

Philippians 2

was lacking.

2:5-11. Paul's Exhortation to Unity in View of Christ's Example

The Philippian believers' mindset should be that of the Lord Jesus Christ Who voluntarily left heaven's glory and humbled Himself and became a human being so that He might eventually go to the cross and pay for the sins of all humanity (2:5-8). As a result of Christ's demonstration of love in giving Himself on behalf of others, God the Father has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. As a result, every knee will eventually bow to Him, whether in heaven, in earth, or under the earth; and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; and God the Father will be glorified in it all (2:9-11).

(5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

(6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

(7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

(8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

(9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

(10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

(11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

but it was not translated into the English. Here its use is emphatic and understood in the sense of *indeed* or *in fact*. **Let this mind be in you** is an imperative phrase or command whose tense implies that its action may already be in progress and must be continued. **This** refers to what precedes in the second half of verse 3 and in all of verse 4,

(3) . . . In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

(4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you is *let this thought be in you, let this attitude be in you, or let this disposition be in you*. It is a third person command for which English has no equivalent. It means that *this mind (thought, attitude, or disposition) must be in you*, where **you** is plural and refers to the believers in Philippi. **Which was also in Christ Jesus** indicates that the sort of mind that is to be found in the Philippian believers has been illustrated in Jesus. He is held up as an example of having an attitude that was not looking on His own things but was instead looking on the things of others. There is no appreciable difference between *Christ Jesus* and *Jesus Christ* in the Greek text other than one of emphasis. Whereas *Christ Jesus* emphasizes that Jesus is the Messiah, *Jesus Christ* emphasizes that He is the Savior. Paul is telling the Philippian believers to think as the Lord Jesus Christ thought and to act toward others as He acted. He did not act in

2:5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Verse 5 introduces a section which is in contrast to verses 3 and 4 in which Paul has basically advised the Philippian believers how they should *not* be acting; whereas, in verses 5 through 8 he advises them how they *should* be acting. The word ordinarily translated *for* appears at the beginning of this verse in the Greek text,

Philippians 2

accordance with His own best interests; instead, acting in accordance with God the Father's will, He voluntarily became a man and went to the cross where He died for the sins of all humanity. He thus acted in accordance with the best interests of all humanity by providing eternal redemption for them. Similarly, believers should be acting in the best interests of others. This starts with having a proper mind or attitude toward self and toward others.

2:6

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Verse 6 introduces the mindset found in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Who** refers to Christ; and **being** is the translation of a participle used adverbially modifying *thought*, indicating cause. It is understood as *because He was, since He was, or inasmuch as He was*. **In the form of God** indicates that Jesus was actually God. *In the form of God* is placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *Who in the form of God being*. **Form** means *outward appearance or shape*. *The* does not appear before *form* in the Greek text, indicating that Paul is emphasizing its quality as *form* rather than its being some particular form. It is made particular, however, by **of God**, which means that He was *in the form which is God*, i.e. He was God and had all the attributes of God. His outward appearance was that of God. *The* also does not appear before *God* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *God*. **Thought** means *considered or regarded*. **Not** is understood with *thought*. Hence, *He did not think something, He did not consider something, or He did not regard something*. **Robbery** implies that He did not think His being in the form of God (or having an outward appearance of God) was something He would have to acquire through robbery. The word translated *robbery* is also used to mean *a prize, a booty, a piece of good fortune, or a windfall*. *The* does not appear before *robbery* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *robbery* or as

prize, booty, piece of good fortune, or windfall. It has been translated in the King James Bible in an active sense, i.e. He did not have to grasp or seize this as if He had to acquire equality with God through robbery. He already had equality with God because He was fully God. The term translated *robbery* may instead be understood in a passive sense as something to *be held on to* as if to prevent its being taken from Him but voluntarily set aside equality with God. Jesus did not think that equality with God had to be held on to as if it were a piece of good fortune, a windfall, a prize, or a booty. He left heaven voluntarily. He was not forced against His will to become a man and die on the cross to pay for the sins of all humanity. Although both the active sense of *robbery* and the passive sense of *a thing to be held on to* are supported by other Scripture, in this writer's opinion the passive sense fits better in this context than the active sense. What He did not think to be *robbery* or *a thing to be held on to* was **to be equal with God**. Again *the* does not appear before *God* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *God*. He already was equal with God, and He did not have to make Himself equal with God. What the Bible indicates here is that Jesus did not think that equality with God was something which He had to acquire through some means such as robbery (because it was already His) or something to which He must hold on (because it would be restored to Him at His exaltation); instead, He voluntarily gave up some of what was His when He became a man. What He voluntarily and temporarily laid aside was heaven's glory, but not His deity or any of His attributes. He was still eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and holy. However, He did limit the use of these attributes. What He gave up was the outward appearance of His being God the Son. A glimpse of this glorious appearance was seen by Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-9 says,

(1) And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

Philippians 2

(2) And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

(3) And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

(4) Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

(5) While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

(6) And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

(7) And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

(8) And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

(9) And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Peter refers to his experience at the transfiguration in II Peter 1:15-21 when he, James, and John saw Christ's glory,

(15) Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

(16) For **we** have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **were eyewitnesses of his majesty**.

(17) **For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**

(18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

(19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

(20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

(21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (emphasis added).

2:7

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. But introduces a strong contrast. **Made . . . of no reputation** is *made empty* or *divested of privileges*. **Himself**, which refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *But Himself emptied*. **Made himself of no reputation** means *He made Himself empty, He emptied Himself, or He divested Himself of His privileges*. Although many suggestions have been made regarding what *made himself of no reputation* means or its extent, it is best to let the Scriptures speak for themselves. The way Christ *made himself of no reputation* or *emptied Himself* is indicated by what is stated in the rest of verse 7 and all of verse 8,

(7) . . . **And took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:**

(8) And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross** (emphasis added).

And took is the translation of a participle which literally means *having taken*. Here it has been translated in a way which indicates an attendant, additional, or accompanying circumstance or fact in addition to *made himself of no reputation*; and

Philippians 2

the time of its action is simultaneous with the action of *made himself of no reputation*. It might instead be used to indicate time and be understood in the sense of *when He took*. What He took **upon him**, or *upon Himself*, was **the form of a servant**, where **form** means *outward appearance* or *shape*. This is the same term used in the previous verse where it says *being in the form of God*. Here, however, it is *the form of a servant*. *The* does not appear before *form* in the Greek text, indicating that its quality as *form* is being emphasized. **Of a servant** is *of a slave*. Now, Jesus was never actually a slave to any human being. However, He was a servant of God. At the same time, He went from the highest position, that of being God the Son in heaven, to a position which was basically equivalent to the lowest position on earth, that of a slave. *The* does not appear before *servant* in the Greek text, indicating that its quality as *servant* or *slave* is being emphasized rather than its being a particular servant or slave. **And was made** is the translation of another participle whose time of action occurs at the same time as the action of *made . . . of no reputation*. It means *having been made, having become, or and became*. It has likewise been translated in a way which indicates an attendant, additional, or accompanying circumstance or fact in addition to *made . . . of no reputation*. It is something He did at the same time. It might instead be used to indicate time and be understood as *when He was made* or *when He came to be*. **In the likeness of men** tells what He was made like and means that Jesus became a man. **Likeness** is understood in the sense of *form* or *appearance*. He looked like a man because He *was* a man, and He was regarded as a man. **Men** is the generic term for *human beings*. *The* does not appear before *likeness* or before *men* in the Greek text in order to emphasize their respective qualities as *likeness* and as *men* or *human beings*. At the same time, however, He did not give up His deity; and He never became a sinner. In reference to Christ's emptying Himself, Paul wrote in II Corinthians 8:9,

(9) For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, **though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor**, that ye through his poverty might be rich (emphasis added).

In Jesus' prayer in John 17:4-5, Jesus prayed,

(4) I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

(5) And now, O Father, **glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was** (emphasis added).

John 17:4-5 indicates that Christ gave up heaven's glory when He became a man. In verse 5 Christ's prayer is that the glory He had before the creation of the world be restored to Him. Likewise, in John 1:1-2, 14 John indicates that Jesus was God and that He was also with God but that He became a human being. He also indicates that Christ's glory, the sort of glory one would expect to see in the Son of God, was seen. John 1:1-2 says,

(1) **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

(2) The same was in the beginning with God (emphasis added).

John 1:14 says,

(14) **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth** (emphasis added).

2:8

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And

Philippians 2

continues the thought. **Being found** is the translation of a participle used adverbially modifying *humbled*, indicating time or attendant circumstance. Its tense indicates that its action occurred before the action of *humbled*. If used to show time, it is understood as *after He was found*. If used to show an attendant, accompanying, or additional circumstance or fact in addition to *humbled*, it is understood in the sense of *and He was found*. **In fashion** means *in outward appearance, in form, or in shape*. *The* does not appear before *fashion* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *fashion, outward appearance, form, or shape*. *In fashion* has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *And in fashion was found as (a) man*. **As** introduces a comparative clause. **As a man** is a statement of comparison, and the reader should insert *is found* in his thinking following *man* so that it reads, *As a man (is found)*. **Man** is the generic term meaning *human being* and indicates that Jesus became a human being. *The* does not appear before *man* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *man or human being*. **He humbled himself** means literally that *He lowered Himself or He made Himself low*. When used figuratively as here, it means *He humbled Himself or He humiliated Himself*. **And became** is the translation of a participle whose time of action occurs at the same time as the action of *humbled*, and it is used adverbially modifying *humbled*. It has been translated in a way which indicates an attendant, additional, or accompanying circumstance or fact in addition to *humbled*. It might instead be used to indicate time and be understood as *when He became*. What Christ **became** is **obedient**. The word translated *became* implies that He came to be something He had not previously been. Sometimes, however, this same word is used as a substitute for *he was*. What Christ *became*, or what Christ *was*, is indicated by the term *obedient*. However, even though the translation *became* is the better choice for this context, it does not mean that Christ was previously disobedient to God the Father, because

what He became was something He had never previously been: He became obedient **unto death**. Although He had always obeyed His Father, He had never previously been called upon to die. *Unto death* is *until death or even to the point of death*. The reference, of course, is to Jesus Christ's dying on the cross in payment for the sins of all humanity. Although He was the Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus humbled Himself when He became a man and was obedient to God the Father all the way up to and including dying on the cross for sin. *The* does not appear before *death* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *death*. **Even** is emphatic and means *indeed, in fact, or certainly*. **The death of the cross** makes it specific regarding which death Paul is writing about. It is not any death as if it were death by choking or death by strangulation, but it was death by crucifixion on the cross where His blood was shed. *The* does not appear before the second use of *death* or before *cross* in the Greek text, indicating that their respective qualities as *death* and as *cross* are being emphasized. The phrase is literally *indeed, a cross's death*. It restricts His death to a death which comes as the result of His having been crucified rather than dying in some other fashion. His humbling Himself to become a man went even farther when He died the most despicable death imaginable, that of crucifixion. It was God the Son dying on the cross as if He were a common criminal and in the process, even though He had never committed so much as a single sin, became sin for us. What an example of looking out for the best interests of others, even of those who would deny Him. II Peter 2:1 says,

(1) But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, **even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction** (emphasis added).

Other Scriptures teach the same truths. I

Philippians 2

John 2:1-2 says,

(1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

(2) **And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world** (emphasis added).

John 1:29 says,

(29) The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world** (emphasis added).

II Corinthians 5:21 says,

(21) **For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;** that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (emphasis added).

Galatians 3:13-14 says,

(13) **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:** for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

(14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (emphasis added).

Hebrews 5:7-8 says,

(7) Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

(8) **Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he**

suffered (emphasis added).

Isaiah 53:1-12 says,

(1) Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

(2) For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

(3) He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

(4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet **we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**

(5) But **he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**

(6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

(7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

(8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for **he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.**

(9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

(10) **Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for**

Philippians 2

sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

(11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

(12) Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because **he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many**, and made intercession for the transgressors (emphasis added).

2:9

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. **Wherefore** introduces a strong inference and is used in the sense of *for this reason*. **God** is God the Father. **Also . . . and**, is the translation of two identical words, which are ordinarily translated *and*. When this combination of words is used together, it is typical that the first one is translated *both* and the second one is translated *and*. It indicates that God the Father actually did two things rather than one. **Hath highly exalted him** indicates the first thing which God the Father did. *Hath highly exalted* is *raised to the loftiest height*, and it has been translated in a way which emphasizes the results of its action. **Him** is the Lord Jesus Christ and indicates the One Whom God the Father raised to a lofty height. It refers to His exaltation in heaven following His ascension into heaven. *Him* has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *Wherefore, God also Him has highly exalted*. **(Hath) given him a name which is above every name**, where **him** again refers to Christ, indicates the second thing God the Father has done on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has also been translated in a way which emphasizes the results of its action. What

God the Father gave Jesus is **a name**. *The* does not appear before this first use of *name* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *name*. However, this is not just any name; instead, it is restricted in its meaning to being *a name which is above every other name*. It is literally *the over-and-above-all name, the beyond-all name, or the more-than name*, where it takes on the sense of *the more-exalted-than name, the more excellent name than, the more glorious name than, or the name superior to*. And what the name given to Jesus is superior to or **above** is **every name** which can be mentioned. The name which is above every name which God the Father has given to Jesus is *Lord*, the name by which God was known in the Old Testament. Although this writer disagrees, some have suggested that it does not refer to an actual name but to that which a name represents, i.e. to His exaltation, and is another way of saying, *Hath highly exalted Him*.

2:10

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Verses 10 and 11 form a purpose clause which indicates the reason God the Father highly exalted Jesus and also the reason He gave Jesus a name which is above every name. Therefore, **that** is understood in the sense of *in order that* or *for the purpose that*. **At the name of Jesus** implies whenever the name of Jesus is mentioned or at some time when the name of Jesus is mentioned. It is not the name *Jesus* that is intended but the name *of Jesus*, i.e. *the name belonging to Jesus* or *the name possessed by Jesus*, i.e. *Lord*. At the mention of the name *Lord*, i.e. the name possessed by Jesus, **every knee should bow**. The fact that every knee *will* bow is indicative that everyone will individually submit himself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and will recognize Christ's Lordship and sovereignty over his life. By no stretch of the imagination does this indicate that all these people will be saved persons. It does, however, indicate

Philippians 2

that everyone will ultimately acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. *The* does not appear before *knee* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *knee*. The knee, whether human, angelic, or demonic, is used to represent a being just as a part is used to represent a whole. **Of things in heaven** indicates that the knee belonging to every heavenly being will bow. This includes not only those beings that are angelic spirit beings but also any other beings that might be found in the heavens. **Things in earth** indicates that all earthly beings will also bow in submission at the mention of the name belonging to Jesus. The phrase *of things in earth* is likely limited to intelligent beings, but at least one writer has suggested that it includes members of the animal creation. However, the animal creation has never rebelled against God. **And things under the earth** implies *of beings who are subterranean* and implies beings or powers under the earth. Every being that has ever been created, whether angelic or fallen, is going to bow in acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ when the name *Lord*, the name which belongs to Jesus, is mentioned.

2:11

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As indicated by **and**, verse 11 continues the purpose clause begun in verse 10; and as indicated by the italics, *that* has been supplied by the translators in order to aid the understanding of the English reader and is understood as *in order that* or *for the purpose that*. Just as *every knee will bow*, so every tongue will confess. **Every**

tongue implies that the entire creation will confess to God and that this confessing will be done individually. There will be no exceptions. *Every tongue* represents one being, whether human, angelic, or demonic. It is another example of using a part to represent the whole. *The* does not appear before *tongue* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *tongue*. **Should confess** means *should admit* or *should acknowledge*. What every tongue will acknowledge is **that Jesus Christ is Lord**. Thus, there will be a recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ by all. Furthermore, the fact that every tongue will confess *that Jesus Christ is Lord* suggests that the name *of Jesus*, the name which is above every name, the name which has been given to Jesus, is the name *Lord*. Although there were attempts to force believers to say that Caesar is Lord, all will eventually acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. *The* does not appear before *Lord* in the Greek text in order to emphasize its quality as *Lord* or *Master*. Furthermore, *Lord* has been emphasized by its placement in the Greek text, which reads literally, *And every tongue will confess that Lord (is) Jesus Christ*. **To the glory of God the Father** indicates the purpose for which every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. God the Father will be the recipient of glory from all beings, even from the fallen creation. All glory ultimately belongs to God the Father, and every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord will bring glory to God the Father. *The* does not appear before *glory*, before *God*, or before *Father* in the Greek text in order to emphasize their respective qualities as *glory*, as *God*, and as *Father*.

2:12-18. Paul's Exhortation to Unity in View of His Own Example

In view of some problems in the church at Philippi and their track record of obedience, Paul admonishes the believers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. They were to be working at being the kind of people they as believers should be and to be doing the things they as believers should be doing. They should be doing this with fear and trembling (2:12) because God is the One working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. If they are not what they should be and are not doing the things they should be