

# Philippians 2:9

- God exalted him to the highest place -

- and gave him the name that is above every name -

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## Introduction

- ❖ Christian communities, churches, congregations, small groups, as well as individuals, are citizens of heaven (Phil 3:22), and at the same time citizens of a particular country.
- ❖ The apostle Paul urges the Philippians to act as a new community following Jesus Christ in his humility.
- ❖ Christian communities are at the same time called to acknowledge the supreme power of Jesus Christ and glorify his name above all names.
  - This glorification is an important aspect of the Christian worship.
  - The glorification of Christ unites Christians because there is only one Lord. Christians are united under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
  - The glorification of Christ makes Christians humble, serving one another and the local communities as a witness to Christ.
  - The glorification of Christ is at the same time a consolation, encouragement and loving kindness to all who suffer.
  - The glorification of Christ makes only sense when he is the LIVING and exalted one.
  - The glorification of Christ unmasks also all powers in this world.
  
- ❖ This sermon outline contains a lot of background information with regard to the exegesis of Philippians 2:1-11.
  - The historical background of Christianity in Philippi is interesting.

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Letter of Paul to the Philippians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ “It is traditionally referred to as one of Paul’s four “Prison” or “Captivity” Epistles, because in this letter as well as in Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon the author indicates that he is incarcerated at the time of writing.  
Paul discusses his imprisonment and its effects on the progress of the gospel (1:12–26). Next, he gives exhortations to the church (1:27–2:18), citing a famous hymn from the early Christian liturgy (2:6–11). After indicating his plans to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi (2:19–30), Paul warns the Philippians about false teachers who would thwart their spiritual progress (3:1–21). Finally, he concludes the letter with various exhortations (4:1–9), an expression of gratitude for a gift sent to him by the Philippians (4:10–20), greetings (4:21–22), and a benediction (4:23).”<sup>1</sup>

## Form and structure

- ❖ Philippians 2:1-11:

	<i>If:</i>	<i>Then:</i>
Verse 1, 2	If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,	then make my joy complete by being like-minded,
	if any comfort from his love,	having the same love,
	if any fellowship with the Spirit,	being one in spirit
	if any tenderness and compassion,	and purpose.
	<i>Do not:</i>	<i>But:</i>
Verse 3	Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,	but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
Verse 4	Each of you should look not only	but also to the interests of others.

<sup>1</sup> Fitzgerald, J. T. (1992, p. 318).

	to your own interests,	
	<i>Follow Christ</i>	
<i>Verse 5</i>	Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:	
<i>Verse 6-11</i> <i>His humiliation</i>	<p>Who,  being in very nature God,  did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  but made himself nothing,  taking the very nature of a servant,  being made in human likeness.</p>	
	<p>And being found in appearance as a man,  he humbled himself and became obedient to death—  even death on a cross!</p>	
<i>His glorification</i>	<p>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  and gave him the name that is above every name,  that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  to the glory of God the Father.</p>	

- ❖ Verse 1, 2 is an if-then clause, with strong emphatic meaning 'of course'.
  - Unity with Christ.
  - Unity with the Spirit.
- ❖ Verse 3, 4 are parallel admonitions.
- ❖ Verse 5 is a summary and an admonition to follow Christ and glorify his name.
- ❖ Verse 6-11 is a hymn, which consists of two parts.
  - The free-will humiliation of Christ.
  - The glorification of Christ by God, the Father.

## Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

### Philippi

- ❖ **PHILIPPI (PLACE)**. Situated in Northern Greece at the border of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, ancient Philippi was the site of Paul’s earliest extensive missionary activity in Europe (Acts 16:11–40; Letter to the Philippians). The city stood about 16 km Northwest of the port city Neapolis (Acts 16:11, 12; modern Kavalla) and originally bore the name Krenides (from the Greek for “spring”) in recognition of the abundance of streams (Acts 16: 13) in the area.
- ❖ In 356, King Philip II of Macedon brought the city under Macedonian dominion and renamed it after himself.
- ❖ Philippi became a Roman colony and discharged veterans receiving land allotments settled permanently in the area.
- ❖ “At the time of Paul’s visit, the population of the colony would have included a relatively privileged core of Roman veterans and their descendants; Greeks descended from the inhabitants of the earlier Hellenistic cities (Krenides and Philippi) and from other Greek settlements in the area (e.g., Amphipolis, Maroneia, and Neapolis); Greeks involved in commerce who had migrated from Asia Minor (exemplified by the figure of Lydia of Thyatira mentioned in Acts 16:14); and native Thracians. Romans dominated the city’s and colony’s administration which was typically Roman (duumviri, aediles, and quaestors are in evidence). While Latin predominates in the inscriptions from the period, traces of the continued use of Greek and Thracian are apparent especially in cultic contexts. The Greek-speaking Paul was understood sufficiently well to have undertaken an extended stay at the city.”<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ “Colonies were modeled closely on the Roman constitution, with roles being defined for magistrates, council, and assemblies. Colonists enjoyed full Roman citizenship and were thus extensions of Rome itself.”<sup>3</sup>
  - The apostle Paul referred to citizenship twice:



Figure 1. Map of Greece with the location of Philippi.

<sup>2</sup> Hendrix, H. L. (1992). Philippi (Place). In D. N. Freedman (Ed., p.313-317).

<sup>3</sup> Local government (ancient Roman). (2018, April 10). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local\\_government\\_\(ancient\\_Roman\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_(ancient_Roman))

- “Whatever happens, **conduct yourselves** (=“**πολιτεύομαι**”) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel” (1:27).
  - “**πολιτεύομαι**”: 1. **to be a citizen**, *have one’s citizenship/home*. 3. **to conduct one’s life**, *live, lead one’s life (1:27)* (RBrewer, JBL 73, ’54, 76–83: **‘discharge your obligations as citizens’**).<sup>4</sup>  
 “To conduct oneself with proper reference to one’s obligations in relationship to others, as part of some community—**‘to live, to conduct one’s life, to live in relation to others.’**”<sup>5</sup>
- “**Our citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:20).
- Paul was a Roman citizen. Once, he was imprisoned in the city of Philippi, and appealed to his rights as a Roman citizen. A Roman citizen enjoyed full legal protection under Roman law.
  - “But Paul said to the officers: ‘They beat us publicly without a trial, even though **we are Roman citizens**, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.’ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that **Paul and Silas were Roman citizens**, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city” (Acts 16:37, 38; also Acts 22:25-29).

### Grammatical issues

#### Verse 2:6

- ❖ Wallace recognizes τὸ εἶναι in 2:6, where Paul indicates that Christ Jesus, “did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited,” as an example of a direct object infinitive in an object-compliment construction. In this case the infinitive is the object and ἀρπαγμὸν is the compliment.<sup>6</sup>

#### Verse 2:6, 7

- ❖ “who, **although he existed** in the form of God.” Wallace comments:

<sup>4</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 846).

<sup>5</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, Vol 1, p. 507).

<sup>6</sup> Wallace, D. B. (1996, p. 344, 602).

- “The translation of this participle as concessive is not entirely clear upon a casual reading of the text. The two options are either causal or concessive. There are two interpretive problems in Phil 2:6-7 relevant to the treatment of this participle. First, of course, is the grammatical problem of whether this is concessive or causal. Second is the lexical problem of whether ἀρπαγμόν in v 6 means robbery or a thing to be grasped. The grammatical and the lexical inform one another and cannot be treated separately. Thus, if ὑπάρχων is causal, ἀρπαγμόν means robbery (‘who, because he existed in God’s form, did not consider equality with God as robbery’); if ὑπάρχων is concessive, then ἀρπαγμόν means a thing to be grasped (‘who, although he existed in God’s form, did not consider equality with God as a thing to be grasped’). As attractive as the first alternative might be theologically, it is not satisfactory. Ultimately, this verse cannot be interpreted in isolation, but must be seen in light of the positive statement in v 7-‘but he emptied himself’ (the participle ὑπάρχων equally depends on both ἠγήσατο and ἐκένωσεν). Only the concessive idea for the participle and a thing to be grasped translation for ἀρπαγμόν fit well with v 7.”<sup>7</sup>

❖ “he emptied himself **by taking** on the form of a servant.” Wallace comments:

- “This text satisfies the regular criteria for a participle of means: (1) The participle follows the verb; and (2) the verb is vague, almost begging to be defined. Taking it as a result participle is problematic, since it is aorist; leaving as temporal leaves the meaning of ἐκένωσεν unexplained (and such an act is not explained otherwise in the following verses). The biggest difficulty with seeing λαβών as means is that emptying is normally an act of subtraction, not addition. But the imagery should not be made to walk on all fours. As an early hymn, it would be expected to have a certain poetic license. Further, Paul seems to have hinted at this meaning in his instructions to the saints in v 2:3: ‘[Think] nothing from selfishness or conceit (κενοδοξίαν): **The Philippians were told not to puff themselves up with ‘empty glory’ (κενοδοξίαν), because Christ was an example of one who emptied his glory. If this connection is intentional, then the Carmen Christi has the following force:** Do not elevate yourselves on empty glory, but follow the example of Christ, who, though already elevated (on God’s level), emptied his glory by veiling it in humanity.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wallace, D. B. (1996, p. 634, 635).

<sup>8</sup> Wallace, D. B. (1996, p. 630).

## Word meaning

### Verse 1, 2

- ❖ Encouragement = “**παράκλησις**”: **1. act of emboldening another in belief or course of action, encouragement, exhortation.**<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ Comfort = “**παραμύθιον**”: **pertaining to that which offers encouragement, especially as consolation, means of consolation, alleviation.**<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Tenderness = “**σπλάγχνον**”: *affection.*<sup>11</sup>
- ❖ Compassion = “**οἰκτιρμός**”: **display of concern over another’s misfortune, pity, mercy, compassion.**<sup>12</sup>
  - Tenderness and compassion are two nouns, which are part of a hendiadys. A hendiadys is a figure of speech, “expressing a single idea by two nouns instead of a noun and its qualifier. **A method of amplification that adds force.**”<sup>13</sup>

### Verse 3, 4

- ❖ Selfish ambition = “**ἐριθεία**”: Its meaning is a matter of conjecture, *selfishness, selfish ambition.*<sup>14</sup>
- ❖ Vain conceit = “**κενοδοξία**”: **1. a vain or exaggerated self-evaluation, vanity, conceit, excessive ambition.**<sup>15</sup>
- ❖ Humility = “**ταπεινοφροσύνη**”: humility is often used “in a pejorative sense but in the New Testament “only in a favorable sense **humility, modesty** (2:3; 1 Pet 5:5)” often listed with other virtues (Col 3:12; compare Col 2:23; Acts 20:19; Eph 4:2.”<sup>16</sup>

### Verse 5-11

- ❖ Something to be grasped = “**ἄρπαγμός**”: **something to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping, something claimed.**<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 766).

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 769).

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 938).

<sup>12</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 700).

<sup>13</sup> Hendyadis. In: The Forest of Rhetoric. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>

<sup>14</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 392).

<sup>15</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 538).

<sup>16</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 989).

- ❖ To make (himself) nothing = “κενών”: 1. **to make empty, to empty.** b. of divestiture of position or prestige: of Christ, who gave up the appearance of his divinity and took on the form of a slave, *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν* *he emptied himself, divested himself of his prestige or privileges.*<sup>18</sup>  
The verb ‘to empty’ is used elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles four times (Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor 9:3), and in each instance it is used metaphorically in the sense of ‘to bring to nothing,’ ‘to make worthless,’ or ‘to empty of significance.’ Context should always determine the meaning; and in the present context the verb refers back to what immediately precedes and its action is explained by the words which immediately follow. Instead of holding onto his privileges, **Christ gave up his divine rank by taking on the nature of a servant.**<sup>19</sup>
  - It seems to be a wordplay on “κενοδοξία” (2:3) <> “κενών” (2:7).
- ❖ To humble = “ταπεινών”: 2. **to cause someone to lose prestige or status, humble, humiliate, abase,** done especially to slaves, a. with focus on reversal of status *humble oneself* of Christ, who went voluntarily to his death (2:8).<sup>20</sup>
  - “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and **whoever humbles himself will be exalted**” (Mt 23:11, 12).
  - Jesus Christ said: “**I am gentle and humble in heart**” (Mt 11:29).

## Exposition

### The prayer of Paul (1:9-11)

- ❖ “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”
  - This prayer governs the admonitions of Paul.

### Verse 1-2

- ❖ Verse 1 and 2 must be understood against the background of the previous verses.
  - At the first place, there is the prayer of Paul:

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<sup>17</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 133).

<sup>18</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 539).

<sup>19</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 59).

<sup>20</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 990).



- “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”
  - At the second place, there are the circumstances of the Philippians:
    - “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have” (1:29, 30).
      - The Philippians are suffering due to their faith in Christ Jesus.
      - You are going through the same struggle you saw I had. “You saw”: “They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.(1) They brought them before the magistrates and said, ‘These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.’(2) The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.(3) After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully” (4) (Acts 16:19-23).
        - Paul and Silas were seized and dragged to face the authorities (1).
        - After a sort of trial, they were stripped, beaten, flogged and thrown into prison (3, 4).
        - The accusation was “an uproar by advocacy customs for us Romans to accept of practice.” “For us Romans” refers to their Roman citizenship and the fact that Philippi was a Roman colony under Roman law.
      - The Philippians are going through the same struggle.
- ❖ “If.” “Paul begins the chapter with a series of four conditional clauses which are true to fact. That is, while it is true that in Greek each clause begins with a term corresponding to ‘if’ in English, **these ‘if’ clauses are equivalent in force with an affirmative statement.** By rendering these clauses literally with ‘if,’ one might get the impression that Paul makes this fourfold appeal with an element of doubt; that is contrary to what he means to say.”<sup>21</sup>
  - Paul makes a strong statement.

<sup>21</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 46).

- ❖ **“If you have any encouragement.”** Loh and Nida comment: “The noun rendered **“encouragement”** by most translators can also mean **“consolation”** (*KJV*), **“comfort”** (*ASV*), or **“exhortation”** (the sense suggested by many commentators). But the context seems to favor the meaning of **“helping,” “encouraging,”** or **“strengthening.”**<sup>22</sup>
- ❖ **“From being united with Christ.”**
  - In Christ: “To all **the saints in Christ Jesus** at Philippi.” (1:1) or **“In the Lord”** (1:14).<sup>22</sup>
  - To live in communion with Christ and with all who believe (1 Cor 12:13; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:13; Eph 2:18-22; Eph 4:4-6).
  - This comment of Loh and Nida is helpful for preaching in different contexts. “In many languages it is difficult to translate literally *your life in Christ*. In the first place, a noun such as *life* must often be rendered as a verb meaning “to live.” But it may make no sense to speak of “living in Christ.” The concept of a supernatural being living within a human being (for example, “Christ living in us”) is not too difficult to understand, since this can be done by means of Christ’s Spirit; but for a person to “live in Christ” may seem utterly meaningless. The closest equivalent in some languages is **“your living completely on behalf of Christ,”** or **“your living completely controlled by Christ.”**<sup>23</sup>
- ❖ **“If any comfort from his love.”** Paul refers to the love of Christ. The love of Christ comforts his disciples. **“His love”** can “be translated as ‘the fact that he loves you.’ Sometimes one can say ‘the fact that Christ loves you comforts you.’ In other languages one may use a passive expression, for example, **‘you are comforted because Christ loves you.’** In some languages *comforts* is expressed negatively as ‘takes away your anxieties,’ or ‘causes you not to worry any longer.’”<sup>24</sup>
- ❖ **“If any fellowship with the Spirit.”**
  - “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and **the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all**” (2 Cor 13:14).
  - The Christian community is a community governed by the Spirit of Christ “
- ❖ **“If any tenderness and compassion.”** “It is sometimes suggested that they have to be taken together here, with the resultant meaning ‘affectionate sympathy’ or ‘affectionate tenderness.’”<sup>25</sup> “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness** and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22, 23).

<sup>22</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 48).

<sup>23</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 48).

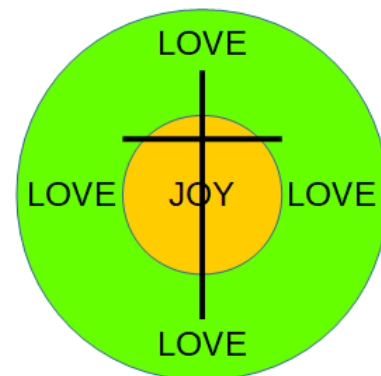
<sup>24</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 49).

<sup>25</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 49).

❖ “then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

- The words “joy,” and “rejoice” are often used in this letter.
  - “In all my prayers for all of you, **I always pray with joy**” (1:4).
  - “**Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.** Yes, and I will continue to **rejoice**” (1:18).
  - “Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you **for your progress and joy in the faith**, so that through my being with you again **your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow** on account of me” (1:25, 26).
  - “**then make my joy complete** by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (2:2).
  - “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, **I am glad and rejoice with all of you.** So you too should **be glad and rejoice with me**” (2:17, 18).
  - “**Welcome him** (Epaphroditus; 2:25) **in the Lord with great joy**, and honor men like him” (2:29).
  - “Finally, my brothers, **rejoice in the Lord!**” (3:1).
  - “Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, **my joy and crown**, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! (4:1).
  - “**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**” (4:4).
  - “**I rejoice greatly in the Lord** that at last you have renewed your concern for me” (4:10).

○ The secret of the Christian joy is found in the words of Christ. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 15:9-12).



❖ “**Make my joy complete.**” Perhaps, Paul has his personal concerns:

- He will send Timothy. “I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. **For everyone looks out for his own interests**, not those of Jesus Christ” (2:20, 21; compare 2 Tim 4:16).
- “Paul’s choice of this particular verb indicates that the Philippians are already a source of joy to him (1:4–5; cf. 4:1). Still his joy is incomplete because of disputes among the members of the church.”<sup>26</sup>

❖ **“Being in one spirit and purpose.”**

- Compare: “But one thing I (Paul) do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.  
All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained” (3:13-16).
- “Apparently the apostle is concerned to produce among the Philippians a unity in purpose and sentiment (*JB* ‘with a common purpose and a common mind’). In some languages the phrase can be rendered “being one in heart and will.”<sup>27</sup>

Verse 3-4

❖ **“Do nothing.”** This is emphatic.

- Paul wrote already in chapter one:
- “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God” (1:14, 15).
- “It is true that some preach Christ **out of envy and rivalry**, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ **out of selfish ambition** (2:3), not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.” (1:15-17).

❖ **“Selfish ambition.”** “It describes a desire to do things for selfish purposes which result in creating a partisan spirit. *From selfish ambition* may be expressed as ‘simply because you want things for yourselves,’ or ‘because of what you yourselves desire.’”<sup>28</sup>

❖ **“Humility”** “is one of the most important Christian moral attitudes. The Greek moralists regarded humility as the subservient attitude of a lower-class person, an attitude of abject self-abasement. But in the New Testament, based on the example of Christ (2:8), **humility acquires a positive meaning, connoting the lowly service done by a noble person**. Humility

<sup>26</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 50).

<sup>27</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 51).

<sup>28</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 51, 52).

before God, a recognition of one's utter dependence on him, leads to humility in one's relations with his fellowmen. (1 Peter 5:5–6). One aspect of humility is selflessness. *Be humble toward one another* is sometimes expressed negatively as 'do not be proud of yourselves.' In some instances one may introduce a verb of activity and so translate 'act toward each other in a humble way,' or "... as a humble person.'

The final phrase of verse 3 defines essentially what humility is, *always considering others better than yourselves* (...) 'always think, Others are better than I am.' Again, however, the meaning may sometimes be expressed by a negative formulation, for example, 'never think that you are better than others are.' This particular rendering is really not as strong as the original text would imply."<sup>29</sup>

❖ **"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."**

- "Be sure to protect the interests of others, and not just your own."<sup>30</sup>
- This phrase "is sometimes interpreted in a way that brings it into closer harmony with the disposition of humility mentioned in the preceding verse. According to this interpretation, Paul is here speaking of the "good qualities" of others; he is urging his readers to seek out the virtues of their fellow members. Most recent translators, however, understand Paul as urging the Philippian Christians to consider *one another's interests* (1 Cor 10:24, 33)."<sup>31</sup>

Verse 5-11

❖ **"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."**

- Your attitude epitomizes the preceding verses, especially the "humility."
- "Paul is here making an appeal to Christ as the supreme example of humility—an act of utter self-negation" "Christ's attitude of humility is exemplified in his accomplished saving acts." "Christians are only called upon to tread the path already trodden by Christ himself" (See also 1 Pet 2:21–25)."<sup>32</sup>
- Example: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (Jn 13:14, 15).

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<sup>29</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 52).

<sup>30</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 54).

<sup>31</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 54).

<sup>32</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 56).

- ❖ “This hymn embodies the essence of early Christian faith, the faith which acclaim the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. It powerfully demonstrates that the lordship of Christ was attained only by way of his servanthood. The message is crystal clear: “no cross, no crown.” In citing this hymn, Paul’s aim is to persuade the Philippians to live a life devoid of discord and personal ambition. They are to live in unity and humility with the model of Christ as their most powerful incentive.”<sup>33</sup>
- ❖ “Who, being in very nature God” <> “taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

- The contrast is clear!

**Important**

- *Equal with God* is probably better taken in the sense of “to exist in a manner equal to God.” The structure of the hymns (synonymous parallelism<sup>34</sup>, see also verse 7) suggests that “equality with God” is closely related in meaning to ‘having the nature of God,’ though not necessarily identical. The former is a natural accompanying consequence of the latter. By virtue of the fact that Christ *had the nature of God*, he naturally had the divine prerogative, that is, a unique privileged status in relation to God. Both expressions signify Christ’s unparalleled affinity with God. The primary focus of *had the nature of God* is in Christ’s sharing God’s “inherent character and quality,” while the emphasis in *equal with God* is to the relation with God’s “rank” or “status.” Taken in this sense, “equality with God” is not a reference to equality of attributes or powers, nor is it alluding to a higher dignity which Christ could achieve in the future; it is an honored status Christ already had.<sup>35</sup>

“In order to distinguish clearly between *the nature of God* and *equal with God*, it may be necessary to speak of the first as ‘being just like God,’ and of the second as ‘ranking as high as God.’”<sup>36</sup>

- ❖ “Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”

- Noh and Nida mention several possible explanations.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to draw a parallel with the Roman Emperor. See also Genesis 3:4, 5!

Christ Jesus	Divus Julius Ceasar
In the very nature of God	In the very nature of man
Equality with God, something not to be	Equality with the gods, something to be

<sup>33</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 54).

<sup>34</sup> Two lines of the same verse, which parallel each other.

<sup>35</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 57).

<sup>36</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, 58).

<sup>37</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, 57, 58).

grasped	granted (by the Roman Senate) <sup>38</sup>
He made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant	He attained for supreme power taking the very nature of an emperor.
He humbled himself	He didn't humble himself
God exalted him to the highest place	The Senate and Roman people exalted him
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth	That at the image of the Emperor every knee should bow, on earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord	And everyone acknowledge that the Emperor is Lord.

- ❖ **“Made himself nothing.”** “It should be said at the outset that the verb must be understood metaphorically, not metaphysically. It says nothing about Christ stripping himself of his divine attributes as has sometimes been suggested.<sup>39</sup> The winds and waves still obeyed him (Mt 8:27). “What was given up is not simply the opportunity to become equal with God, but the equality with God itself, namely Christ’s divine status or rank of dignity and glory (Jn 17:5).”<sup>40</sup>
- ❖ **“Taking the very nature of a servant.”** “Christ did not disguise himself as a servant; he became a servant, expressing in his deeds complete and absolute submission to the will of God. The heart of the matter is to show that Christ gave up the highest possible status and took on the lowest possible role. Christ did not merely exist in a servant’s condition; he lived in humble service.”<sup>41</sup>
- ❖ **“Being made in human likeness.”** The word ‘likeness’ suggests similarity, but this does not mean that Christ’s humanity is unreal (see also Rom 8:3; Heb 2:7, 14). In Greek, the plural

<sup>38</sup> As Helios (the sun) shines brightly over all parts of the world, so Augustine is lord over the then known world. Divinity combined with universality of the sphere of rule is even more plainly expressed in an inscription in honour of Nero: ὁ τοῦ παντός κόσμου κύριος Νέρων (Foerster, W., & Quell, G. (1964–, Vol. 3, p. 1056)).

<sup>39</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 58, 59).

<sup>40</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 59).

<sup>41</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 59).

form of *man* is used, emphasizing the fact that Christ became like a member of the human race in general, not like any particular individual.”<sup>42</sup>

- What Paul “means to emphasize is that **Christ’s likeness to men in general is a real likeness**: “he came as man in the world and lived as a man.”<sup>43</sup>
- ❖ **“He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”** **“Obedient to death’** defines the measure of Christ’s humbling himself (see also Jn 10:17; Heb 5:8; 12:2). The obedience is rendered to God, as implied in verse 9. A contrast with Adam appears to be in the author’s mind (Rom 5:12–21). **The act of self-humbling and obedience sums up the whole course of Christ’s life on earth.**<sup>44</sup>
- ❖ **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place.”**
  - “This verse marks the turning point in the drama. Two contrasts govern the transition:
    - (1) humiliation <> exaltation, and
    - (2) servant <> Lord.
  - Up to this point, attention has been focused on the humility and obedience of Christ. **But now God takes the initiative in conferring on Christ the highest honor.**<sup>45</sup>
  - “Exaltation is the natural consequence of humiliation (Mt 18:4; 23, 12; Lk 14:11, 18:14; see also 2 Cor 11:7; Phil 4:12).”<sup>46</sup>
  - **“God exalted him to the highest place”** is literally ‘God hyperexalted him. This rare compound verb occurs only here in the New Testament. The force of ‘hyper’ is not simply ‘more than before,’ but rather ‘in superlative measure.’ The idea is not that God exalted Christ to a higher rank than the one he held before. The contrast is between the lowest point of his earthly role (servant-obedience-criminal death) to the highest heavenly honour (see also Isa 52:13). It is possible that the exaltation includes the resurrection and especially the ascension, as understood by a number of commentators (Acts 2:23–24, 33; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:3); but **the context seems to suggest that the reference is primarily to status, namely, the highest honor, the lordship.**<sup>47</sup>
- ❖ **“And gave him the name.”** **“Name”** is not simply a designation to distinguish one person from another. **In its biblical sense, it carries the idea of one’s character, position, role, rank,**

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<sup>42</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 60).

<sup>43</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 60).

<sup>44</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 61).

<sup>45</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 61, 62).

<sup>46</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 62).

<sup>47</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 62).



dignity, etc. (see also Eph 1:21; Heb 1:4).” “The name that is above every name” could then mean ‘the highest rank or dignity of all.’<sup>48</sup>

- ❖ The words in verses 10–11 are adapted from Isa 45:23, a passage which Paul also quoted in Rom 14:11. See also Rev 5.
  - “Paul now describes the cosmic and universal power and authority of Jesus Christ.”<sup>49</sup>
- ❖ “Every knee” and “every tongue” is a poetic expression of “everyone.” This includes the Roman Emperor!
- ❖ “The content of the acclamation is *Jesus Christ is Lord*. Here we have one of the earliest Christological confessions of the church preserved in the New Testament (see also Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). *Lord* is the most common title applied to Jesus by the early church. It is the word employed in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to translate the Hebrew ‘Yahweh.’” “When Jesus Christ is acclaimed as *Lord*, he is installed in the place which properly belongs to God alone. This means that Jesus Christ has sovereignty over the entire universe. *Lord* is emphatic by its position in the sentence.”<sup>50</sup>

## Application

- ❖ Praise Christ and Glorify Christ because
  - He is equal to God in ranking and status and by nature.
  - He humbled himself and became man, like a servant, like a slave.
  - He was obedient unto the death on the cross for our salvation.
- ❖ Praise Christ and Glorify Christ because
  - God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name.
  - He received supreme power (Mt 28:18-20) and honour.
  - His power is eternal and transient, such as the power of Emperors, kings, presidents, leaders.
    - Christ didn’t attain power by election, by revolution, by inheritance, but by obedience as a servant.
- ❖ Pay attention to the Christian worship.
  - To confess Jesus Christ is Lord.
  - To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - To celebrate the unity with Christ and the Spirit.

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<sup>48</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 62).

<sup>49</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 63).

<sup>50</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 64).

- ❖ To teach humility.
  - This is very important in a cultural context where individualism and the realization of the self are very important.
  - **“Humility”** “is one of the most important Christian moral attitudes. The Greek moralists regarded humility as the subservient attitude of a lower-class person, an attitude of abject self-abasement. But in the New Testament, based on the example of Christ (cf. 2:8), humility acquires a positive meaning.”<sup>51</sup>
- ❖ To teach encouragement because Christ is Lord.
  - Show the love of Christ.
- ❖ General remark
  - Compare this hymn with:  
 “He appeared in a body,  
 was vindicated by the Spirit,  
 was seen by angels,  
 was preached among the nations,  
 was believed on in the world,  
 was taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16).

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<sup>51</sup> Loh, I.-J., & Nida, E. A. (1995, p. 52).

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