

Series: To Live is Christ

Title: Humility

Text: Philippians 2:5-11

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Verse 5

Humility is of utmost importance to our spiritual lives. One author has remarked, “Years ago, Andrew Murray observed that humility is the seedbed in which all the other graces in the Christian life grow. And, likewise, the seedbed of pride brings forth all the vices of sin. So, it’s not an overstatement to say that if we neglect humility, we can’t progress in the Christian life.”¹ If believers want to experience and emulate the life of Christ, they must pursue humility. The Bible enjoins us, “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). It also says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:10).

Paul knew the subject of humility was of paramount importance for the spiritual vibrancy of the church at Philippi. He had been used as a church planter to establish the congregation in that city. Having heard rumors of sectarian factions within the church, he penned the letter we now hold in our hands. Though he had a number of purposes in writing, one of his foremost was to encourage wayward members to reconcile. As he did, he didn’t shame such individuals for their sinful behavior. He didn’t bark out apostolic commands, telling people to simply make up and get along. Instead, he appealed to glorious, God-centered Christian virtues. He knew that the character and person of Christ were the means of interpersonal health and reconciliation within the church.

In Philippians 2:5, Paul continued his appeal toward unity by upholding the humility of Christ as an aspired virtue for all. He said, “Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5). The Greek word rendered “attitude” is one that referred to one’s mindset. It spoke of one’s habitual mode of thinking.² Paul’s verbiage called for continual action. As a result, verse 5 could be rendered, “Keep on having the attitude of Christ Jesus.”³ God’s Word strictly calls God’s children to cultivate an attitude of humility, an attitude similar to the one Christ maintained.

Notice that Christ was central to Paul’s appeal. The apostle didn’t uphold a cultural or societal ideal as his standard for relational unity. Jesus and Jesus alone was the means of humility and unity within the church. One has said Paul presented “... Jesus as the supreme example of humility....” In addition, Paul upheld the humility of Christ as “the only way to secure unity.”⁴

Important to this discussion is the means by which such humility is developed in the Christian life. The original language of verse 5 used a passive voice verb in saying,

¹ Raymond, Erik. A Framework for Humble Leadership. *Tabletalk: January 2022*. (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2022), 11.

² Zodhiates, 1454-1455.

³ Robertson, 444.

⁴ Robertson, 444.

“Adopt the same attitude....” The apostle’s syntax was significant. It depicted an action being performed upon Paul’s readers. The meaning was that the Philippians had no ability to cultivate a Christ-like attitude through their own efforts. Human flesh cannot create Christian character. Help from the Spirit of Christ is needed. One can only have the attitude of Jesus as he or she allows God’s Spirit to produce it.

All in all, humility grows as we surrender ourselves to Christ. His indwelling Spirit is our means of growing in humility and every other Christian virtue. Paul expressed this to be true in his letter to the Galatians, saying, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). If one wants to grow in Christian humility, one needs to learn to draw spiritual life and energy from the Vine — Jesus Christ (John 15:4-5). The flesh profits nothing in spiritual development. All the beautiful fruit of Christian character grows from the root of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s heart (Galatians 5:22-23). Seen in this way, Jesus isn’t just an example in regards to the humility that breeds Christian unity. He is the empowerment for such humility as well! As believers walk with Christ and yield to His Spirit, they receive, as one commentator has noted, “...the almighty, emancipating, quickening Spirit of the One who lived and reigns forevermore.”⁵

Verse 6

Paul continued his exposé on Christian humility by describing Christ’s willful surrender to God’s will. He said, “...who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited” (Philippians 2:6). The words of verse 6 were a part of hymn that was regularly sung in first-century congregations.⁶ The hymn was undoubtedly an important one. It was cherished and repeated because of the way in which it upheld the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. In particular, it gave strong witness to the deity of Christ.

It is neat to think we have Scriptural witness of a song that was sung in first-century Sunday-morning gatherings. From the words of the song, we learn that Christian doctrine should be at the forefront of all Christian worship. The time of public worship isn’t to be oriented on entertainment; it is to be oriented on spiritual edification and encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:1-5; Hebrews 10:25). Fun and the flesh aren’t priorities when the body gathers together; instead, “the faith” is to be the main priority (Jude 1:3).

Take note of Paul’s words concerning Jesus’ eternal nature. He indicated that Jesus existed “in the form of God.” The apostle’s words pointed to the fact that Jesus had a pre-incarnate existence before His birth in Bethlehem. In addition, the words revealed that Jesus was apart of the Triune God before His birth.⁷ Jesus was God, He is God, and He always has been God. The Bible is replete with assertions concerning these things (Genesis 1:3, 26; John 1:1; Colossians 1:15-18). Jesus spoke of such

⁵ Martin, 104.

⁶ Melick, Richard R. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Vol. 32. The New American Commentary.* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), [CD-Rom].

⁷ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, 266.

realities when He prayed, “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5).

Although Jesus was one with the Heavenly Father and Holy Ghost before time began, He “...did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.” The term translated “equality” maintained that Jesus was fully God before He came to Earth. He was not an emanation from the Divine, nor did He simply embrace divinity when He was born. Jesus has eternally held complete Divine status with the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. Some deny such things, relegating our Lord to a secondary status of religious, teacher, leader, or rabbi. Some try to make compromises with weird explanations that propose Jesus enjoyed a divinely enlightened status, but such deny the full divinity of Jesus.

It is worth noting that Jesus Himself claimed to be the Eternal God. In one of His famous debates with the religious elite of His day, He said, “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). The meaning of our Lord’s words were not lost on His opponents. Knowing that He used the holy name of God in reference to Himself, “... they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden, and went out of the temple” (John 8:59). First-century Jews were more in tune with Jesus’ claim concerning His deity than some modern professing believers. Make no mistake about it — Jesus claimed to be God!

Paul’s words about these things certainly upheld cardinal doctrines concerning Christ, but it is worth remembering the apostle’s main point. His purpose in writing was to encourage humility on the part of a divided church membership (Philippians 4:2-3). Consequently, he appealed to the way in which Jesus humbled Himself through the incarnation. Despite His eternal and divine standing, Jesus didn’t shy away from His purpose and mission in life. He humbly said, “...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). He proclaimed, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

Jesus humbled Himself by leaving the portals of heaven and submitting to the Heavenly Father’s will for His life. Paul said Jesus “did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.” The translation “something to be exploited” is a highly interpretive one. It is hard for modern English translators to give a perfectly adequate translation of the original language. Literally, the language depicts Jesus as not trying to hold on to His status in heaven. The meaning is that our Lord did not hold on to His pre-incarnate status in a way that would have caused Him to reject His role as the “Son of Man” and suffering servant (Matthew 20:28; Isaiah 53:3).

One has noted, “Christ did not use His equality with God in order to snatch or gain power, dominion, riches, pleasure, or worldly glory.”⁸ Even unto the end of His earthly life, He humbled Himself and stayed resigned to the Father’s will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, shortly before His crucifixion, He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39). At the moment of His arrest, as His disciples tried to wage a political war to save Him, He said, “Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). Though He was God, and though He was omnipotent, He solemnly submitted Himself to the Father’s plan of

⁸ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 451.

redemption. He embraced humanity on our behalf. He could have held on to His divine position and privileges, shunning service on behalf of our sins. However, He didn't use His God nature for His own advantage. He willingly and voluntarily embraced God's program of redemption (Romans 5:8; Hebrews 10:7; Revelation 13:8).

In doing so, Jesus provided an example of true humility. The virtue doesn't involve an unhealthy self-hatred. It is not defined by a quiet disposition, a certain personality, or doormat-like obliging attitude. Humility is all about being resigned to the will of the Heavenly Father. It is an attitude wherein one lives for the glory of God instead of the glory of self. Christ is our example in such things.

Verse 7

Instead of seizing His Divine status for His own benefit, Jesus "emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:7). In the original language of the New Testament, Paul placed emphasis on the word rendered "Himself." His intent was to draw attention to our Lord's voluntary submission to the Father's will.⁹ Jesus was not coerced or forced to become human on our behalf. Out of a loving act of His own volition, He embraced sin and suffering for us. His resolve was depicted by the prophet Isaiah, who quoted Messiah as saying, "The Lord God will help me; therefore I have not been humiliated; *therefore I have set my face like flint*, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:7).

The word rendered "emptied" in Philippians 2:7 was used literally in the ancient world of one emptying the contents of a vessel. Figuratively it depicted the act of one being stripped of prerogative, position, or status. The idea of our text is that the incarnate Jesus "took an unimportant position" compared to the one He previously enjoyed in heaven.¹⁰

Don't misunderstand the meaning of Paul's words. Jesus by no means "emptied" Himself of His Divine nature. Such is made plain by Paul's remarks concerning how Jesus assumed "...the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity." The word rendered "slave" (doúlos) was used literally of slaves in the first-century world. Such an individual was one who was "altogether consumed in the will of the other."¹¹ Figuratively, the term was used of one who engaged in voluntary service for another.

This was Paul's point — Jesus emptied Himself by voluntarily embracing humanity for us. His divinity was not diminished in the least when He descended to Earth. He did not empty Himself of His Divine nature through the incarnation. He only emptied Himself of the rights and privileges associated within dwelling in the presence of God. He emptied Himself by embracing humanity, by living among us, and by dying for our sins.

This is highlighted by Paul's mention of Jesus "...taking on the likeness of humanity." None should mistake the apostle's words as meaning Jesus was only "like" a man on Earth, in that Jesus wasn't fully man when He lived among us. The apostle's grammar shouldn't be mistaken for a simile or comparison. Instead, his words were

⁹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 451.

¹⁰ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, 228.

¹¹ Zodhiates, 483.

meant to convey that Jesus left His position in Heaven and assumed a human nature. In doing so, Jesus was one hundred percent God and one hundred percent man. Jesus embraced humanity in order to pay for the sins of humanity (Romans 8:3). In doing so, however, He never quit being God, neither was His God-nature compromised by the sin that stains other humans (Hebrews 4:15). Theologians call the mysterious and unfathomable melding of God's nature into human nature as "the Hypostatic Union." The term points to, as one has said, "...the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the one person Jesus Christ. It was defined at the Council of Chalcedon (451). It seeks to affirm the personal unity as well as the two natures. This reality is a mystery."¹²

Paul emphasized Jesus' humanity at the end of verse 7 by saying, "...and when he had come as a man." The apostle's words were meant to highlight the fact that Jesus had a physical body. Emphasis was placed on our Lord's external form. Within Paul's words, maybe there was a subtle rebuke of Gnostic heretics who denied such things, maintaining that Jesus was a spirit being while on Earth. Whatever the case, Paul's main point was that Jesus voluntarily embraced humanity on our behalf. He emptied Himself of His prerogatives and privileges and descended to our helpless condition. He willingly served us so that we might be delivered from sin and its consequences.

Our Lord's emptying of Himself served as an example for the church at Philippi. It seems that some members of the congregation were "position conscious." Remember Paul's words in Philippians 2:3. Some were acting "out of rivalry and conceit." A number of believers were approaching the ministries and meeting times of the church with a focus on self. They needed to think upon Christ's humility. If the Lord emptied Himself of His rights and privileges for the sake of His church, shouldn't the members of His body do likewise? Scripture flatly tells the church, "...serve one another through love..." (Galatians 5:13).

Verse 8

Paul continued his description of Jesus' voluntary submission in verse 8, saying, "...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). The word rendered "humbled" literally meant "lowered." Again, Paul's terminology was by no means intended to diminish the Divine nature of our Lord. The apostle meant to figuratively depict Jesus submitting Himself to the Father's will. Though His Divine nature was never compromised, Jesus did indeed "lower" Himself through the way in which He embraced His role as Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:3).

Paul made it plain he had Jesus' role as sin sacrifice in view. He did so by pointing to the way Jesus became "...obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). Jesus' lowering of Himself had nothing to do with a stripping of His Divine nature. It had everything to do with Him embracing His role in God's redemptive plan.

¹² McKim, Donald K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 135.

According to Paul, our Lord was “obedient” to God’s will for His life. The author of Hebrews used similar language from Philippians 2:8 to speak of Christ’s service on our behalf. He said, “Although he was the Son, he learned *obedience* from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Neither Philippians 2:8 or Hebrews 5:8 should be regarded as teaching that Jesus had to learn obedience because of some propensity toward sin or disobedience. The idea of both texts is that Jesus perfectly submitted Himself to the will of God. Jesus expressed His zeal for such obedience when He said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

The depths of Jesus’ obedience is seen through Paul’s language in verse 8. The apostle spoke of how Jesus was obedient “to the point of death.” The Lord was willing to give His life for the sake of obedience to God’s will. He paid the ultimate cost. Scripture says, “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

But Jesus didn’t just die. His form of death was exceptional in and of itself. Paul emphasized this by speaking of how Christ submitted Himself “...even to death on a cross.” Jesus wasn’t just obedient to the Father’s will. He was obedient to the point of submitting Himself to Roman crucifixion. Such a means of execution was the most “ignominious of deaths” in the first-century world. It was reserved for the dregs of society, the most despised people of all.¹³ It was usually reserved for slaves, rebels, and the lowest of criminals.¹⁴ The punishment was so barbaric that it was actually illegal to crucify a Roman citizen.¹⁵ Jews saw it as being evidence that one was accursed by God (Galatians 3:13).

Christ’s humility and obedience were an example for the believers at Philippi. Some had become conceited and competitive. Remembering Christ’s attitude would have done a lot to cultivate the right type of attitude in the church. For believers of all generations, it is always worth remembering that Jesus was “lowly and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). The way of Christ calls God’s children to humble obedience to the will of the Heavenly Father.

Verse 9

In verse 9, Paul continued his doxological praise of Christ by saying, “For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name...” (Philippians 2:9). Ultimately, the apostle’s words refer to a doctrine known as “the Ascension.” After having being crucified and raised from the dead, Jesus lived on the Earth in a resurrected body for forty days. In the book of Acts, Luke said, “After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). After such things, Jesus then ascended to the right hand of God in heaven. The event is also described in the book of Acts — “After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they

¹³ Robertson, 445.

¹⁴ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 452.

¹⁵ Melick, [CD-Rom].

were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them” (Acts 1:9-10).

The Ascension was an integral part of His redemptive work on behalf of His people. It is significant for a few reasons. First, the event revealed that Christ is now interceding on behalf of His people at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Second, it conveyed the idea that true believers will one day experience a similar ascension into the presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:8). Third, the Ascension signified the coming of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of God’s people (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:7-11).¹⁶

It is important to clarify Paul’s exact reason for mentioning the Ascension in Philippians 2:9. His purpose was to extol Christ’s exaltation over all other worldly powers. He wanted to uphold our Lord’s absolute uniqueness and supremacy over the created realm.¹⁷ Such was important for a couple of reasons. First, there was a popular heresy in the first-century world that believed Jesus was a mere spiritual being. Amongst those known as the Gnostics, it was taught that our Lord was one of many spiritual emanations who had descended from a higher power. In such theology, worshippers were often instructed to pray to various ranks of angelic beings. Paul, as he did elsewhere in the New Testament (Colossians 2:8-15), intended to show that Jesus was above all such principalities and powers.

Second, the apostle knew there were believers in Philippi who were focused on rank and privilege. Some were jockeying for position and prominence over one another (Philippians 4:2-3). The apostle wanted the church to remember that Christ was above all. Jesus alone was the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18), and He alone deserved glory in the church. The bickering believers in Philippi needed to remember that all praise and honor was due to Christ.

Paul highlighted Jesus’ exaltation in verse 9 by speaking of the way in which God had “highly exalted him.” The language was used in the ancient world of one being given a position of honor and power. Because of Jesus’ faithful work on behalf of sins, the Heavenly Father granted Him a position of honor through the Ascension. Paul spoke of these realities in Ephesians, saying, “He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens— far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet, and appointed him as head over everything for the church” (Ephesians 1:20-22).

To further highlight our Lord’s exaltation, Paul spoke of how Jesus had been given “the name that is above every name.” In the ancient world, names were often used to represent rank and authority. The apostle’s intent was to figuratively portray the Lord as having the highest rank and authority because of His victory over sin and death. Jesus Himself confessed that He had such authority after His resurrection. In giving the Great Commission, He told the Twelve, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18).

¹⁶ Elwell, Walter A. ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: 1984), 104.

¹⁷ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 452.

Paul's words in Philippians 2:9 certainly upheld the exalted status of our Lord; however, it is important for believers to notice the train of thought contained within the apostle's teaching. His aim wasn't to just emphasize the exaltation of Jesus. It was also his intent to emphasize the path of Jesus' exaltation. Our Lord was exalted because He humbled Himself. Remember, this was the entire point of Paul's recitation of the famous hymn we find in Philippians 2:6-11. He wanted the church to embrace a humble frame of mind similar to the one our Lord possessed. Consider the context of the doxological praise we find in our passage. Paul was encouraging the church to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit" (Philippians 2:3). He wanted them to pursue "humility" (Philippians 2:3) and "the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

While many were exalting themselves in Philippi (Philippians 4:2-3), Paul promoted the true path of Christian exaltation. The way up is down in the Christian life. Jesus was exalted because He humbled Himself. If believers in Philippi wanted to experience spiritual blessing and advancement, they needed to seek it through the same means Jesus did. They needed to humble themselves in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord could exalt them in due time (James 4:10). They needed to remember the words of Jesus — "So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16). They needed to remember that service was the means of greatness in Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:42-45).

Verse 10

Paul's exaltation of Jesus continued in verse 10. He said, "...so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — in heaven and on earth and under the earth..." (Philippians 2:10). It is important to note the intended meaning of "name" in Philippians 2:10. Paul's intent wasn't to make much of the phonetical pronunciation of the word "Jesus." Instead, he used it as a representation of Jesus' personage.

As in Philippians 2:9, the concept of "name" signified or Lord's authority. Consequently, the idea of Philippians 2:10 was not that people are coerced to bow when hearing the name of Jesus pronounced or proclaimed. Instead, the idea was that all will one day be compelled to recognize that the person of Jesus has all authority. A.T. Robertson has commented on the meaning of our text by saying Paul's emphasis was not on "...perfunctory genuflections whenever the name of Jesus is mentioned, but universal acknowledgment of the majesty and power of Jesus who carries his human name and nature to heaven."¹⁸

The Greek conjunction rendered "that" is one that denoted result or purpose. As it appeared in Philippians 2:10, the word was intended to show the result of Jesus' exaltation. Because of the Ascension, Jesus is worthy of obeisance from all. His authority stems from His effective work on behalf of sin. He deserves worship because of the way in which He trampled Satan, sin, and death underneath His feet (Genesis 3:15).

Such worship is referenced through the fact that "every knee will bow." The act of bowing before a king was well-known in the ancient world. It was a universal symbol of subservience and obedience. Many knew what it was like to bow before a

¹⁸ Robertson, 446.

superior. Through such activity, one recognized another as being a sovereign authority. Paul used the act as a descriptor for Christ receiving worship from the entire created realm.

To depict the way Jesus deserves worship from all, Paul mentioned three different locales of worship — “in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” The reference to heaven undoubtedly included both the angelic beings and redeemed saints who currently give praise to the Father, Son, and Spirit within the heavenly realm (Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:8-11). The reference to “earth” was directed toward living believers — the church that brings praise to Christ through their lives and worshipful praise (Romans 12:1; Colossians 3:15-16). The mention of “under the earth” was surely a reference to Sheol. Even in the place of the dead, both unredeemed souls (Luke 16:23-24), as well as demonic beings who previously rebelled against God (1 Peter 3:19), must acknowledge the supremacy of Christ.

Paul’s primary intent wasn’t to give a categorical ranking of different angelic and demonic beings. He merely meant to exalt Jesus as being above all. Because of His triumph over sin and death, Jesus deserved the praise and worship of every being. Paul’s teaching was in alignment of John’s vision in the book of Revelation — “I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say, Blessing and honor and glory and power be to the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13). Gnostic philosophy concerning different ranks of angelic beings was erroneous. In addition, the haughty church members in Philippi needed to remember that Jesus was the one who was worthy of all prestige and praise.

Verse 11

Paul’s recitation of a famous hymn concluded in verse 11 with him saying, “...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The Greek word rendered “confess” literally meant “to say the same thing.” It was used of one making a public confession or acknowledgment. As used in our text, the term pointed to an end time event in which all humanity and every angelic force will be compelled to acknowledge Jesus’ Lordship.

All will one day “say the same thing” about Jesus that God would say. They will acknowledge His supremacy and sovereignty. They will admit He is “Lord.” The title was one that spoke of a master, of one who had binding legal power. Because of His pre-incarnate status as the Son of God (Genesis 1:3; John 1:1; Colossians 1:15-18), and because of His work on behalf of sins, Jesus is the rightful Lord over all creation.

According to Paul, all will one day pay homage to the Lord’s exalted status. Scripture elsewhere upholds the reality of such a future confession. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared, “By myself I have sworn; truth has gone from my mouth, a word that will not be revoked: Every knee will bow to me, every tongue will swear allegiance” (Isaiah 45:23). Though the prophet’s prophecy found a degree of fulfillment through the birth and praise of the New Testament church, there is still a full fulfillment that will be realized in the future. Paul made this clear in his letter to the Romans. In speaking on sinful judging amongst the body of Christ, he said, “But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live,

says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God” (Romans 14:10-11).

The intent of Paul’s words in Romans 14:10-11 is similar to the intent of Paul’s words in Philippians 2:11. Both the church at Rome and the church at Philippi struggled with interpersonal strain amongst the membership. Paul upheld the end-of-time exaltation of Jesus as a remedy to pride-driven arguments. Knowledge that Jesus would one day receive praise from all should have humbled the divisive members of local congregations. Since Christ will one day be exalted above all, believers of all generations should be leery of exalting self within the congregation of God’s people.

Paul concluded his doxological praise with reference “...to the glory of God the Father.” The phrase indicated that even the future praise of Jesus would contribute to the over all glory of God. The chief purpose of all things is the praise and glory of the Heavenly Father. Even Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension served the purpose of giving glory to God. Jesus Himself recognized this in praying, “I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). Paul similarly recognized this reality in his letter to the Corinthians. In speaking about the end of time, he said, “When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The apostle’s purpose of upholding the glory of God was rather simple. If Jesus served for the glory of God, believers in Philippi should have done the same. Self-promotion and self-glory were foolish in light of what Christ had done. Individuals like Euodia and Syntyche needed to humble themselves. By pursuing the humility of Christ, all could be used to get glory for God. When the peaceable fruit of humility reigns in the church, an unbelieving world takes note. This is why Jesus prayed, “May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me” (John 17:21).