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**Conduct Worthy of the Gospel**  
Be Conformed to Christ's Likeness  
Php 2:5-11

**Pre-Introduction:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is always an honor to preach the gospel to you.

**Introduction:** Today, I will continue to expound upon the implications of the gospel. Individuals who commit to follow the Lord Jesus Christ have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ! There is an undeniable link between the saving events of the gospel and the conduct appropriate for Christ followers.<sup>1</sup> This is the third sermon of the series "Conduct Worthy of the Gospel." We began this series in Philippians 1:27-30 where Paul exhorted the Philippians to be united in mission, specifically in gospel ministry and in gospel hostility so, the focus was external (outside of the church). I titled that sermon "Conduct Worthy of the Gospel: Be United in Mission." Next, we looked at Philippians 2:1-4 where Paul exhorted the Philippians to be like-minded in community so, the focus was internal (inside the church). Today, we will explore Philippians 2:5-11 where Paul's maintains an internal focus. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 2:5-11 as we read together from the sacred text. The title of this sermon is "Conduct Worthy of the Gospel: Be Conformed to Christ's Likeness."

**Sub-Introduction:** The letter written by the Apostle Paul and his companion Timothy is addressed to the church at Philippi, and the most common location for its composition is in Rome around A.D. 61-63 while Paul was there in prison.<sup>2</sup> The most likely pattern of events are as followed: Paul planted the church in Philippi during his second mission

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<sup>1</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1991), Logos edition, 205.

<sup>2</sup> Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 617-618.

trip in A.D. 50; he visited the church again during his third mission trip in A.D. 55; he was detained by the Romans in Jerusalem in A.D. 57; he was held in Caesarea from A.D. 57-59 where he eventually appealed to Caesar and was transferred to Rome in A.D. 60.<sup>3</sup> During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, the Philippians sent him a gift through the hands of Epaphroditus, and Paul put this letter in hand to return to the church at Philippi (Php 2:25-30; 4:10, 14-20). Paul opens the letter with his typical greeting (Php 1:1-2), offers thanksgiving and prayer on behalf of the Philippians (Php 1:3-11), provides an update on his imprisonment (Php 1:12-18), shares his future convictions (Php 1:19-26) and exhorts them to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel (Php 1:27-2:18).

The purpose for Paul's trip to Jerusalem following his third missionary journey was to provide an offering for the saints, which was collected among the Gentile churches, and when he was seen by a mob of Jews from Asia (modern day Turkey) they accused him of teaching "men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place (referring to the temple)" and for bringing a Greek in the temple (Ac 21:28-29). As the mob attempted to kill Paul, the Roman soldiers intervened, thus saving Paul's life, and placed him in the barracks, but the commander eventually relocated Paul to Caesarea because of the Jews continual plotting to murder him (Ac 21:30 - 23:35). Paul's case was heard by Felix, the governor of Caesarea, and the Jews brought the following false charges against Paul (Ac 24:5-10): 1) Paul was a worldwide trouble maker, stirring up riots; therefore, he was a threat to Rome who desired to maintain control; 2) Paul was the ringleader of the Nazarene sect, a faith divorced from the Jewish religion and it was a new cult, which means it was illegal to practice because Roman law controlled religious practice; 3) Paul attempted to desecrate the temple (note: the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the temple, Ac 21:28; nevertheless, the allegation is false because the mob only accused Paul of bringing a Gentile, Trophimus from Ephesus, inside the temple, which was also false).<sup>4</sup> To

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<sup>3</sup> *The King James Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1988), 1844-1845.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, Acts, vol. 2 of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, eds. John F. Walvoord & Roy. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Logos edition, 421.

make matters worse, the Jewish leaders reported to Felix that they seized Paul because of these alleged offenses, thus implying they took him to arrest him and judge him according to their law (Ac 24:6-9), which is false because the mob actually sought to kill Paul before the Roman soldiers intervened (Ac 21:31-32; 26:21)!<sup>5</sup> Paul argued his case before Felix, emphasizing that the chargers were false (Ac 24:10-13, 17-21): “they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd . . . neither can they prove the things of which they now accuse me” (Ac 24:12-13). Nevertheless, Paul remained bound without cause (Ac 24:22-23), even into the reign of Festus who replaced Felix as Governor of Caesarea (Ac 24: 26-27). Festus also heard Paul’s case before his accusers, but because he desired to do the Jews a favor he attempted to have Paul’s case heard in Jerusalem, the place where his life would be in the greatest danger (Ac 25:1-12); therefore, Paul appealed to Caesar, and Festus granted his request. Paul said,

**For if I am an offender or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying, but if there is nothing in these things of which men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar (Ac 25:11)**

King Agrippa later visited Festus and heard Paul’s case and concluded with his wife, Bernice, and others present that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or chains and he would have been released, if he had not appealed to Caesar (Ac 25:13 - 26:32). However, Paul did not make a mistake in appealing to Caesar because the Lord was clearly orchestrating Paul’s path to Rome so that he could bear witness before Caesar (Acts 23:11, 27:23-24; Phil 1:17), and Paul knew all along that he was really on trial for the sake of the Gospel as the charges were just a cover up to murder both the apostle and the gospel he faithfully proclaimed (Ac 26:19-23).

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Sermon Points:

### I. Be Conformed to Christ's Likeness (v. 5)

<sup>5</sup> Let this (τοῦτο, pronoun, demonstrative, accusative, singular, neuter) mind be (φρονέω, verb, present, active, imperative, second person, plural) in (ἐν, preposition) you which was also in (ἐν, preposition) Christ Jesus,

**Explanation:** Paul introduces Jesus Christ as the ultimate illustration of self-sacrifice and humility in Php 2:5.<sup>6</sup> Paul's exhortations in Php 2:1–4 prepares the way for the Christian hymn in Php 2:6-11, which sets forth “Jesus Christ as the Lordly Example.”<sup>7</sup> Paul follows this section with three additional examples of Gospel servants who in obedience to Christ and following His example, demonstrate joy, unity, humility, and concern for others —Paul himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus (2:17–30).<sup>8</sup> The demonstrative pronoun, “This” (τοῦτο) in the opening verse, points backward to Paul's exhortations in Php 2:14. “Let [this] mind be” (φρονέω) means “to dispose the mind in a certain way” (Logos Bible Sense Software, hereinafter LBSS), and it appears a total of five times in this letter alone (Php 1:7, 2:5, 3:15, 3:19, & 4:2). “Let this mind be” is the concluding imperative of Php 2:1-4; therefore, the mind Paul commands the Philippians to have in Php 2:5 equals the sum of his exhortations in Php 2:1-4, which also happens to be the mind of Christ as illustrated by the hymn in Php 2:6-11. According to NASB, ESV & most Greek texts, φρονέω (let [this] mind be) is a present, active, imperative verb, but according to NKJV it is a present, passive, imperative verb. The evidence favors the former, so the verb is better translated as “Have this mind” (ESV). The imperative mood expresses action that can only be achieved by the exercise of the will of one person upon the will of another person.<sup>9</sup> Typically, the present imperative, as used here, denotes a command to do something repeatedly, it specifies *how* or *when*

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<sup>6</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 166.

<sup>7</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 166.

<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 166.

<sup>9</sup> David Alan Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), Logos edition, 185.

something is to be done.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, the present imperative is usually a general precept to be applied broadly in many situations.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Paul using the present, active, imperative of φρονέω is a making a general command (exercising his will upon the Philippians) to the Philippians to have “this mind,” which can be applied broadly in many situations, and to do so repeatedly. The preposition “in”, which appears twice in v. 5 is key in understanding this passage. The Philippians are commanded to have this mind “in” their mutual relations with one another, again the mind is the sum of Paul’s exhortations in Php 2:1-4, which was also “in” Christ. The Philippians are to repeatedly have this mind functioning within themselves, which was also functioning in Jesus Christ. A.T. Robertson translated it this way, “Keep on thinking this in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (ὁ και ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [*ho kai en Christōi Iēsou*]).”<sup>12</sup>

### **Parallel Text:**

**Ro 15:5:** Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,

**Application:** As followers of Christ, we must be like-minded in love (Php 2:2), purpose (Php 2:2), humility (Php 2:3), and the interests of others (Php 2:4) within the local church. This mind/ attitude was also in Christ Jesus, the ultimate example of sacrifice and humility (Php 2:5), and followers of Jesus must conform to His likeness.

### **A. Christ’s Sacrifice (vs. 6-7)**

<sup>6</sup> who, being (ὑπάρχω, verb, present, active, participle, singular, nominative, masculine) in the form (μορφή, noun, dative, singular, feminine) of God did not consider (ἡγήομαι, deponent verb, aorist, middle (true middle), indicative, third person, singular) it robbery (ἄρπαγμός, noun, accusative, singular, masculine) to be equal with

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>12</sup> Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Concise ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Logos edition.

God,<sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation (κενόω, verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular), taking (λαμβάνω, verb, aorist, active, participle, singular, nominative, masculine) the form (μορφή) of a bondservant (δοῦλος, noun, genitive, singular, masculine), and coming (γίνομαι, deponent verb, aorist, middle (not a true middle = active), participle, singular, nominative masculine) in the likeness of men.

**Explanation:** In verse 6, “[Who] Being” (ὑπάρχω) can also be translated as “existing” and the verb is a present, active, participle; therefore, the action is continuous and likely contemporaneous (occurring simultaneously) with the action of the main verb.<sup>13</sup> While continuously existing in the form of God, Christ did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. “The form [of God]” (μορφή, appears 3 x in Greek text (Mk 16:12; Php 2:6, 7) here the noun is referring to the glory of God as supported by both the OT and NT, which speak of the glory of God as the manifestation of God; as a result, “the form of God” in which the preincarnate Christ was clothed was the glory of God and “the glory of God is the manifestation of God’s power, the revelation of God’s nature in creation and redemption, and the radiance of God’s being.”<sup>14</sup> In *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Peter O’Brien accurately argued:

μορφή [form] refers to that ‘form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it’. The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ [in the form of God] is best interpreted against the background of the glory of God, that shining light in which, according to the OT and intertestamental literature, God was pictured. The expression does not refer simply to external appearance but pictures the preexistent Christ as clothed in the garments of divine majesty and splendour. He was in the

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<sup>13</sup> Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 150.

<sup>14</sup> Walter G. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2009), Logos edition, 137.

form of God, sharing God's glory. ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ [in the form of God] thus corresponds with Jn. 17:5 ('the glory I had with you before the world began') and reminds one of Heb. 1:3 ('the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being').<sup>15</sup>

Did [not] consider" (ἡγέομαι) is a deponent verb (a verb with a middle or passive form without any corresponding active form), yet it is a true middle, which emphasizes the subject's involvement, a process that Christ (the subject) alone experienced.<sup>16</sup> "It robbery" (ἀρπαγμός) is a noun that appears once in Greek NT, and has been translated in diverse ways in an effort to capture the sense: "a thing to be grasped" (ESV; NASB); "as something to be used for His own advantage" (HCSB; NIV); "as something to be exploited" (CSB). In summary, while existing in the form of God, Christ himself did not consider equality with God as something to be used for his own personal advantage. In his commentary, *The Letter to the Philippians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, Walter G. Hansen correctly stated:

The hymn lifts the veil between time and eternity to reveal the choice of one existing in the form of God and equal with God. This person did not view his divine being and rank as something to use for his own selfish advantage.... This decision to say No to selfish exploitation of an advantageous position—was the choice of this divine person.... In contrast to the natural human tendency to say Yes to every opportunity to exploit personal advantages of position and power for selfish purposes.<sup>17</sup>

However, while existing in the form of God, he did choose to make Himself of no reputation by taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. "Made [himself] of no reputation" (κενόω) means "to make void or empty of contents"

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<sup>15</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 210–211.

<sup>16</sup> Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 89.

<sup>17</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 145–146.

(LBSS, See 1 Co. 9:15) and the verb has also been translated as “emptied himself” (ESV; NASB; HCSB; CSB) or “made himself nothing” (NIV). The latter is preferred, but it is important to note that Christ did not empty himself of his divinity (his divine form and equality with God), but he did relinquish his divine rights and masked his divine glory by becoming human in the form of a slave; therefore, His existence in the form of God was both manifested and concealed in the form of a slave.<sup>18</sup> Christ always existed in the form of God (Php 2:6), but he also added or took on the form of a slave (Php 2:7). Christ’s self-emptying was the incarnation.<sup>19</sup> “Made of no reputation” is in the active voice, which means Christ (the subject) carried out the action and it is the main verb for the Greek participles (verbal adjectives) “taking” (λαμβάνω) and “coming” (γίνομαι), which are designed to describe how Christ “made himself of no reputation.” “Taking” (λαμβάνω) is an aorist, participle in the active voice (subject carries out the action), which denotes antecedent action (action prior to the action of the main verb).<sup>20</sup> In translation, the aorist participle may generally be rendered by a phrase consisting of “having” or “after” plus an English past participle.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it could be translated as “having took” or “after he took” the form of a bondservant. “Bondservant” (δοῦλος) is “a person who is legally owned by someone else and whose entire livelihood and purpose was determined by their master” (LBSS). As a result, it carries the idea of a slave, which is the how the HCSB translates δοῦλος here. Christ having took (or after Christ took) the form of a slave (note the contrast between μορφῇ θεοῦ (form of God) in v. 6 and μορφῇ δοῦλου (form of a bondservant) in v. 7). “Coming” (γίνομαι) is an aorist participle, which also denotes antecedent action, and it is a deponent verb, so it is also the active voice (not a true middle voice). It could be translated as “having came” or “after he came”

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<sup>18</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 151.

<sup>19</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 151.

<sup>20</sup> Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 150.



in the likeness of men.” Christ made himself void “having took” (or “after Christ took”) the form of a slave and “having come” (or “after he came”) in the likeness of man.

**Parallel Text:**

**Ro 12:1:** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*

**Illustration:** Listen to this wonderful poem that Paul Lee Tan obtained from a magazine called *The Brethren Evangelist*:

I counted dollars while God counted crosses,  
I counted gains while He counted losses,  
I counted my worth by the things gained in store  
But He sized me up by the scars that I bore.  
I coveted honors and sought for degrees,  
He wept as He counted the hours on my knees;  
I never knew until one day by the grave  
How vain are the things that we spend life to save;  
I did not yet know until my loved one went above  
That richest is he who is rich in God’s love.<sup>22</sup>

Warren Wiersbe once told the story of a missionary who attended a religious festival in Brazil, and as he was going from booth to booth, he saw a sign above one booth that read: “Cheap Crosses.” The missionary thought to himself, “That’s what many Christians are looking for these days—cheap crosses. My Lord’s cross was not cheap. Why should mine be?”<sup>23</sup>

Epigrams on Sacrifice:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”—Jim Elliot<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), Logos edition, 1175.

<sup>23</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Philippians*, vol. 2 of *The Bible Exposition Commentary: An Exposition of the New Testament Compromising the Entire “BE” Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), Logos edition, 75.

<sup>24</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1185.

“There has never yet been a man in our history who led a life of ease whose name is worth remembering.”—Theodore Roosevelt<sup>25</sup>

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.”—Dr. J.H. Jowett<sup>26</sup>

**Application:** Christ left His pre-existent, divine glory to become a human, not for Himself, but for others and Christ followers must conform to His self-sacrificing character.<sup>27</sup> Followers of Christ in their mutual relations within the church must shun the temptation to grasp or hold onto our own interests, benefits, or privileges for the sole benefit of ourselves; instead, we must willingly sacrifice them for the glory of God and the good of others. This is looking out for the interests of others and not just our own (Php 2:4).

Christians must use the privileges of their influence to help others; lesser persons will use their privileges to promote themselves.<sup>28</sup>

“Jesus used His heavenly privileges for the sake of others—for *our* sake.”<sup>29</sup> If paying a price will honor Christ and help others within the local church, then Christians should be willing to do it as this was Paul’s attitude (Phil. 2:17), Timothy’s (Phil. 2:20), and also Epaphroditus’ (Phil. 2:30).<sup>30</sup> There is no better example of a selfless attitude for Christians to follow than that of Christ and with His example before us we should be “like-minded” (v. 2) in community (the local church). In *Opening up Philippians, Opening Up Commentary*, Roger Ellsworth profoundly stated, “We cannot receive the benefits of his sacrifice and then refuse to follow his example.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1185.

<sup>26</sup> Wiersbe, *Philippians*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Robert James Utley, *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians)*, vol. 8 of *Study Guide Commentary Series: New Testament* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), Logos edition, 180.

<sup>28</sup> Wiersbe, *Philippians*, 74.

<sup>29</sup> Wiersbe, *Philippians*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> Wiersbe, *Philippians*, 75.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Philippians, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster, MA: Day One Publications, 2004), Logos Edition, 38.

## B. Christ's Humility (v. 8-11)

<sup>8</sup> And being found (εὕρισκω, verb, aorist, passive, participle, singular, nominative, masculine) in appearance as a man, He humbled (ταπεινῶω, verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular) Himself and became (γίνομαι, verb, aorist, middle, participle, singular, nominative masculine) obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore (διο, conjunction, logical inferential) God also has highly exalted (ὑπερυψῶω, verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular) Him and given (χαρίζομαι, deponent verb, aorist, middle (true middle), indicative, third person, singular) Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that (ινα, conjunction, adverbial purpose) at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Κάμπτω, verb, aorist, active, subjunctive, third person, singular) of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess (ἐξομολογέω, verb, aorist, middle, subjunctive, third person, singular) that (οτι, conjunction, substantival content) Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory (δόξα, noun, accusative, singular, feminine) of God the Father.

**Explanation:** In verse 8, “Being found” (εὕρισκω) is an aorist, passive, participle. The aorist, participle is antecedent action to the main verb “he humbled [himself]” (ταπεινῶω) and the passive voice indicates action received by the subject. Therefore, it could be translated as “having been found in appearance of a man” or “after being found in appearance as a man” he humbled himself. “He humbled [himself]” (ταπεινῶω) is the main verb, and it is in the active voice meaning Jesus performed the action. The sense is “to humble someone, conceived of as bring the person low or down” (LBSS, see Mk 23:12, Lk 14:11; Lk 18:14; 2 Co 11:7). The verb “He humbled” is also in the active voice so Jesus carried out the action and it is also the main verb of the participle “became [obedient]” (γίνομαι, deponent verb, active voice, not a true

middle). Both participles, “being found” (εὕρισκω) and “became [obedient]” (γίνομαι) further describe how Christ humbled himself. Therefore, verse 8 could be translated as follows: “having been found” (or “after being found”) in appearance as a man, He humbled himself, “having been obedient” (or “after being obedient”) to the point of death, even the death of the cross. It is important to note that death on a cross was neither a heroic death nor a noble death, but a shameful and disgraceful death.<sup>32</sup> Hansen provided background on the shame associated with the cross: “Roman law reserved the cross for the worst criminals and the most violent insurrectionists, and only those who were slaves or foreigners. A Roman citizen would never be executed by crucifixion.<sup>33</sup> The contrast is significant between the first line of verse 6 and the last line of verse 8 as the one existing in the form of God voluntarily suffered the most extreme humiliation in human experience by his death on a cross.<sup>34</sup>

“Has highly exalted” (ὑπερψόω) means “to bestow honor or status far beyond what is usual in magnitude or degree; conceived of in terms of lifting something to uncommon high position” (LBSS). “Has highly exalted” (ὑπερψόω) is a verb in active voice, meaning God the Father fulfilled this action. “Given” (χαρίζομαι) is much deeper than how it appears on the surface as it means “to give something as a sign of one’s beneficent goodwill toward someone” (LBSS, See Ro 8:32; 1 Co 2:12; Php 1:29). “Given” is a deponent verb, yet it is in the true middle voice, which emphasizes the subject participating in the action, and it is also in the active voice. Therefore, God the Father bestowed honor on Jesus Christ and God the Father himself gave Jesus Christ THE NAME (not “a “name, but “THE” name, the definite article is

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<sup>32</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 157.

<sup>33</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 157.

<sup>34</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 157.

important), which is superior to every name, as a sign of his generous goodwill toward Him! “That” (ὅτι) is a conjunction leading to a purposeful clause; therefore, what proceeds is the purpose for God’s activity toward Jesus Christ as previously stated: “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The purpose of the Father giving Jesus the name above every name is two-fold, (1) that at His name, the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth and every tongue should confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ (2) to the glory of God the Father! The acknowledgement of the Lordship of Jesus Christ will abound to the glory of God the Father! “Should bow” (Κάμπτω) is an active voice verb in the subjunctive mood, which is action related to the future. Therefore, “the English future indicative is often used to convey the idea of the Greek subjunctive (whether present or aorist).”<sup>35</sup> The sense is “to worship or show obeisance to a deity; conceived of as bowing one’s knee to a deity” (LBSS, see Eph 3:14). “Should confess” (ἐξομολογέω) is also in the subjunctive mood, but the verb is in the middle voice, and it means “to profess openly in honor of another, whether in praise, thankfulness or acknowledgement” (LBSS). This worship and acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord is an eschatological picture (a picture of the end times). In *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, of *The New American Commentary*, Richard Melick, Jr. correctly argued, “The hymn brings the future into view by describing the culmination of history, when all persons will acknowledge Jesus’ lordship. No evidence states that such

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<sup>35</sup> Black, *Learn to read New Testament Greek*, 178-179.

acknowledgment will bring salvation, however. That must be cared for in the present, before Jesus conquers his enemies.”<sup>36</sup>

**Parallel Text:**

**Mt 23:12:** And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

**Lk 14:11:** For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**Jas 4:10:** Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

**Illustration:** Paul Lee Tan shared how Dr. Frederick B. Meyer (April 8, 1847 – March 28, 1929), a Baptist Pastor, author, and a contemporary and friend of the great D.L. Moody, once said:

“I used to think, that God’s gifts were on shelves

*one*

*above*

*another*

and the taller we grow,  
The easier we can reach them.

Now I find, that  
God’s gifts are on shelves

*one*

*beneath*

*another*

and the lower we stoop,  
The more we get.”<sup>37</sup>

Al Bryant recounted how one of Charles Spurgeon’s students entered the pulpit with every expression of confidence, but he struggled in the delivery of his sermon. According to Bryant, the

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<sup>36</sup> Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32 of *The New American Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), Logos edition, 108.

<sup>37</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 572.

student came down distressed, nearly brokenhearted, and he approached Spurgeon about it who said, “If you had gone up as you came down, you would have come down as you went up.”<sup>38</sup>

### Epigrams on Humility:

“A Christian minister once said, ‘I was never of any use until I found out that God did not intend me to be a great man.’”<sup>39</sup>

“It is possible to be too big for God to use you but never too small for God to use you.”<sup>40</sup>

“True humility is not to think low of oneself but to think rightly, truthfully of oneself.”<sup>41</sup>

### Quotes on Humility:

“As we see how in their very nature pride and faith are irreconcilably at variance, we shall learn that faith and humility are at root one, and that we never can have more of true faith than we have of true humility.”—*Andrew Murray*<sup>42</sup>

“Dr. Bonar once said that he could tell when a Christian was growing. In proportion to his growth in grace he would elevate his Master, talk less of what he himself was doing, and become smaller and smaller in his own esteem, until, like the morning star, he faded away before the rising sun.”—*D.L. Moody*<sup>43</sup>

“Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction to be a sanctified man, or a true Christian, and not humble.”—*Richard Baxter*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1100.

<sup>39</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 572.

<sup>40</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 572.

<sup>41</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 572.

<sup>42</sup> Elliot Ritzema, ed., *300 Quotations for Preachers* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Logos

Edition.

<sup>43</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 571.

<sup>44</sup> Ritzema, *300 Quotations for Preachers*.

“O, beware, do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all!”—*John Wesley*<sup>45</sup>

“I am persuaded a broken and a contrite spirit, a conviction of our vileness and nothingness, connected with a cordial acceptance of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel, is the highest attainment we can reach in this life.”—*John Newton*<sup>46</sup>

“Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble.”—*Andrew Murray*<sup>47</sup>

**Application:** Christ humbled himself and was obedient to death, not because of His own sins, but for the sins of others’ and Christ’s followers must conform to His self-humbling character.<sup>48</sup> In their mutual relations within the church, followers of Christ must humble themselves and walk in obedience to Christ. Christians must be and act out of who and what they are by virtue of being in Christ.<sup>49</sup> Humility is not natural, but if we appropriate who we are in, then it is possible to attain. No better example of humility exists for Christians to follow than that of Christ. With this example before us, followers of Christ should be “like-minded” (v. 2) in community (the local church). And if God decides to exalt us, we must always remember that exaltation is not for us “to get”, but for us “to give”, which abounds to His glory! God exalts for His glory, not our own! Sacrifice and humility leads to God’s glory, not our own!

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<sup>45</sup> Ritzema, *300 Quotations for Preachers*.

<sup>46</sup> Ritzema, *300 Quotations for Preachers*.

<sup>47</sup> Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 570.

<sup>48</sup> Utley, *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound*, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Gary Weedman, *Philippians–Thessalonians, Unlocking the Scriptures for You* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1988), Logos edition, 40.



**Conclusion:** Conduct Worthy of the Gospel: Be Conformed to Christ's Likeness. This early Christian hymn in honor of Christ serves as a description of Christ's self-sacrifice and humility along with his subsequent exaltation by God. Christ is the chief example of sacrifice and humility and followers of Christ must conform to His likeness in their relations within the local church. If we will only remember what kind of people we are in Christ Jesus, if we will remember that we are His people, then we can achieve these lofty exhortations toward one another through Him.<sup>50</sup> I lovingly encourage us all to respond to this appeal to the glory of God!

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<sup>50</sup> Weedman, *Philippians–Thessalonians*, 43.