</sup> Willing to empty himself in service of the other (cf. 2:4, 6-8). Paul urge the Philippians to “honor such people” (2:29).

Paul sends Epaphroditus back knowing that the Philippians will rejoice at seeing him again. This goes to show that Paul is willing to let go of those who can minister to his needs. He considers it to be more important that the Christians in Philippi can experience the joy of receiving Epaphroditus back in good health, than himself having people who can minister to his needs. Not that he counts Epaphroditus’ help as worthless. On the contrary, as he is stating

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<sup>275</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 3-4. Fee suggest that through commending Epaphroditus, he is offering praise to the Philippians. Because Epaphroditus is their representative, carrying out the mission of the Philippians.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Paul evaluating of his own life in 1:20-26.

how Epaphroditus was working for Christ (2:30). It is important to underline that Paul really had use of Epaphroditus, both as a friend and as a co-worker/fellow soldier. But he was willing to let go of the benefit of having Epaphroditus nearby. This is rooted in his recalibration of worth system. Paul is not regarding Epaphroditus' contribution as rubbish<sup>278</sup> *per se*, but for Paul it pales in comparison to the joy that the Philippians and Epaphroditus share when Epaphroditus finally returns. Again, this shows how Paul puts the interest of other before his own (as in 2:4).<sup>279</sup>

## 5.5 Implications of the mindset

Having surveyed the letter in the effort to discern the concept of the mindset of Christ, it is time to return to the gift section in chapter 4. First, we shall summarise some of our findings from chapter 5.:

Through the narration of the Christ event (2:6-11), Paul is putting forward the mindset which the Philippians also should have in themselves. The story centres around the down trajectory of Christ's kenosis. He "who was in form of God", decided not to exploit any advantages which that entailed. Rather he emptied himself out, taking the position of a slave,<sup>280</sup> becoming human and lowering himself all the way to the death on a cross (a slave's death). Christ's mindset which is revealed through this story, is the mindset which Paul urge the Philippians to have. This mindset centres around the dichotomy of exploiting and self-emptying.<sup>281</sup>

This dichotomy represents a different paradigm than one previously known.<sup>282</sup> In order for a shift of paradigm to take place, the believers are not to re-enact the kenosis of Christ. Instead, it depends on an encounter with the Christ event. The basis being a graciously act of God upon the believer. Paul is setting forth his story to show this shift of paradigm in the believer (3:2-

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<sup>278</sup> To use the language of 3:7-9.

<sup>279</sup> We have already seen that he puts others need Infront of his own in relation to the circumstances in prison (1:12-18 and 1:20-26).

<sup>280</sup> Or in the word of NRSV: "form of a slave".

<sup>281</sup> Gk. ἀρπαγμὸν and ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν.

<sup>282</sup> Not for Christ, but for the believers.

11). Here it becomes apparent what this shift of paradigm entails. That is having one's identity relocated in Christ, recalibrating the system of worth. This gives Paul a whole new perspective on what he former held as estimable. Now he renders his former status and prestige as loss, because knowing Christ is surpasses this every way possible. This new identity is also enabling him to pursue Christ and conform to the mindset of Christ. Although Paul admits that he has not already obtained it, he presses on to make it his own (3:12). He encourages the Philippians to join him in this (3:14-17).

He puts forward Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself as examples of people who have had their system of worth transformed by the Christ event. They now serve as role models for the Christians in Philippi. As the mindset of Christ is apparent in them. The examples he presents revolve around the dichotomy of exploiting and emptying found in the Christ event (2:6-11). Paul and his co-workers serve as examples of people who self-empty rather than exploit. They are contrasted with the adversaries who exploit rather than practice self-emptying.

With renewed sight, we shall now consider Paul's standpoint in regard to the Philippians gift. Carrying the insights from chapter 5 and applying them on the gift exchange. Observing if they make any sense in relation to Paul's treatment of the gift brought by Epaphroditus.

When receiving the gift from the Philippians, Paul his rejoicing greatly (4:10). We have seen that this is rooted not in the gift *per se*, but in their concern for him being evident through their gift (4:10). It is good that their concern is materialized (4:14) is it accumulates fruit to their account and serves as is proof of Gods work in them (4:17). Paul is fully satisfied with their gift which is a pleasing sacrifice to God (4:18). God is the one who bears the responsibility to reciprocate (4:19). Mean

First, we shall notice Paul's declaration of joy. The numerous eruptions of joy that this letter is so famous by, spring out of the recalibration of worth. Paul walks according to the new paradigm. Not seeking the treasures and satisfactions of the world, in contrast with the belly-devotees (3:18). Paul has experienced something so much better than what the earthly things has to offer. Knowing Christ surpasses everything he former knew. He puts on the mindset of Christ, not concerning himself with the advantages and riches that he may exploit (food and money being part of it). He is now ready to empty himself of everything in order to gain Christ (3:8). In face of the Christ event, he is willing to suffer and bring himself low. Paying more

attention to others interest than his own's. This means that food, money and other such things are just mundane matter for Paul. He has already stated how he counts everything as rubbish for the sake of gaining Christ. For him they have no value in themselves, only what they can achieve. What is now valuable is the treasures found in Christ. This shift enables Paul to be content no matter the circumstances. No matter how little or how much he has. For through the encounter of Christ, he has learned "the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need." (4:12). The recalibration of worth system has lead him to declare that "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (4:13). Paul is not worried by the changing of circumstances.<sup>283</sup> This gives the grounds for him to always rejoice in the Lord (4:4).<sup>284</sup>

In the context of 4:10 Paul's rejoice is sparked by the Philippian's concern. It is not their gift *per se* that Paul joy revolves around. We have already seen that Paul's joy is over their concern which is evidence of Gods work in them.<sup>285</sup> Paul does not have his eyes on his circumstance but is looking after their affairs. He expresses interest in what could gain them. Exhibiting the mindset of Christ who seek the interest of others, rather than to look for his own interest (2:4). And that which could gain them, is that they could harvest the fruit of their deed. Through participating in giving and receiving with Paul, he is declaring that they are gathering fruit to their eschatological account. Building up an account which will one day reveal itself in Christ. Paul is here giving insight in how he perceives their "sharing in giving and receiving".<sup>286</sup> His motivation for engaging in this is not because of having needs which he wants them to meet. He is first and foremost doing it for their sake. Hoping that by them giving, their love shall grow producing the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ (1:9-11). Their gift is proof of the God's work of grace in them (1:5; 2:13). The reason being that through the practice of giving, they are putting others needs ahead of themselves (2:4). Therefore, when Paul is rejoicing over their concern, he is commending them for showing the mindset which was in Christ. This aligns itself with Paul's repeatedly wish for them to grow in their faith,

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<sup>283</sup> If he were, he would surely live by the practice that he himself urge the Philippians to do, namely "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (4:6).

<sup>284</sup> Which he very much do (1:4, 18; 2:17-18). These are the verses where Paul declares his joy. In addition, there is there is other types of utterance about joy (1:24; 2:2, 29; 3:1; 4:1)

<sup>285</sup> Cf 1:5, 9-11; 2:13.

<sup>286</sup> Gk. ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήψεως.

taking after what they see in him.<sup>287</sup> Paul's response is then revealing that he is more interested in how their gift serve as evidence for their "spiritual health", then to what extent it could aid his "physical health".<sup>288</sup>

Again, we can restate how Paul's recalibration of worth system has made him more tuned in on the needs of others, then what he could gain for himself. What he sees as vital for the other is also shaped by this recalibration. The best for the other is not that they experience the satisfaction given by the earthly things. What is better is that they experience the joy and gains that are to be found in Christ.

Having shed light on Paul's reason for content (4:11) and joy (4:10), what are we to make of his delegation of reciprocity to God. One way to look at it is that Paul is giving God the responsibility to bring about a return because he understands God to be the ultimate recipient of the Philippians gift. What gives this idea weight is that Paul sees their gift in the spiritual sense of a fragrant offering, which is pleasing to God. The aroma that this gift produce is not aimed at Paul, but at God. We have to pose the question if Paul by putting God in his seat, escapes any responsibility of reciprocity? Maybe he has built the case for an escape of the duty to return in similar matter. Paul is in his current situation not living up to his responsibility according to the norms of gift exchange.

Is it possible that Paul is trying to elevate their vision of gift exchange through this letter? We have already observed that Paul promises that God's return will meet all of their needs, both physical and spiritual.<sup>289</sup> Going another step, is he in practice inviting the Philippians to share in his contentment in the Lord. Like him, they are to seek first and foremost the gain that is in being found in Christ (3:8), learning the secret of being content (4:11-13) always in rejoice.

This view begs the question: What happens if everybody resolves to Paul's solution, delegating the responsibility of reciprocating to God. Maintaining that there is a higher reward installed for the initiator of the gift. Then the risk of not getting anything in return will get dramatically higher. Nobody would reciprocate any gift, and the risk of not getting anything in back would

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<sup>287</sup> Instances where Paul states his wishes for them to progress or grow by imitating the examples he provides: 1:9-11; 2:15-16, 25-30; 3:14-18.

<sup>288</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 448.

<sup>289</sup> See chapter 4.1.4.

in return scare anybody from giving. This will in practise shatter the whole system of gift exchange.<sup>290</sup> It is not likely that Paul has this in mind, as he applauds the act of giving (4:14-16).

I will suggest that Paul's response is not to be universally imitated. But he is offering a better story. Just as in the case in 3:2-11 where Paul sheds the light of the Christ event on the former cultural capital, revealing them to be worthless garbage. He is now shedding the light of the Christ event on the Philippian gift. Although they are sharing in giving and receiving with Paul, what is of far greater significant is that they are acting out the mindset of Christ, harvesting fruit in their eschatological account, offering a fragrant offering which is pleasing to God. Paul's God will therefore "fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"

## 6 Conclusion

The objective of this Master thesis has been to investigate how Paul treats the gift he receives from the church in Philippi. Paying attention to how he perceives their gift. How do we understand the tension between Paul statements, on the one hand expressing content regardless of their gift and on the other hand rejoice over the same gift?

In the effort to discern whether this tension is intended by Paul or imposed on the text by the reader, I have first given an introduction to the topic of gift-exchange. Creating a backdrop to help understand the practice of gift-exchange in Paul's near context. Two ideas are of important value here. Namely the all encompassing notion of the gift in the society. It being the glue between any social relationship. Either it be a family or friendship. Through the participating of Gift-exchange, people are in fact putting bonds on each other, tying them together. The reason being

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<sup>290</sup> "he who does not repay a benefit sins" (Ben 1.1.13).

the other equally prevalent idea of reciprocity. As it was the norm that the gift should always be returned in similar fashion. A gift would always spark another gift.

Further in chapter three I have given an introduction to the Philippiian letter. Retelling the prior relation between the church in Philippi and Paul himself. Learning that they have shared in giving and receiving all the way back to the start of their relationship. They are the only church who have practiced gift-exchange with Paul. Years later when Paul is composing this letter, he finds himself imprisoned, likely in Rome. He is sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians with a letter. The purpose is to encourage them to stand firm together in face of opposition. Another thread is an urging to “progress in faith”. Of course we shall not forget the reason for him being able to send them this letter, that is their gift to him, which he has to give a deal with, as it was an important part of any relationship. The letter bears the like of a family letter, full of sentiments for the Philippians. This is in effect setting up the scene for us to move forward.

In chapter four I have examined the pericope of 4:10-20 which is the section of the letter where Paul deals with their gift. Through an exposition of the verses, I have wanted to untangle the tension between Paul being stating both his content and joy over their gift. The solution which I settle with is that any tension made of his statements are imposed on the letter by the reader. I believe that my proposal has given a helpful reading of Paul’s treatment of the gift in chapter 4. It goes and resolves any tension in relation to any supposedly ungratefulness in Paul’s response. It shows that he is in fact expressing gratitude, as he is expressing his joy over their concern. A question which remains unanswered is why Paul is stating his content in face of the gift?

This brings us to the final chapter. Here I make the case for how Paul has “learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.” (4:12). First, I expound the Christ narration (2:6-8), to make clear what Paul means by the mindset of Christ. I suggest that we are to understand it as a narration of the Christ event. Here we can detect a paradigm revolving around the dichotomy of exploiting and self-emptying. This constitutes the mindset which the Philippians are to have in themselves. Further, I suggest that the way they are to obtain this mindset is not to re-enact the Christ event. Rather Paul shows through his autobiographical section (3:2-11) that it is the encountering with the Christ event which enables him to obtain the mindset of Christ. The encounter with the Christ event is a gracious act from

God, where he deconstructs his former identity, and reconstruct it in Christ. It recalibrates his whole worth system, causing him to render any former value as garbage in the face of knowing Christ. Cause knowing Christ surpasses any other thing. The recalibration of worth system has made him more tuned in on the needs of others, then what he could gain for himself. In effect it shapes him by the paradigm of the Christ event so that he is able to avoid exploiting things for his own advantage, but rather practice self-emptying.

I believe this will also make sense of his content in relating of the gift. For his interest is not in the gift *per se*, as it would be to heed the advantages he could obtain. Rather he concerns is in them. Wanting them to grow in spiritual fruit. He rejoices because it grows by them giving to Paul. That is because is because they by doing so show the mindset of Christ and thereby producing spiritual fruit.

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