

PHILIPPIANS

Standing Together In Christ (1:27 – 2:11)

Notes: Week Three

Philippians 1:27-2:11 (NIV)

Life Worthy of the Gospel

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,^[a] striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Imitating Christ's Humility

² Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature^[b] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[c] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 1:27](#) Or in one spirit
- b. [Philippians 2:6](#) Or in the form of
- c. [Philippians 2:7](#) Or the form

Philippians 1:27 – 2:11 (HCSB)

²⁷ Just one thing: Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind,^[a] working side by side for the faith that comes from the gospel,²⁸ not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your deliverance—and this is from God.²⁹ For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him,³⁰ having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.

Christian Humility

² If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,² fulfill my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal.³ Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.⁴ Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Christ's Humility and Exaltation

⁵ Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus,

Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 1:27](#) Lit *soul*
- b. [Philippians 2:6](#) Or *to be grasped, or to be held on to*
- c. [Philippians 2:11](#) Gk *kurios* = Yahweh; Is 42:8 LXX

taking on the likeness of men.

And when He had come as a man
in His external form,

⁸ He humbled Himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason God highly exalted Him
and gave Him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
of those who are in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,^[c]
to the glory of God the Father.

Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 1:27](#) Lit *soul*
- b. [Philippians 2:6](#) Or *to be grasped, or to be held on to*
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Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

Philippians 1:27 – 2:11

1:27-28 Live your life (lit "conduct yourselves as citizens"; cp. [Ac 23:1](#)) alludes to Philippi's political history, reminding the church of its higher citizenship (in the kingdom of God). Paul's primary concern, that **you are standing firm in one spirit**, reflected military pride. Roman armies stood ready for combat regardless of the enemy's level of strength and preparedness or the distracting enticements of culture. The church must manifest the same readiness. "One spirit" expresses the believer's unified attitude. **One mind** (lit "same soul") means that believers share "life." Together they prevent divisiveness like Paul witnessed at Rome ([vv. 14-17](#)). Standing firm involves **working side by side**. "Working" comes from athletics where teams contended for a prize (cp. [4:3](#)). Harmony, not individualism, achieves God's purposes. Standing also involves not being **frightened... by your opponents**. Soldiers used "frightened" to describe horses that might easily be startled.

euangelion

Greek Pronunciation [yoo ahn GEHL ee ahn]

HCSB Translation gospel, good news

Uses in Philippians 12

Uses in the NT 76

Focus passage [Philippians 1:27](#)

The Christian *euangelion* (*gospel*) is the universal message of God's saving grace through faith in Christ, and the message of His kingdom over which Jesus reigns. Jesus preached the *good news* of God's coming kingdom ([Mt 4:23](#)), and substantiated His message by miracles ([Mt 9:35](#)). This *good news* of the kingdom's arrival will be preached to the world ([Mk 13:10](#)) and is worthy of sacrificial labor ([Mk 8:35](#)). Paul believed the *gospel* was an extension of OT promises, where it lay hidden in mystery form ([Rm 1:1-3](#); [16:25-26](#)). Paul's *gospel* encompasses Jesus' entire life: His incarnation, sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, post-resurrection appearances, and ascension ([Rm 1:1-6](#); [1Co 15:1-8](#); [Php 2:9](#)). It is the Spirit-empowered message ([1Th 1:5](#)) by which God calls the elect ([2Th 2:13-14](#)) and reconciles people to Himself ([2Co 5:18-21](#)). Men will one day be judged by it ([Rm 2:16](#); [2Th 1:8](#)).

1:29-30 Given (lit "by grace") indicates that God "graces" Christians to **believe and suffer on Christ's behalf**. Both contribute to Christ's glory.

2:1-2 Four **if** statements in this verse form the basis of Paul's appeal. These phrases express conditions that are assumed for the sake of argument. Both Paul and his readers will be inclined to believe the truth of these conditions. **Fulfill my joy**, not "make Paul happy," reminded them that their steadfastness completed God's call on his life. Four actions on the Philippians' part explain what Paul meant. Two verbs translate the Greek word *phroneo* μ—**thinking** and **focusing**. Beyond mere "thinking," this addresses values. The Philippians were to value **the same way** (lit "the same thing") and the **one goal** (lit "a common objective"). Between these two, Paul included shared **love** and **feelings** (lit "the same soul").

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Philippians 1 & 2".

2:3-4 These four habitual actions reveal themselves collectively through another four attributes. **Rivalry or conceit** recalls the problem Paul condemned ([1:15,17](#)). **Humility**, the antidote for wrong attitudes, results in considering **others as more important**. Additionally, humility considers the **interests** of others. Proper relationships include the contrast "not only but also." Personal responsibilities demand consideration, but the concerns of others are equally important.

2:5-11 This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible, prompting various (Gk) *kenosis* (lit "emptying") theories attempting to describe what Jesus gave up in coming to earth. The text illustrates Christian humility. Because of its rhythmic character, it is often considered an early hymn, including two stanzas—[verses 6-8](#) (on Christian humility) and [verses 9-11](#) (on Jesus' ascension).

2:5 The phrase **make your own attitude** ("value"; cp. [v. 2](#)) commands the church to value Christ's character as a model.

2:6 The key thought of this verse is that Jesus **did not consider** (cp. [v. 3](#)) His own interests, thus allowing them to dominate His actions. **Existing** (lit "existing originally") should be "although existing" since it presents an apparent obstacle for Jesus to overcome in becoming human. **Form** (Gk *morphê*) suggests His complete deity. **Equality with God** indicates His coequality with God and separate personality (the second person of the Trinity). **To be used for His own advantage** is capable of two connotations. It can mean "to grasp" (steal), but because of Jesus' deity it probably means "to clutch" (hang on to at all costs).

2:7-8 The phrase **He emptied** is much debated. Theologians ponder what Jesus emptied Himself of. It is certain that He did not divest Himself of deity or its attributes. Two statements accompany the verb. First, **by assuming the form of a slave** indicates that God the Son became a servant. "Form" (cp. [v. 6](#)) indicates true servanthood, as does the word "slave." Second, **the likeness of men** explains both emptying and servanthood. "Likeness" (Gk *schema*; "fashion") differs from "form" ([vv. 6-7](#)). Two statements explain the second verb **humbled** (cp. [v. 3](#)). First, **when He had come as a man in His external form** provides the time of His humility. "External form" (Gk *scheyma*) contrasts with the form of God ([v. 6](#)). Jesus was more than human, though He came to earth in the form of a man. Second, Jesus' humility came through **becoming obedient**. Servants or slaves obey; Jesus obeyed God, even to the point of dying on a cross.

2:9-11 God is described as acting in these verses. Again, two verbs organize the thought. First, **God highly exalted Him** ("super-exalted," occurring only here) suggests that God gave Jesus a new position, although some take it as superlative ("to the highest"). Second, God **gave Him the name**. This name that is **above every name** is Lord ([v. 11](#), *kurios* = *Yahweh*). **Every knee will bow** and **every tongue should confess** state one result of God's exaltation ([vv. 10-11](#)). The posture and the confession imply submissive reverence. "Every" includes spatial dimensions: **heaven... earth, and under the earth**. Together they indicate the living and the dead (blessed and condemned). All bring glory to God. This teaches that Jesus mediates between God and humans. He is the focus of worship (Lord) and the administrator of God's will on earth.

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

Philippians 1:27 – 2:11

[1:27-30](#) **Encouragement to Walk Worthy of the Gospel.** Paul’s sacrifice will be futile, however, if the Philippians do not continue to live in a way that is “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

[1:27](#) The phrase **be worthy of the gospel** translates the Greek word *politeuesthe*. As the esv footnote indicates, the Greek can also be translated as “only behave as citizens worthy [of the gospel of Christ],” a phrasing that nicely captures Paul’s play on words here and in [3:20](#) (“our citizenship [Gk. *politeuma*] is in heaven”). Philippi prided itself on being a Roman colony, offering the honor and privilege of Roman citizenship. Paul reminds the congregation that they should look to Christ, not Caesar, for their model of behavior, since their primary allegiance is to God and his kingdom. They need to stand together with one another and with Paul in **striving** for the gospel. Paul’s emphasis on unity may suggest some division within the Philippian congregation (cf. [4:2-3](#)). Perhaps the disunity is one reason he mentions the “overseers and deacons” at the outset of the letter ([1:1](#)), for they are required to minister in a way that promotes unity.

Partnering with Paul in the Gospel in Many Ways

1:5	“partnership in the gospel”
1:7	“partakers with me of grace”
1:14-19	“through your prayers”
1:27	“striving side by side for the faith”
2:22	“served with me in the gospel”
2:25	“my brother, and fellow worker, and fellow soldier”
3:17	“join in imitating me”
4:3	“labored side by side with me”
4:15	“partnership with me in giving and receiving”

[1:28](#) As the Philippians maintain courage in the face of their **opponents**, these opponents will realize that such remarkable strength could come only from God, and thus anyone who continues to oppose God’s people will be marked for **destruction**. “Destruction” (Gk. *apōleia*) here means eternal destruction, hence these are different opponents from those who antagonized Paul in [vv. 15-18](#), who seem to have been Christians. A different city is in view as well, for here Paul speaks about what is happening in Philippi, while in [vv. 15-18](#) his opposition is (presumably) in Rome. But God’s sustaining grace amid trouble will assure the believers of their own final **salvation**. Paul follows the teaching of Jesus here ([Matt. 5:10-12](#)), reminding them that persecution is a sign that they belong to Christ.

[1:29-30](#) Troubles will come, because the reality is that believers in Christ will **suffer for his sake**. Paul teaches that both suffering and faith are gifts of God; for both, Paul says, have **been granted to you**. Suffering for the sake of Jesus is a great privilege (see [Matt. 5:10-12](#); [Acts 5:41](#)). Paul again holds himself out as an example of one who has maintained his joy while experiencing the **same conflict** (i.e., opposition from hostile unbelievers).

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Philippians 1 & 2".

2:1-30 Exhortation to Humble Service. Paul calls the Philippians to unite in love and humility ([vv. 1-4](#)), as exemplified by Christ's humble service ([vv. 5-11](#)). They are to live as lights in the world ([vv. 12-18](#)), just like Christ's faithful servants Timothy ([vv. 19-24](#)) and Epaphroditus ([vv. 25-30](#)).

2:1-4 Encouragement to Unity in the Faith and Service of One Another. The Philippians are encouraged to live out their life in Christ and in the Spirit by living in unity.

2:1-2 Paul is not *doubting* that **encouragement, participation in the Spirit, affection, and sympathy** are realities **in Christ** and are present in the congregation at Philippi. He uses a conditional sentence (**if**) to provoke the Philippians so that they will reflect on whether these qualities are evident in their lives. The Philippian believers must make sure they continue to progress in the absolutely critical area of love for one another. As Paul emphasizes, they must be **of the same mind**. This does not imply a drab intellectual uniformity; rather, the Philippians are to use their diverse gifts (cf. [1 Corinthians 12](#)) in an agreeable, cooperative spirit, with a focus on the glory of God.

2:3-4 There is always a temptation to be like Paul's opponents in [1:17](#) and operate in a spirit of **rivalry**, looking to advance one's own agenda. Such **conceit** (lit., "vainglory") is countered by counting others **more significant than yourselves**. Paul realizes that everyone naturally looks out for his or her **own interests**. The key is to take that same level of concern and apply it **also** to the **interests of others**. Such radical love is rare, so Paul proceeds to show its supreme reality in the life of Christ ([2:5-11](#)).

2:5-11 Christ's Example of Humble Service. This passage is often referred to as the "hymn of Christ." Paul depicts Christ's example of service in a stirring poem that traces his pre-existence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Paul wrote this magnificent theology to encourage the Philippians to consider other people's interests first (see [v. 4](#)). Jesus is the paradigm of genuine spiritual progress: not a self-aggrandizing struggle for supremacy, but a deep love for God and neighbor shown in deeds of service. [Verses 6-11](#) have some clear indications of poetic structure, leading some to believe that this is a pre-Pauline hymn adapted by Paul. It is just as likely, however, that Paul composed the hymn for this setting. In view of the myriad theological questions that arise in these verses, it is critical to keep two things in mind: (1) these verses were written not to spur Christians to theological debate but to encourage greater humility and love; and (2) the summary of Christ's life and ministry found here is not unique: the same themes are evident throughout the NT.

2:5 The believer's **mind** needs to reflect on the proper model, if life is to be lived for God. There is some debate as to whether this mind-set is something Christians receive by virtue of being *united to Christ (which is yours in Christ Jesus)*, or whether it is to be based on *the model of Christ* (ESV footnote: "which was also in Christ Jesus"). (The Gk. has no verb; either "is" or "was" has to be supplied.) In light of the consistent theme of behavior modeling in this letter (Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus are all held out as examples), many interpreters have adopted the latter meaning. Both ideas are theologically true. In either case, the central theme of [vv. 1-5](#) is the same—that the Philippian church would be of one mind ([v. 2](#)), united by love ([v. 2](#)) and humility ([v. 3](#)), and looking out for the interests of others ([v. 4](#)).

2:6 Prior to the incarnation, Christ was in the **form of God** (Gk. *morphē theou*). Despite the assertions of some scholars to the contrary, this most naturally refers to the "pre-existence" of Christ—he, the eternal Son, was there with the Father ([John 1:1](#); [17:5](#), [24](#)) before he was born in Bethlehem. "Form" here means the true and exact nature of something, possessing all the characteristics and qualities of something. Therefore having the "form of God" is roughly equivalent to having **equality with God** (Gk. *isa theō*), and it is directly contrasted with having the "form of a servant" ([Phil. 2:7](#)). The Son of God is and always has been God. "Form" could also be a reference to Christ being the ultimate image of God, "the exact imprint of his nature" ([Heb. 1:3](#)). It might also refer to the fact that he is the visible expression

of God's invisible glory ([Col. 1:15](#)). Remarkably, Christ did not imagine that having "equality with God" (which he already possessed) should lead him to hold onto his privileges at all costs. It was not something to be **grasped**, to be kept and exploited for his own benefit or advantage. Instead, he had a mind-set of service. "Christ did not please himself" ([Rom. 15:3](#)). In humility, he counted the interests of others as more significant than his own ([Phil. 2:3-4](#)).

2:7 Made himself nothing has occasioned much controversy. Greek *kenōō* can mean "empty, pour out" or also (metaphorically) "give up status and privilege." Does this mean that Christ temporarily relinquished his divine attributes during his earthly ministry? This theory of Christ's *kenosis* or "self-emptying" is not in accord with the context of Philippians or with early Christian theology (see the article on [The Person of Christ](#)). Paul is not saying that Christ became less than God or "gave up" some divine attributes; he is not even commenting directly on the question of whether Jesus was fully omnipotent or omniscient during his time on earth. Nor is he saying that Christ ever gave up being "in the form of God." Rather, Paul is stressing that Christ, who had all the privileges that were rightly his as king of the universe, gave them up to become an ordinary Jewish baby bound for the cross. Christ "made himself nothing" by **taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men** (roughly equivalent phrases). While he had every right to stay comfortably where he was, in a position of power, his love drove him to a position of weakness for the sake of sinful mankind (cf. [2 Cor. 8:9](#), "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich"). The "emptying" consisted of his becoming human, not of his giving up any part of his true deity.

2:8 It is remarkable enough that God the Son would take on **human form** (Gk. *schēma*, "outward appearance, form, shape," a different term from *morphē*, used in [vv. 6-7](#) for "form of God" and "form of a servant") and thus enter into all the vicissitudes of a broken world. But Jesus went much farther, **becoming obedient** (cf. [Rom. 5:19](#)) **to the point of death, even death on a cross**. Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners. It was the ultimate indignity, a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was beyond contempt. The excruciating physical pain was magnified by the degradation and humiliation. No other form of death, no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing, could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction of the person (see note on [Matt. 27:35](#)). It was the ultimate counterpoint to the divine majesty of the pre-existent Christ, and thus was the ultimate expression of Christ's obedience to the Father.

2:9 Therefore. It was precisely Jesus' humiliation that became the grounds for his exaltation. By humbling himself on the cross out of love, he demonstrated that he truly shared the divine nature of God, who is love ([1 John 4:8](#)). *For this reason* ("therefore") God raised him to life and **highly exalted him**, entrusting him with the rule of the cosmos and giving him **the name that is above every name**. This name is not specified here, but many think it refers to the name Yahweh (Hb. *YHWH*), God's personal name, which in the Septuagint is regularly translated as Greek *Kyrios*, "Lord," the name specified in [Phil. 2:11](#). In any case, Paul means that the eternal Son of God received a status and authority (cf. [Matt. 28:18](#) and note on [Acts 2:33](#)) that had not been his before he became incarnate as both God and man. Jesus' being given this name is a sign that he exercises his messianic authority in the name of Yahweh.

2:10-11 While Christ now bears the divine name Yahweh ("Lord"), he is still worshiped with his human name, **Jesus**, since it was in the flesh that he most clearly displayed his divine glory to the world. This astounding union of Jesus' divine and human natures is reinforced by the allusion to [Isa. 45:23](#) in the words **every knee should bow... and every tongue confess**, which in Isaiah refer exclusively to Yahweh (cf. [Isa. 45:24](#): "Only in the LORD... are righteousness and strength"). The fact that these words can now be applied to God's messianic agent—**Jesus Christ is Lord**—shows that Jesus is fully divine. But the worship of Jesus as Lord is not the final word of the hymn. Jesus' exaltation also results in **the glory of God the Father**. This identical pattern is found in [1 Cor. 15:23-28](#): God gives Jesus messianic dominion over all creation, and everyone will one day rightly give praise to him as their Lord. But when his kingdom reaches its fullness, Jesus does not keep the glory for himself. Instead, "the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all" ([1 Cor. 15:28](#)). Even in his exaltation, Jesus remains the model of loving service to God.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Philippians 1:27 – 2:11

1:27 Paul encouraged the believers to be unified, as they stood "side by side, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News." How sad that much time and effort are lost in some churches by fighting against one another instead of uniting against the real opposition! It takes a courageous church to resist infighting and to maintain the common purpose of serving Christ.

1:29 Paul considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ. We do not by nature consider suffering a privilege. Yet when we suffer, if we faithfully represent Christ, our message and example affect us and others for good (see [Acts 5:41](#)). Suffering has these additional benefits: (1) It takes our eyes off of earthly comforts; (2) it weeds out superficial believers; (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure; (4) it serves as an example to others who may follow us. When we suffer for our faith, it doesn't mean that we have done something wrong. In fact, the opposite is often true—it verifies that we have been faithful. Use suffering to build your character. Don't resent it or let it tear you down.

1:30 Throughout his life, Paul suffered for spreading the Good News. Like the Philippians, we are in conflict with anyone who would discredit the saving message of Christ. All true believers are in this fight together, uniting against the same enemy for a common cause.

Paul never urges Christians to seek suffering, as if there were virtue in pain. But we should not forget those who suffer. If your cupboard is full, share your food. If you control the wheels of power, work for justice and mercy. If you are wealthy, give generously to the poor. When life is comfortable, willingly take a share of someone else's pain, and so tell the world that the gospel is true.

2:1-5 Many people—even Christians—live only to make a good impression on others or to please themselves. But selfishness brings discord. Paul therefore stressed spiritual unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first, and we experience unity. Don't be so concerned about making a good impression or meeting your own needs that you strain relationships in God's family.

2:3 Selfishness can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (see [Romans 12:3](#)). It does not mean that we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's Kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

2:4 Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. [Acts 16](#) gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church. The church included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman ([Acts 16:14](#)); the slave girl ([Acts 16:16, 17](#)), probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman ([Acts 16:25-36](#)). With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Although there is no evidence of division in the church, its unity had to be safeguarded ([3:2](#); [4:2](#)). Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2016-2018.

2:5 Jesus Christ was humble, willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve people. Like Christ, we should have a servant's attitude, serving out of love for God and for others, not out of guilt or fear. Remember, you can choose your attitude. You can approach life expecting to be served, or you can look for opportunities to serve others. See [Mark 10:45](#) for more on Christ's attitude of servanthood.

2:5-7 The Incarnation was the act of the preexistent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, he became a human being, the man called Jesus. He did not give up his deity to become human, but he set aside the right to his glory and power. In submission to the Father's will, Christ limited his power and knowledge. Jesus of Nazareth was subject to place, time, and many other human limitations. What made his humanity unique was his freedom from sin. In his full humanity, Jesus showed us everything about God's character that can be conveyed in human terms. The Incarnation is explained further in these passages: [John 1:1-14](#); [Romans 1:2-5](#); [2 Corinthians 8:9](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Hebrews 2:14](#); and [1 John 1:1-3](#).

2:5-11 These verses are probably from a hymn sung by the early Christian church. The passage holds many parallels to the prophecy of the suffering servant in [Isaiah 53](#). As a hymn, it was not meant to be a complete statement about the nature and work of Christ. Several key characteristics of Jesus Christ, however, are praised in this passage: (1) Christ has always existed with God; (2) Christ is equal to God because he *is* God ([John 1:1ff](#); [Colossians 1:15-19](#)); (3) though Christ is God, he became a man in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation for all people; (4) Christ did not just have the appearance of being a man—he actually became human to identify with our sins; (5) Christ voluntarily laid aside his divine rights and privileges out of love for his Father; (6) Christ died on the cross for our sins so we wouldn't have to face eternal death; (7) God glorified Christ because of his obedience; (8) God raised Christ to his original position at the Father's right hand, where he will reign forever as our Lord and Judge. How can we do anything less than praise Christ as our Lord and dedicate ourselves to his service!

2:5-11 Often people excuse selfishness, pride, or evil by claiming their rights. They think, "I can cheat on this test; after all, I deserve to pass this class," or "I can spend all this money on myself—I worked hard for it," or "I can get an abortion; I have a right to control my own body." But as believers, we should have a different attitude, one that enables us to lay aside our rights in order to serve others. If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as he lived. We should develop his attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts. Are you selfishly clinging to your rights, or are you willing to serve?

2:8 Death on a cross (crucifixion) was the form of capital punishment that Romans used for notorious criminals. It was excruciatingly painful and humiliating. Prisoners were nailed or tied to a cross and left to die. Death might not come for several days, and it usually came by suffocation when the weight of the weakened body made breathing more and more difficult. Jesus died as one who was cursed ([Galatians 3:13](#)). How amazing that the perfect man should die this most shameful death so that we would not have to face eternal punishment!

2:9-11 At the Last Judgment, even those who are condemned will recognize Jesus' authority and right to rule. People can choose now to commit their lives to Jesus as Lord or be forced to acknowledge him as Lord when he returns. Christ may return at any moment. Are you prepared to meet him?

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

*A Principle to Live By: Philippians #5: Mutual Support
from Philippians 1:27-30*

When we face various challenges in life, we are to draw our strength not only from Christ's love and mercy, but from the love we have for one another.

God does not ask any of us to face resistance and persecution alone. We are to be one body in Christ. "Standing firm in one spirit" is a military metaphor demonstrating the defensive stance against evil, and "working side by side" is an athletic metaphor illustrating how we are to take the offensive as a unified team ([v. 27](#)). In both cases Paul emphasized that we should avoid individual competition against Satan and those who hate the gospel of Christ. We are in this struggle together, functioning as if we are one.

This was true in Paul's life. Although he was incarcerated and unable to have regular fellowship with other believers, he knew that he did not face his persecutors alone. He was supported and prayed for by the Philippians, even though they were miles away ([1:19](#)). Furthermore, they had sent Epaphroditus to minister to him ([2:25](#)).

Reflection and Response

In what ways can we use various modern means of communication to encourage Christians who may feel isolated from a functioning body of believers?

*A Principle to Live By: Philippians #6: Imitating Christ
from Philippians 2:1-8*

To live worthy of the gospel, we must live in harmony with one another, demonstrating Christ's attitudes of unselfishness, humility, and self-sacrifice.

Throughout this section of his letter, Paul expressed his deep concern that the Philippians not be defeated by those who opposed their faith. They must stand together and work side by side ([1:27](#)), not allowing "rivalry or conceit" to dictate their attitudes and actions. Individuals must not focus on themselves but on the needs of others ([2:3-4](#)).

Next comes one of the most profound passages in the whole Bible ([vv. 5-8](#)). It is a great experience to study carefully all that this passage means theologically since it describes Christ's attitude when He "became flesh and took up residence among us" ([Jn 1:14](#)).

Even so, the simple and practical truth is, just as Christ demonstrated remarkable unselfishness and humility in His willingness to give up His heavenly position to occupy an earthly position and then to die for the sins of the world, so also the Philippians were to imitate these attitudes and actions toward one another ([Php 2:5](#)). If they did, they would be able to stand firm as one body in Jesus Christ and experience "deliverance" ([1:19,28](#)). Each one of them would be able to say with Paul,

My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ([Php 1:20](#))

Reflection and Response

In what ways can we imitate Christ's example in our day-to-day relationships with both Christians and non-Christians?

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1641-1642.