

# **Have the Same Mindset as Jesus Christ: An Exegesis of Philippians 2:1-11.**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper aims to demonstrate that Paul presented Jesus Christ as the best example of humility for the Philippian believers to follow in Philippians 2:1–11 by properly examining and exegeting Philippians 2:1–11 through available extant sources. The contents contain the historical-cultural context, the literary context, exegesis of the passage of Philippians 2:1–11, theological implication, application, and conclusion. The main exegesis is comprised of two major points: Maintain Christian Harmony and Humility by Sharing the Same Mindset (2:1–4) and The Best Example of Humility—Jesus Christ (His Incarnation And Exaltation) (2:5–11). Philippians 2:1–11 exhibits the incarnation and exaltation of Jesus Christ and the importance of having the mindset of Jesus Christ.*

**Keywords:** biblical exegesis, biblical theology, Jesus Christ, Christology, Jesus' incarnation, Jesus' exaltation, Christian harmony, Christian love, Christ-like humility, Christian virtues

## **INTRODUCTION**

Paul wrote the Epistle of Philippians to a church in Philippi that is vulnerable to persecution, syncretism with Graeco-Roman cultural standards, false teachers, and internal conflict.<sup>1</sup> The church in Philippi is composed of mostly Gentile believers in Christ, such as Greeks and Romans.<sup>2</sup> Since the believers came from different backgrounds, there were dissensions between certain people among believers in the Philippian church. Therefore, in Philippians 2:1–11, Paul exhorted the Philippian

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<sup>1</sup> Mark J. Keown, *Philippians*, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

believers that the impact of Jesus Christ in their lives should encourage them to maintain Christian harmony, love, and humility by having the same mindset as Jesus Christ in the face of factiousness; thus, Paul presented Jesus Christ as the best example of humility for them to follow. Jesus Christ gave up His preincarnate social status and lived a life of self-humiliation while fulfilling His purpose on earth, which includes crucifixion; hence, having the same mindset as Jesus Christ and sharing this kind of mindset will result in Christian harmony, humility, and joy. This paper examines the exegesis of Philippians 2:1–11 through available extant sources.

## HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Most scholars deem that Paul wrote the Epistle of Philippians (as an authentic letter) to the believers in Philippi.<sup>3</sup> The city of Philippi was considered the political center of the eastern end of Macedonia, and its population was composed of Romans and Greeks.<sup>4</sup> Philippi was occupied mainly by Romans; thus, Latin became the official language then.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Greek was the principal language utilized for commerce and everyday life by the time Paul visited the city in 49 A.D. (see Acts 16:11–15).<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the date and the place of the epistle's origin, several scholars debate about them. Traditionally, scholars deem that the epistle was composed in Rome around AD 60–62.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, certain scholars such as Lisco and Bowen

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<sup>3</sup> Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 30; <sup>3</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2004), xxviii; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 19; F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 9; Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015), 3; Keown, *Philippians*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, xxxvi.

<sup>6</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, xli.

proposed that it was written in Ephesus around AD 54–57, while others like Oeder and Dockx suggested that it was written Corinth around AD 50.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars, like Hawthorne, propose Caesarea as the location of composition dated in the late 50s A.D. The present author concurs more with the traditional scholars including Blomberg and Markley that Paul was in prison (1:7, 13), most likely under house arrest in Rome, between AD 61 and 62 (Acts 28:30–31), where he was assumed to be near his end at a certain point (1:22–23; 2:17) but “only to have God encourage him that there was still more for him to do (1:24–25).”<sup>9</sup>

Paul was inspired to compose the epistle to the Philippians by two facets of his experience during imprisonment: the advance of the gospel while he was in bonds (1:12–25) and the gift from the church in Philippi through their envoy, Epaphroditus.<sup>10</sup> In the epistle, Paul expressed his gratitude toward the Philippian believers (1:3; 4:10–20), challenged them to stay faithful to the gospel in the face of factitiousness (1:27–30), and addressed the issues of disunity (2:1–4; 4:2–3) and false teachings (3:2, 18–19) in which Paul recognized as threats to the church.<sup>11</sup> Apart from the pastoral concerns, there were also personal concerns (2:19–30).

The purpose of the Epistle of Philippians was to uphold the harmony of the church under the gospel of Christ. The language of *κοινωνία* (“fellowship” or “partnership”) is observed throughout the epistle. Paul viewed the believers of Philippi as His partners in sharing the gospel with the coming eschatological world.<sup>12</sup> Paul composed 2:1–11 to inspire them to enact their partnership with him and Christ by living together as “an eschatological community.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xliii–iv.

<sup>9</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Jennifer Foutz Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 80.

<sup>10</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald J. Allen, “Between Text & Sermon: Philippians 2:1–11: A Journal of Bible and Theology,” *Interpretation* 61, no. 1 (01, 2007): 72.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Concerning its genre, several scholars attempt to assess the epistle in terms of epistolary analysis, rhetorical analysis, and/or literary analysis.<sup>14</sup> In terms of epistolary analysis, several scholars, such as Alexander, Fee, and Holloway, have compared Philippians to the Hellenistic letter form of “family” or “friendship.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Fee argues that Philippians is different from Paul’s other epistles because it reflects the fundamental features of these two types of letters: friendship and moral exhortation.<sup>16</sup> The friendship or family letter view poses difficulty concerning the function of 3:1–4:9 and 4:10–20 in the letter; thus, there is the question of how much actual light the hypothesis casts on the letter as a whole. In terms of rhetorical analysis, the Philippians has been compared to ancient rhetorical handbooks, such as judicial (accusation and defense), deliberative (persuasion and dissuasion), and epideictic (commendation and liability).<sup>17</sup> In terms of literary analysis, scholars claim that the Philippians includes a chiasmic structure, which involves the A-B-B-A pattern.<sup>18</sup> The Philippians is similar to the informal Hellenistic letter forms, deliberative and epideictic letters, and is somewhat chiasmic in structure but bearing some differences; thus, the present author concurs with Keown’s statement, “Philippians should be read for what it is: a letter from a Jewish apostle, in prison in Rome, whose life is now shaped by the crucified and risen Christ, to his converts in Philippi, seeking to persuade, dissuade, warn, and encourage them.”<sup>19</sup>

Another literary feature is Paul’s usage of *hapax legomena* in the vocabulary. Most of the *hapax legomena* refer to the historical context of Philippi’s being a Roman colony; hence, the mentioning of the “Praetorian Guard” in 1:13, of “Caesar’s household” in 4:22, and the metaphorical wording on “citizenship” in 1:27 and 3:20 all suggest Paul’s awareness of the Roman provenance. Concerning Greek grammar, every

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<sup>14</sup> Keown, *Philippians*, 69.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Keown, *Philippians*, 71.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Keown, *Philippians*, 78.

imperfect and aorist indicative verb practically indicates past time from the author's view (the epistolary aorists in 2:25 [ἡγγησάμην] and 2:28 [ἔπεμψα] mark past time from the readers' view).<sup>20</sup>

## **EXEGESIS OF THE PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11**

### **Maintain Christian Harmony and Humility by Sharing the Same Mindset (2:1-4)**

Paul exhorted the Philippian believers that the impact of Jesus Christ in their lives should encourage them to maintain Christian harmony, love, and humility in the face of factiousness, which will result in joy (2:1-4). Paul provided four grounds of Christian harmony, which include comfort in Christ, consolation of love from God, participation in the Spirit, and affection and compassion (2:1). Paul urged the Philippians to make his joy complete by sharing the same mindset, having the same love that is united in spirit, and sharing the same mindset, which he repeated for emphasis (2:2). Paul amplified the means for joy in Christian harmony (2:3-4).

Although verse 1 begins with “Εἰ τις,” it contains the word “οὖν” (“therefore”) because it connects to 1:27-30. The outcome of standing firm together and exhibiting harmony while struggling together because of those who oppose the church (1:27-30) should inspire them to pursue harmony with those who have different backgrounds and preferences within the church (2:1-4).<sup>21</sup> Εἰ is best translated as “since” because εἰ is “assumed to be true for the sake of argument,” according to Hellerman.<sup>22</sup> Verse 1 introduces the four grounds of Christian harmony: (1) comfort in Christ (2:1a), (2) consolation of love from God (2:1b), (3) participation in the Spirit (2:1c), and (4) affections and compassion (2:1d).

Several scholars debate over the four εἰ-clauses regarding their description: if they describe the supernatural work of God in the believers' lives, the mutual experiences among believers, or

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<sup>20</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 92.

the relationship between Paul and the Philippian believers.<sup>23</sup> The present author agrees with both Hansen and Hellerman that the *εἰ*-clauses describe the supernatural work of God in the believers' lives.<sup>24</sup> They appeal to the believers to confirm both the "divine objective work of salvation and the human subjective experience of salvation in Christ."<sup>25</sup> The foundation of the appeal is the Philippians' relationship to the triune God and Paul and the Philippian believers' relationship to each other because of their common relationship to the Trinity.<sup>26</sup>

Verse 2 contains an imperative *πληρώσατέ* from *πληρῶω*, which means "to bring to completion that which was already begun, *complete, finish*."<sup>27</sup> It could also mean "to fulfill."<sup>28</sup> The present author chooses "make complete" because it involves an increase, such as an increase in joy. Moreover, she agrees with Hawthorne and Hellerman that Paul stressed unity or harmony with humility among the Philippians instead of the fulfillment of his joy in verses 1–4.<sup>29</sup> Paul's joy had been incomplete due to the internal conflicts in the Philippian church.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Paul urged the Philippian believers to make his joy complete with the means of sharing the same mindset (2:2a), having the same love that is united in spirit (2:2b), and sharing the same mindset (2:2c). Verse 2 describes the content of Paul's appeal.<sup>31</sup>

Paul emphasized the verb *φρονέω* ("to think") by utilizing *φρονήτε* (subjunctive) and *φρονέω* (participle), both of which could be translated as "sharing the same mindset." Paul was

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<sup>23</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 106; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 92.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 106.

<sup>26</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 828.

<sup>28</sup> Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 160.

<sup>29</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 85; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Andris H. Snyman, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians 1:27-2:18," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26, no. 3 (2005): 794.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 156; Fee, *Philippians*, 85.

linking this kind of mindset to the mindset of Christ in verse 5, which involves “a Christlike attitude toward benefits of power, authority, and social capital,” according to Hellerman.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Paul urged the Philippian believers to share the same mindset to promote harmony and humility. Sharing the same mindset includes τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες (“having the same love that is united in spirit”). Fee claims that this love refers to the mark of Christianity concerning the love of God in verse 1, while having the same love for one another.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Hawthorne explains that this kind of love is like the self-sacrificing love of Christ for the church, while Hansen expounds that it is the work of love that Christ exhibited in verse 7.<sup>34</sup>

The main key to harmony is humility. In verses 3–4, Paul amplified the means for joy in Christian harmony. Paul demonstrated the content of his appeal.<sup>35</sup> He stressed the significance of humility by utilizing the technique of antithetic exhibition.<sup>36</sup> He exhorted the Philippian believers in verse 3: “Do nothing according to selfishness nor vain conceit (μηδὲν κατ’ ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν) but in humility by considering one another as more important than yourselves (ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἡγουμένοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν).”<sup>37</sup> No verb is utilized in this first exhortation for a more compelling effect.<sup>38</sup> The noun ταπεινοφροσύνῃ (“humility”) is the primary concern of this exhortation and is termed contextually by its opposition to the noun ἐριθεία (“selfishness”), which is also observed in 1:17.<sup>39</sup> Thus, a verb form needs to be added. The verb form could be a participle, such as (ποιοῦντες or φρονοῦντες [from verse 2]) or an imperative, like most English

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<sup>32</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter*, 150.

<sup>34</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86; Hansen, *Philippians*, 112.

<sup>35</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter*, 156; Fee, *Philippians*, 86.

<sup>36</sup> Snyman, “A Rhetorical Analysis,” 794.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Fifth Revised Edition. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), Php 2:3. All Greek biblical versions are in the *Greek New Testament*, 5<sup>th</sup> rev. ed (UBS5) unless otherwise noted. All English biblical translations are the present author’s unless otherwise noted.

<sup>38</sup> Snyman, “A Rhetorical Analysis,” 794.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

versions.<sup>40</sup> Hansen argues, “The addition of a verb of action (*do nothing*) correctly indicates that the phrase has the force of a moral imperative.”<sup>41</sup> Paul expounded his exhortation in verse 4: “Do not look out for your own interests but rather for each one and all (μη τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ [καὶ] τὰ ἑτέρων ἕκαστοι).” The antithetic demonstration does not only clarify the meaning of ταπεινοφροσύνη but it also amplifies the weight of the statement.<sup>42</sup>

Paul utilized his rhetorical skills to inspire the Philippian believers to pursue harmony based on a call to sincere and authentic humility.<sup>43</sup> The central focus on Jesus Christ is upheld as “a motivating force” to assess self-centeredness and to prompt the readers to pursue the interests of others.<sup>44</sup> Since Christ *humbled Himself*, His followers should apply *humility* in their attitudes and actions to others. Paul clarified to his audience that the manner to apply humility is “to *value others above yourselves*” (2:4–5).<sup>45</sup>

Verse 4 contains minor textual issues, which are not considered critical in the exegesis of the text. The first one involves the adjectives ἕκαστος and ἕκαστοι. According to Fee and NA<sup>28</sup>, several manuscripts contain both words as ἕκαστοι, which means that each occurrence of “each” should be read as plural.<sup>46</sup> The first ἕκαστοι is contained in ABFG 17, Vulg., while ⋈ CDKLP, Goth., Cop., Arm., Syr.utr contain ἕκαστος, and the second ἕκαστοι is observed in ⋈ ABCvi Dgr P 17, 31, 47, Cop., while KL, Goth., Syr.utr, Arm. observe ἕκαστος.<sup>47</sup> Second, the

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<sup>40</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Hansen, 113.

<sup>42</sup> Snyman, “A Rhetorical Analysis,” 794.

<sup>43</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 89.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–90.

<sup>45</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 115.

<sup>46</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 66; Eberhard Nestle, and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger eds., 28, revidierte Auflage (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 606.

<sup>47</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 56; Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*, 606.



καὶ is textually contested.<sup>48</sup> However, there are several external evidence for its early inclusion and its inclusion is extensive (ⱼ46⋈ A B C D2Byz; [lacking in D\* F G K Tertullian]).<sup>49</sup>

### **The Best Example of Humility—Jesus Christ (His Incarnation and Exaltation) (2:5–11)**

Paul presented Jesus Christ as the best example of humility for the Philippian believers to follow; thus, they need to have the same mindset as Him (2:5–11). Verse 5 introduces verses 6–11 when Paul commanded the Philippians to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ. Verses 6–11 describe the incarnation (humility) and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Verses 6–8 involve an action: Jesus Christ, who is God, humbled Himself to the point of humiliation by dying on the cross (2:6–8). Verses 9–11 demonstrate the result of the action of Jesus. God exalted Jesus Christ to the highest honor and granted Him a reputation that is superior to every reputation that every living being would bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Introduction: Have the Same Mindset as Jesus Christ (2:5).

Verse 5 shapes the connection between verses 1–4 and 6–11.<sup>50</sup> The word τοῦτο, which is accusative and direct object, steers back to the mindset portrayed in verses 2–4, not forward to the account of Christ.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Paul introduced the hymn to Christ in verse 5 by gazing backward and forward. Apart from τοῦτο, Paul gazed backward by taking up again the theme of sharing the same mindset (φρονῆτε) in 2:2 and “consider” (ἠγέομαι) in verses 3 and 6.<sup>52</sup> Paul gazed ahead by expecting the

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<sup>48</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 103.

<sup>49</sup> Nestle and Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*, 606; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 103.

Hellerman notes that it involves “reading of the original hand of a manuscript as opposed to subsequent correctors of the manuscript.”

<sup>50</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 107.

<sup>51</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 107.

<sup>52</sup> Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 100.

archetype of the proper mindset, which is the mindset of Jesus.<sup>53</sup>

The imperative, φρονεῖτε is from φρονέω, which means “to develop an attitude based on careful thought, *be minded/disposed*.”<sup>54</sup> It also denotes “a mindset” or a “kind of thinking.”<sup>55</sup> Other verbs belong to the same semantic domain of φρονέω, such as οἶμαι, νομίζω, δοκέω, and ὑπολαμβάνω. They all denote “to think;” however, only φρονέω embodies the mind, attitude, and emotions; hence, its range is more extensive.<sup>56</sup> Paul most likely chose the verb φρονέω to express the urgency of the issue of harmony and unity.<sup>57</sup>

Paul commanded the Philippian believers in verse 5 to have this kind of mindset among themselves as Christ Jesus. Paul presented the mindset of Christ that is conveyed in verses 6–8, which concerns Jesus’ incarnation and crucifixion.<sup>58</sup> Jesus humbled Himself through obedience and death by crucifixion. Brian Peterson states, “For Paul, there is no gospel without obedience and no faith without being conformed to Jesus’ death.”<sup>59</sup>

## The Incarnation (Humility) and Exaltation of Jesus Christ (2:6–11)

Philippians 2:6–11 exhibits the full deity of Jesus.<sup>60</sup> Several scholars deem that Philippians 2:6–11 was a traditional hymn that existed before Paul (while others claim that Paul composed

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1066.

<sup>55</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 108.

<sup>56</sup> Rachael Tan, “Conformity to Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis of Paul’s Perspective on Humiliation and Exaltation in Philippians 2:5-11,” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 51, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 108.

<sup>59</sup> Brian K. Peterson, “Between Text & Sermon: Philippians 2:5-11: A Journal of Bible and Theology,” *Interpretation* 58, no. 2 (04, 2004): 178.

<sup>60</sup> A. G. Erum, “Jesus Christ Is Fully God, Not Just Fully Man,” *Eleutheria* 5, no. 2 (2021): 275.

the hymn originally), which portrays a vivid Christology emphasizing the ontology of Christ.<sup>61</sup> Hellerman proposes the passage to be a Greco-Roman encomium (“speech of praise”).<sup>62</sup> Fee argues that verses 6–11 form a narrative structure containing two parts (verses 6–8 and verses 9–11).<sup>63</sup> Whether hymn, encomium, or narrative, Paul’s intention in writing verses 6–11 is not theological or ontological but ethical and sociological.<sup>64</sup> Paul presented Jesus Christ as an example of what it means for the Philippian believers to “not look out for your own interests but rather for all.”<sup>65</sup> As Hawthorne states, “The hymn, it is said, presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, since the Philippian believers are in Christ, Paul prompts them that they already possess the power to live in a manner that is implied by 2:6–11.<sup>67</sup>

Verses 6–11 can be divided into two parts: the humility of Jesus Christ involving His incarnation (verses 6–8) and the exaltation of Jesus Christ by God the Father (verses 9–11). The first part is a compound sentence involving two clauses linked by “and,” which are indistinguishable in shape and present how Christ’s “mindset” conveyed itself first as God and second as man.<sup>68</sup> The second part captures the shape of basic Pauline argumentation in which the vital effect of Christ’s mindset (involving His humiliation) has led to God exalting Him to the highest honor by bestowing upon him the greatest name of all: “God’s own

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<sup>61</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 105–106; Allen, “Between Text & Sermon,” 73; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 105.

<sup>62</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 106. Hellerman explains, “Identifying Philippians 2:6–11 as an encomium contributes little to the interpretation of the text, but it does show that the Philippians would have been in familiar territory when they heard this portion of the letter for the first time” (Ibid.).

<sup>63</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 157–58.

<sup>64</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 105–106; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 105.

<sup>65</sup> Allen, “Between Text,” 73.

<sup>66</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 105–106.

<sup>67</sup> Allen, “Between Text,” 73.

<sup>68</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 158.

appellation of Lord,' which, not incidentally, is also one of the appellations of Caesar (Acts 25:26)."<sup>69</sup>

*Action: Jesus Christ humbled Himself through obedience and humiliation (2:6–8)*

The mindset of Jesus Christ involves an action. Jesus Christ, who is God, humbled Himself through His obedience and humiliation by dying on the cross (2:6–8). This involves His incarnation.

Although Jesus is God, He dismissed or laid away His preincarnate glory (social status) during His incarnation (verse 6). Cults, such as Iglesia ni Cristo, claim that Jesus Christ is just a special man and argue that being in the form of God in Philippians 2:6 means that Jesus is created in the image of God.<sup>70</sup> However, the word used in Philippians 2:6 is μορφή (“form”) and not εἶδος (“image”). BDAG defines μορφή as “form, outward appearance, shape,” while Louw and Nida define μορφή as “the nature or character of something, with emphasis upon both the internal and external form—‘nature, character.’”<sup>71</sup> TDNT refers μορφή to “form,” “external appearance,” while EDNT refers μορφή to “form, visible appearance.”<sup>72</sup> The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ indicates that Jesus is the preincarnate Christ. He is God. When He “did not consider being equal with God as something to be grasped,” He did not brag about His divine nature.

In verse 7, Paul utilized the word ἐκένωσεν from κενόω, which means “to make empty, to empty of divestiture of position or prestige: of Christ, who gave up the appearance of his divinity and took on the form of a slave.”<sup>73</sup> Jesus divested Himself of His divine rank and social status (linked to verse 6). Other scholars

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 158–59.

<sup>70</sup> Erum, “Jesus Christ Is Fully God,” 272, 281.

<sup>71</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* 584; Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* 659.

<sup>72</sup> Johannes Behm, “Μορφή, Μορφώω, Μόρφωσις, Μεταμορφώω,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 742; Horst Robert Balz, and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 44.

<sup>73</sup> Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 539.

attempted to have other interpretations of ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν: Jesus emptied His glory (Plummer), His sovereign implementation of authority (Hendriksen), His emblem of majesty (Calvin, Lightfoot), His virtual divine attributes (the kenoticists—C. Gore, P. T. Forsyth, H. R. Mackintosh), His equality with God (A. Oepke), and many more.<sup>74</sup> Although there is no basis for these hypothetical interpretations, the present author agrees with the definition of BDAG as well as Hellerman's view. Hellerman argues, “ἐκένωσεν is intended metaphorically to signify a lowering of rank (vis-à-vis verse 6) by means of the incarnation.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, Paul conveys the social status and reputation of Jesus Christ.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Fee argues that Jesus did not empty himself of anything but emptied Himself or “poured himself out.”<sup>77</sup> Jesus still possessed His divine attributes during His incarnation. Jesus emptied Himself by coming to earth as a poor human being, God-Incarnate (God-Man).

Verse 8 states, “He humiliated Himself by being obedient to the point of death, that is death on the cross (ἐταπεινώσεν ἐαυτὸν γεγόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.)” The lemma of ἐταπεινώσεν is ταπεινῶ, which means “to cause someone to lose prestige or status, humble, humiliate, abase, done especially to slaves with focus on reversal of status ταπ. ἐαυτὸν humble oneself of Christ, who went voluntarily to his death.”<sup>78</sup> Hellerman explains that ἐταπεινώσεν is better translated to “humiliated” because the word “humble” in English commonly denotes a state of mind or an attitude, while the word “humiliate” implies an action executed in a social context.<sup>79</sup> The Philippians understood very well what it means

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<sup>74</sup> Albrecht Oepke, “Κενός, Κενῶ, Κενόδοξος, Κενοδοξία,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 661; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>75</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 114.

<sup>76</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 114.

<sup>77</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter*, 210.

<sup>78</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 990.

<sup>79</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 116.

to be “humiliated by superiors in their social, political, and economic worlds.”<sup>80</sup>

Christ’s humiliation involved self-renunciation and self-sacrifice throughout His whole life on earth.<sup>81</sup> Jesus Christ decided to be obedient as a slave rather than to be sovereign as the Lord, and through His obedience, the One who existed in the form of God, reinforced His choice to take the form of a slave.<sup>82</sup> Through His obedience, Christ both revealed and suppressed His glory in the humiliation of a slave.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Jesus Christ humiliated Himself by being obedient to the point of death. The phrase ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου gauges the scale of Christ’s humility and paints the picture that He was “obedient to God to the full length of accepting death.”<sup>84</sup> As Hawthorne states, “He set himself to obey God by serving humankind.”<sup>85</sup> Jesus Christ humiliated Himself by obeying God the Father to the point of crucifixion.

Crucifixion (death on a cross) displays a very shameful death. The cross exhibited the lowest depth of human depravity and the most brutal form of sadistic torture and execution ever invented by humanity that it was only executed (by the Roman law) for the worst criminals and cruelest insurgents.<sup>86</sup> No Roman citizen would be executed by crucifixion; it was only reserved for slaves or foreigners.<sup>87</sup> Jesus Christ, as God-Incarnate, was able to experience the worst possible experience that a human being could ever experience. Christ’s death by crucifixion exhibits His definitive yes to God the Father and humanity and His supreme act of obedience to God the Father in His self-giving service to humankind.<sup>88</sup> Jesus Christ had

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<sup>80</sup> John H. Reumann, *Philippians, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 352.

<sup>81</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

<sup>82</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 156.

<sup>83</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 156.

<sup>84</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 157.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

Himself crucified voluntarily to die as the ultimate sacrifice for humankind to satisfy the wrath of God.

*Result: Jesus Christ has been exalted (2:9–11)*

The action of Jesus Christ (2:6–8) results in His exaltation (2:9–11). Because of the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ, God the Father exalted Him to the highest honor and granted Him the reputation that is superior to every reputation. Thus, every living being would bow to Him and confess that He is Lord. Paul encouraged the Philippian believers that God’s affirmation of Jesus’ incarnation and death has been marked with the final exclamation point, and he encourages them that their exalted Lord is sovereign over the entire universe, including Caesar.<sup>89</sup>

Verse 9 states: “Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest honor and granted Him the reputation that is superior to every reputation.” Instead of being ashamed of Jesus Christ’s humiliation, God responded to Christ’s self-humiliation (αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν) by exalting Him (ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν).<sup>90</sup> This is only evident to those who shared Paul’s perspective on God’s non-worldly social economy.<sup>91</sup> As Hellerman expounds, “The honoring of a crucified δοῦλος would have been anything but self-evident to pagans steeped in the social realities of Roman Philippi.”<sup>92</sup> Jesus imparted that in the divine order of things, self-humbling leads to exaltation.<sup>93</sup> This is how God’s kingdom functions and this law applies to the Philippian believers as for Christ Himself.<sup>94</sup>

While most English versions translate τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα to “the name which/that is above every name,” Hellerman argues that ὄνομα is best translated as “reputation.”<sup>95</sup> The phrase τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα echoes the “name” or “reputation,” which YHWH made for Himself when He delivered Israel from Egypt; thus,

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<sup>89</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 122.

<sup>90</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 118.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 118.

<sup>93</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 124.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 119.

Christ gained this name or reputation for the wonderful act of redemption (verses 7–8) when He instituted the new covenant.<sup>96</sup> The present author agrees with Hellerman’s explanation regarding “reputation,” although the phrase τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὄνομα in verse 9 indirectly anticipates κύριος in verse 11.<sup>97</sup>

Since God the Father exalted Jesus Christ and granted the highest reputation, every living creature (either human or angelic) everywhere will bow before Jesus (2:10) and will declare that Jesus is Lord (2:11). According to Hawthorne, there are two important interpretive issues in verse 10, which involve the phrase τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (“the name of Jesus”) and the verb κἀμπεῖν (“to bow”).<sup>98</sup> First, τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (“the name of Jesus”) does not imply that everyone will bow before “the name, Jesus” (Ἰησοῦ identified as a dative) but that everyone will bow before “the name of Jesus” (Ἰησοῦ identified as a genitive), and that name is κύριος, “Lord.”<sup>99</sup> Second, the verb κἀμπεῖν (“to bow”) is followed by the preposition ἐν (“in”) and the dative—ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (“in the name of Jesus”).<sup>100</sup> Due to ἐν, some scholars interpret this verse as “in the name of Jesus everyone should kneel” to God.<sup>101</sup> However, Hawthorne argues that Jesus was given the name or title “Lord;” thus, the phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ must be translated “at the name of Jesus.”<sup>102</sup> The present author agrees with Hawthorne’s argument because the title of Jesus Christ as κύριος echoes the Κύριος in the Septuagint (LXX) for the name of YHWH.<sup>103</sup>

Verse 11 proclaims that every tongue should confess publicly that Jesus Christ is Lord to the honor of God the Father. This implies that all creatures (every living being) will publicly

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>97</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 120.

<sup>98</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 127.

<sup>99</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 126–127.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> The present author has also made this connection (κύριος = יהוה) when she reads the Hebrew Old Testament and the LXX. For example, the LXX phrase in Ezekiel 37:1 “Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐπ’ ἐμὲ χεὶρ Κυρίου has been translated from “עַל־יְדֵי־יְהוָה וַיִּצְאֵנִי בְרוּיֵשׁ הַקְּתָה” (BHS).



recognize the lordship of Christ, either willingly or under obligation (with *ĩva* observed as a result or purpose and result).<sup>104</sup> Every living creature will bow down in reverence of Jesus' name and publicly confess simultaneously that Jesus Christ is Lord. As Bruce conveys, "He who took the very nature of a servant has been elevated by God to be Lord of all, and **every tongue will confess** him as such."<sup>105</sup>

## **THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATION**

In Philippians 2:1–11, unity and harmony are based on the work of God among believers; thus, giving encouragement, comfort, *koinōnia*, affection, and compassion.<sup>106</sup> The gospel involves a regenerated people who repent from sin that is etched in their hearts through the depravity committed by Adam and Eve sin (Romans 5:12).<sup>107</sup> These regenerated people would live out the desire of the triune God through the Holy Spirit; thus, others would recognize what God's people should look like.<sup>108</sup> As Keown states, "The answer is found in a full Christology, where we see in Jesus not only our salvation, but our example."<sup>109</sup>

Although the purpose of Paul's composition of Philippians 2:1–11 was ethical instead of ontological, the passage contains Christological features, especially in verses 6–11. Philippians 2:6–11 demonstrates the preincarnate form of Jesus Christ, His incarnation involving humility, obedience, and humiliation for God and humankind, and His exaltation resulting in every living being worshiping Him. Jesus Christ is God-Incarnate (God-Man).

Philippians 2:6–11 could also be paralleled to Adam, the first human being in Genesis 1:26–27. Adam was created in the image of God, was tempted to be like God, and was enslaved to

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<sup>104</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 123.

<sup>105</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 75.

<sup>106</sup> Keown, *Philippians*, 349.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

sin, which resulted in death after his disobedience.<sup>110</sup> Jesus Christ already existed in the form of God with God as God (also John 1:1-2); He wasn't created by God. Jesus did not grasp equality with God but took the form of a slave and was obedient to death, which resulted in His exaltation.<sup>111</sup> Jesus is Lord (Κύριος).

## APPLICATION

Since Paul's goal for composing Philippians 2:1–11 was ethical, he urged the believers (which is also applied to all believers today) to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ's and to live like Him. Jesus Christ is God-Incarnate who has exhibited what living for God appears in the chaos of human existence. Philippians 2:5–11 creates the epicenter of biblical ethics. Paul presented the life of Jesus as an ethical pattern to be imitated.<sup>112</sup>

Sadly, in contemporary churches today, some believers worship money and wealth more than God because of greed. Others hunger for power and status. They want to become church leaders for their selfish gain. The church has become a political organization or a corporation instead of a body of believers following Paul's charge in Philippians 2:1–11 to have joy in Christ through unity and humility.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to exhibit harmony, love, and humility by considering the needs of others in our church over our self-interests. If Jesus was willing to dismiss His own rights in obedience to the Father's greater purposes, we should do the same.<sup>113</sup> We need to share the same Christ-like mindset and consider others more important than ourselves.<sup>114</sup> Thus, let us also meet the needs of others. If we recognize someone who is in need in church, let us meet that need. For example, if we have church members who are sick either at home or

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<sup>110</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 140.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Keown, *Philippians*, 442.

<sup>113</sup> Steven E. Runge, *High Definition Commentary: Philippians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011), Php 2:5–11.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

hospital, let us visit them. If we can't visit them, then let us encourage them by sending food at home or money if they need finances to pay hospital bills. Many Christians say that they care but their actions don't show it. Let us be like Jesus Christ not just through our words but also through our actions.

## CONCLUSION

After examining Philippians 2:1–11, the passage demonstrates the significance of having the mindset of Jesus Christ. Paul presented Jesus Christ as the best example of humility (of considering others more than themselves) for the Philippian believers to follow. Jesus Christ gave up His preincarnate social status and lived a life of self-humiliation while fulfilling His purpose on earth, which includes crucifixion. Therefore, having the same mindset as Jesus Christ and sharing this kind of mindset will result in Christian harmony, humility, and joy.

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