

## Phil. 2:1-11

Therefore,

This passage starts with the word “therefore,” which connects it to the passage before, where Paul encouraged his readers to live as citizens in an appropriate manner in response to the Gospel. That includes standing firm in unity, which will be a major idea in this passage as well. And it includes the possibility of suffering and struggling together for the sake of the Gospel

### I. Grounds: Because these things are true: (1)

The first section is a series of four “if” conditional statements, which Paul used as the grounds for the rest of the passage. Just like in English, Paul’s word translated “if” can introduce something that everyone knows is not true. Like I could say, “If pigs could fly...” and we would all assume that this is not going to happen. But “if” can also introduce something that is unknown, which could go either way, like saying “if we win the game tomorrow...” We would have to wait and see who actually wins. And “if” can also introduce something that everyone already knows to be true. I could say, “if politicians lie..” and we would all take this as a given, as a true statement. In this last case, I could use the word “since” instead of the word “if” – “since politicians lie...”

In Paul’s four statements, it is almost certain that he intended them to be taken as true, like my last example. He used the grammatical form that signals the statement is “assumed true for argument’s sake.” (see Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, p. 690). And so, it would be appropriate to use the word “since” in Paul’s statements, because he was using them as assumed facts in order to ground and strengthen the request he was about to make.

These four statements are expressed in general categories, not necessarily referring to specific things. Because in each of them, Paul used a word that signals indefiniteness, “any” encouragement, “any” consolation, etc. In other words, Paul was saying that his readers had experienced some kind of encouragement, and he was willing to let the reader fill in the details of the specific kinds of encouragement that came to mind from their own life. And the same kind of general category is used in all four statements, assuming them to be true in some way for his readers to specify.

And each of these four statements can be taken in one of two ways, or (as I think most probable) as a combination of two dynamics. They are all referring to interpersonal relationships. They could refer to each Christian’s relationship with Christ. For instance, “any encouragement in Christ” would mean the encouragement we have received from Christ. Or they could refer to the church’s relationship with one another, and with Paul. In this case, “any encouragement in Christ” would mean any encouragement the Philippians received from one another and from Paul, because they are all together in Christ. I think it is a combination of all these dynamics. This book is characterized by a deep personal connection between Paul and this church, and an emphasis on the relationship between church members. So, Paul is saying something like, “because we have mutual encouragement, consolation, fellowship, etc. because we are united in a common experience of these things from Christ, live this out in the way I am asking.”

#### A. If/since there is any encouragement in Christ (1a)

This means that we are emboldened, strengthened, and pushed toward good things by one another in Christ, because we are sharing the same encouragement which we have received from Christ.

#### B. If/since there is any consolation of love (1b)

This means that our mutual love works to take away or alleviate those negative things that occasionally happen in life. We pick one another up, because we have been picked up and rescued by Christ.

#### C. If/since there is any fellowship of spirit (1c)

This means that we have genuine common life, common goals, and common work, being united in spirit, because we have all been given the same new life which we share with Christ by His Holy Spirit.

#### D. If/since there is any affection and compassion (1d)

That is, because we all have genuine concern for one another, especially when someone is in need, because we all have received compassion and mercy from Christ when we were in need.

All these statements describe a common care Christians have for one another because we have all experienced the same care from Christ. Paul assumed this was true for the Philippians, and used it as the basis for what he was requesting from them.

## II. Give me joy by having the other-serving attitude which Christ demonstrated (2-11)

### A. Fulfill my joy (2a)

Paul's main command in this passage is simply to "fulfill my joy." That means "make my joy full, or complete." Philippians is a very joyful letter, and Paul consistently expressed his joy in the Philippians – in their discipleship and partnership with him in the Gospel. Here he asked them to make him as joyful as possible, by living out their discipleship to the fullest extent possible, and by acting out their partnership in the Gospel to the fullest extent possible. And thereby, they would complete Paul's reason for joy on their behalf. Just like Paul earlier expressed his confidence that God would complete His work in the Philippians (1:6), here he is asking them to cooperate in this transformation, and so complete Paul's joy in God's work in them.

### B. Manner: How you can make my joy full: 5(2b-11)

The rest of this passage is, in essence, a description of *how* they could complete his joy. In other words, Paul described what they should do and how they should think in order to be the kind of mature disciples he would delight in them becoming. He described the manner of attitude and lifestyle they should adopt in order to fulfill this command. He commanded, "fulfill my joy," and then he wrote "and here's how." Of course, the "here's how" is the heart of this passage – what Paul really wanted to accomplish. All that he had just written was the rhetorical packaging to motivate them to do what he was about to describe in the next few verses.

#### 1. Have a unified, serving attitude (2b-4)

##### a That is – you all should have the same mindset/attitude (2b)

Paul commanded the Philippians to have the same mindset, to think the same thing. This word is a verb, "to think this way." But because the word means so much more than think, and because there is no similar English verb, it is usually translated something like "have this mindset." This word overlaps the meanings of the English words "attitude," "mindset," and "thinking." It is similar, yet slightly different from all of these concepts. It is like having a certain attitude, but not quite, because we typically think of attitude as something that changes. One day you have a good attitude, and the next day you don't. But Paul is commanding his readers to have something that is more of a settled character habit – a consistent disposition of life and attitude. It is like a mindset, except it refers to more than just thinking. It involves emotions and gut level desires. And all of this results in a consistent way of thinking about and processing everything around us. It is our default way of seeing, evaluating, and reacting to the world.

And Paul wanted them to have the *same* mindset, to think about the same thing, to have a unified attitude. This is not at all talking about some kind of forced uniformity of thought, where we lose intellectual autonomy. Just the opposite. Paul was encouraging them to voluntarily conform their thinking to Christ, because He is right and true. When we conform to the truth of Christ, we become freest of all in our thinking, because He is the real Lord of all. The only people who resort to manipulating people's thoughts, or forbidding certain kind of thinking, or using propaganda, are those who are pushing falsehood. And as we'll see in the way Paul will elaborate, he emphasized the unity that would happen when all the Christians together brought themselves into conformity with a truly Christian mindset.

As any sports team or business will testify, when there is genuine unity of purpose and goal and methods, when everyone is working together in the same direction, it is not only more successful, but it is more pleasant to be a part of. Paul commanded them to have the same mindset/attitude, to think in the same general direction.

b Specifically: Have an other-serving attitude (2c-4)

Paul continued to elaborate what he was asking with a number of additional phrases, which are grouped into three categories.

1) Have the same united, loving, mindset (2c-e)

a) Having the same love (2c)

They should all love one another, with no one left out, with no one refusing to participate in this love. That they would all be together in their mutual love for one another.

b) Being united in spirit (2d)

Literally, this word is “together in soul.” Paul wanted them to be harmonious, to have a similarity of attitude, to be one in spirit. This is kind of like what you see in a healthy marriage after they have been together for a long time. They start to think in the same way, and are on the same mental track together. They know what the other is thinking before anything is spoken. This is sometimes described as their souls being knitted together. This is similar to the kind of attitude and phenomenon that Paul wants the church to experience in their mutual care for one another.

c) Having a mindset/attitude of unity (2e)

Literally, “to think the one.” This is the same word, and almost the exact same phrase as the overall command to have the same mindset in 2b. Here the emphasis is to have one mindset, a unified mindset. Again, this is nothing like the forced uniformity of totalitarian societies, but it is a genuine unity based on mutual love and unified purpose and goals.

2) Don't be selfish, but consider others more important (3)

This concept is explained with a positive/negative contrast. What they are *not* to do is stated along with what they *are* to do, so that each will mutually explain and reinforce one another.

a) Pos: Don't act out of selfishness and pride (3a-b)

(1) [do] nothing according to selfish strife (3a)

This is self-centered ambition, which sometimes involves rivalry or resentment. This same word was used in 1:17 where Paul described the motivation for some talking about Christ in a way that they thought would harm Paul.

(2) neither according to vain pride (3b)

This refers to an exaggerated evaluation of your own importance. This kind of empty pride and self-centeredness should not be the motivating cause of anything that a mature Christian thinks or does. These kinds of attitudes are not appropriate in the church, and will only bring problems.

b) Neg: but with humility consider one another to be of more value/more important than yourself (3c)

This means we should consider others better than ourselves. Paul is not suggesting that LeBron James should think that I am better at basketball than he is. Paul is not asking us to lose touch with reality or deny that some people have different giftings and abilities. God has designed us to be different and excel at our own particular callings. Unity was never intended to be uniformity, and the kind of mindset that claims everyone should be equal in outcome at everything is not only denying reality, it is denying God Who created us different. On the other hand, just because someone is good at sports or acting, this does not mean that I should care what they have to say about other issues in which they do not have any expertise. Paul is not talking about any of this kind of stuff, which our society makes such a big deal about.

Paul means that we should consider other people to be valuable and important and worthy of our consideration, care, and courtesy, especially among the community of believers. He is commanding the opposite of self-centeredness. He is commanding

consideration of others. Instead of putting yourself first, put others first. We should consider others ahead of ourselves.

And Paul added that we should do this in humility. The best definition of humility that I have heard, goes back to C. S. Lewis. He said, in essence, it is not thinking of yourself too highly. But neither is it thinking of yourself too lowly. It is not thinking of yourself at all (see Mere Christianity, book 3 chapter 8). That means that true humility, the kind that Paul was encouraging, is not focused on ourselves. But it is focused on others, for the sake of Christ. If we think very highly of Christ, we will not think of ourselves too highly. And we will consider others for the sake of Christ.

### 3) Don't focus on yourself, but care for others (4)

Again, Paul taught by way of contrast, first saying what not to do, in order to highlight what we should do.

#### a) Neg: Each [of you] not [only] focusing on/paying attention to your own matters/concerns (4a)

Paul is not forbidding that we take care of our concerns. Rather, we are not to focus exclusively on them. We are to care about other things beside ourselves and the things that are important to us. This is elaborated in the next proposition.

#### b) Pos: But each [of you] also [focusing on/paying attention to] the matters/concerns of others (4b)

We should keep our eyes open, looking out for one another, and making sure the other person is taken care of.

Paul's point is similar to the old saying "happy spouse, happy house." This means, in a marriage, if the husband is selfish, and only tries to make himself happy, and tries to use his wife only for his own selfish benefit. And if, at the same time, the wife has the same attitude, only trying to make herself happy, and trying to make her husband do what she wants. Neither the husband nor the wife will ever be happy; neither will get what they want. They will both be miserable and make each other miserable.

But if the husband makes an effort to make his wife happy, if he puts her wants and needs before his own, and if the wife does the same for her husband. Then they will both get what they want, and they both will be happy.

In a similar way, if each member of a church family is looking out for others, we will all meet the needs of one another and take care of one another, and thereby, we all will be taken care of.

This is the kind of mindset, attitude, and actions which Paul commanded his readers to have toward one another, in a unified, serving attitude. At this point, all this may seem like "wouldn't that be nice, but I don't know that it could ever happen." It may seem unrealistic that selfish, sinful people would ever be able to live like this. And that is why, in the rest of this passage, Paul brings out the big guns. The imperative follows from the indicative. Gospel behavior always comes from Gospel truth. Paul does not expect that we could ever love one another in this way by our own decision or will power. Remember, all of this passage is part of Paul's instructions how we can live out the Gospel of Christ. And so, Paul next explicitly connected it with Christ.

## 2. Imitate the mindset/attitude of Christ (5-11)

### a Have *THIS* mindset/attitude in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (5)

We are not to try to do this on our own, but we are to imitate the mindset, attitude, and actions of Christ. “Have this mindset/attitude” is the same word he had been using throughout this passage (see the comment on 2b). Our mindset, our attitude and way of thinking that influences all of our actions should be conformed to Christ and the Gospel. It should be empowered by Christ and the Gospel as we are changed by Christ and the Gospel.

This passage is profitable on two levels: First, as Paul intended it, we need to understand what Christ did as an example for our own attitude and actions. We need to ask, “how does this instruct and help me to live humbly, putting others first?” But at the same time, we need to understand all this tells us about Christ (which was also Paul’s intention, but less explicitly, as he probably assumed the Philippians already knew most of this). In other words, “how does this help us to grasp the nature and mission of Jesus as a whole?” and “What does this passage contribute to our knowledge of Christ as our Savior and Lord?”

### b Like He put others first, and therefore, God exalted Him (6-11)

#### 1) Even though He had the right to be first, He put others first (6-8)

During His life on Earth, He did not insist on His outward glory, and did not demand to always be treated as the boss (even though He certainly still was the boss). Rather, He gave and served for the sake of others.

#### a) Even though He exists in the exact form of God (6a)

Paul started his description of Christ by saying that He is equal with God (the Father). “Exists in the exact form of God” does not mean that Jesus is like an action figure or bobble-head, having the form, but not being the same. In the next phrase, Paul will clearly say that Jesus is equal with God. And the word “form” which Paul used means the outward appearance, but more than just the appearance. It means the actual shape, the exact nature and character of something. This word “always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it” (Nicoll, The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Vol. 3, p. 436). This is another clear example of the deity of Christ, which leads us to the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus had the actual nature and outward glory of God. And Paul used this statement to set up the contrast with what Jesus did.

#### b) He didn’t behave selfishly, but humbled Himself (6b-8)

##### (1) Neg: He did not consider being equal with God something to be selfishly grasped (6b)

“Consider” is the same word used in 3c when Paul said we should “consider others above ourselves.” It reflects this mindset, attitude, and way of thinking that Paul had been commanding. And “equality with God” means equality with God. There is no denying or getting around this simple straightforward statement. Paul wrote that Jesus was and is the same as God the Father in His deity. Again, we see clear evidence of the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

But even though this is true of Christ, He did not think that this was something to be grasped. This phrase “something to be grasped” is an attempt to translate the one word which Paul used. This can be a confusing topic, and there are a variety of views. It can mean the act of grabbing and holding on to something (sometimes violently). It can also refer to something that is taken, such as plunder. And it can refer to something precious, which is held onto tightly.

I think a helpful way to illustrate and understand how Paul used this word is to notice that the Old King James Bible translated this word as “robbery” – “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” That might make it more confusing at first, but bear with the explanation.

If you sneak into someone’s house while they are away, and steal their stuff, that is burglary, not robbery. But if you go up to someone, grab their stuff and take it away

from them, that is robbery. So, we can imagine the cliché of a purse-snatcher: Some little old lady is minding her own business, when a bad guy grabs her purse and tries to run away. The bad guy is grabbing onto the purse, holding it tightly, and thinking “Mine!” That is robbery. However, imagine that the old lady is feisty and she sees the bad guy coming. She will hold on to her purse and not let it go. She would hold it tightly and be thinking “Mine!” That also is “robbery” according to the old English definition. And the word Paul used could mean the bad guy illegitimately grabbing and holding on to something that was not rightfully his. But it could also mean the lady grasping and holding on to something that legitimately was hers.

So here, Paul said that even though equality with God, and all its outward manifestations and honor, rightly belonged to Jesus, He did not selfishly insist on “Mine!, Mine!” for things that were rightfully His, but gave them up.

Jesus, as God, had a right not to suffer, to not be treated unjustly. He had a legitimate, inherent right not to be crucified. And for our sake, He did not selfishly hold on to that privilege, even though He legitimately had every right to do so.

At the transfiguration (see Matt. 17:1-9) part of Jesus’s true glory, which was usually hidden, was revealed. Imagine if He had walked around like that all the time, with His full glory shining. People would have fallen on their face and worshipped Him. They would have recognized Him as God and treated Him as God. They would have hung on His every word and immediately obeyed His every command. But they would not have arrested and crucified Him. And that is what He came for. Back in Genesis (see Gen. 3:4-5), the first temptation included the false promise that “you will be like God.” And when Jesus was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11) the devil said, in essence, “just use your divine powers to avoid suffering, and show yourself to be marvelous, and take rulership of all the kingdoms of the world, but do it in a way that avoids the cross.” The desire to be treated as a god is a constant temptation for all of us. And Jesus rejected that temptation, not only in the wilderness, but throughout His earthly life. Because His mission was to go to the cross and not avoid it. His character is to give and help, and His nature is gracious, loving and giving. So, Jesus never did think that equality with God was something to be selfishly held on to, to the exclusion of His greater mission and purpose.

(2) Pos: Rather, He humbled Himself (7-8)

(a) He humbled Himself by taking on humanity (7)

(i) But He emptied Himself (7a)

We need to be careful here, because many people have fallen into heresy by misunderstanding this phrase. When Paul said “He emptied Himself,” this does not in any way mean that Jesus stopped being God, or that Jesus gave up any of the attributes and character of God. It does not say that Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity or His omniscience, or His omnipresence. It does not say He emptied Himself of anything. Rather, it says that He emptied *Himself*, similar to what Jesus commanded His disciples – that they deny *themselves*, take up their cross and follow Him (see Lk. 9:23). Paul clearly defined what he meant by “emptied” with three modifying phrases. And each of these phrases do not mention anything being taken away. Rather, they talk about humanity being added. Jesus emptied Himself by *taking on* humanity, not by *taking off* any part of His deity.

(ii) How He emptied Himself – He took on human nature (7b-d)

((a)) Taking the form of a servant (7b)

This word “form” is the same one used in 6a to say that Jesus is in the “form of God.” The One existing in the form of God did not cease to be in the form of God. But His form as God was hidden by His putting on the form of a servant. The significance of Paul’s word “servant” (or “slave”) is shown in Jesus’s attitude of service and obedience, as well as His death by crucifixion, which was reserved for slaves.

((b)) becoming into the likeness of a human (7c)

He changed state so that now He is also in the likeness of humanity. Jesus now has two natures. He has always had the full nature of God. And after the incarnation, He now has the full nature of humanity. This term “likeness” is used in Rom. 8:3 to say that Jesus had the likeness of sinful man (without the sin). This term separates the two entities somewhat. The term “form” means an exact form, whereas this term can mean only a similarity.

((c)) and being found in outward appearance as a human (7d)

And He took on the outward appearance of a man. However, this does not mean that Jesus only appeared to be human. He actually was (and still is) fully human, just not a normal human. He was completely without sin. And He was fully human while also still remaining fully God. Paul’s stress was that judging only by outward appearance, He was fully human, even though He was God by nature.

Being a normal human being is not a big deal for us. It is what we were created to be. But for the One Who is God, this is quite a step down in status and glory. It was a huge demotion, that Jesus willingly took for our sakes. Jesus emptied Himself by taking on the form and nature of humanity, with its inherent limitations.

(b) He humbled Himself even unto death (8)

This verse is a progression of three statements. Each statement adds to the previous, going further along the same progression of thought, describing the depths of how Jesus lowered Himself for the sake of His people.

(i) He humbled Himself (8a)

He made Himself low. Not just by becoming human, but He humbled Himself even further by becoming obedient, even to death on a cross. His giving up of His prestige and status did not stop merely with His becoming human, even though that is an infinite loss of status compared with His equality with God

(ii) Becoming obedient unto death on a cross (8b-c)

((a)) becoming obedient unto death (8b)

He continued down to the lowest status and experience of humanity. He took on the nature and attitude of a servant, being obedient. And He did not just become obedient, He became obedient even unto death.

((b)) even [becoming obedient unto] death on a cross (8c)

And He did not just become obedient to death, He became obedient to death on a cross. This was the most painful, most humiliating, most despised form of death possible in that society. This was a form of death reserved for only the lowest classes of humanity like slaves and rebels. It was something so humiliating that it was not talked about in polite society.

This is the kind of loving, giving God that He is. He is not needy. He has nothing to prove. He is infinitely great and will always remain so. And so, He was willing to stoop down and saved us, even at great cost to Himself. He is so great that He could afford to pay that cost. But this also highlights the great cost that He did pay on our behalf. Not just by dying on the cross, but also in humbling Himself to become a human, because that was the only way to bring us back to God. And He did genuinely become human, so that we can forever relate to Him, because He related to us.

"He might have used the miraculous powers inherent in His Divine nature in such a way as to compel men, without further ado, to worship Him as God. Instead of that He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering and death." - Expositors Greek Testament II, 437

Remember, this is to be an example that we follow. In light of what Christ has done, how could we refuse to endure a little inconvenience for the sake of someone else? We can give up some of our status and privilege so that someone else can hear the Gospel and grow in discipleship. We don't need to insist on our rights and status, or hold it over other people.

Christian leaders do not need to be treated as celebrities. It bugs me whenever someone insists on being addressed as "reverend doctor so and so." If someone insists on this in order to puff their pride or exalt their own status, lording it over others, then that seems like evidence that they are not following this self-humbling Savior as closely as they should be. If someone insists that they are something great, they are probably not. Because if they were, you would not need to be told.

And this is not just for Christian leaders. Every Christians should be willing to take a lower status to serve others outside of the spotlight. Our reward and status is secured with Christ in heaven. We have been accepted in Christ. So, what do we have left to prove about our own status and greatness? Our identity is in Christ. Therefore, we no longer have a need to selfishly grab and say "Mine!" We can empty ourselves and put others first, just like He did. And the rest of this passage will give an even greater reason for us to humble ourselves and serve.

2) Therefore, God exalted Him above everything (9-11)

This section also starts with the word “therefore.” This connects these verses with the previous ones. This connects what God did with what Christ had done, as just described.

a) Therefore, God exalted Him and gave Him the Highest Name (9)

Because Christ had humbled Himself and taken on human nature, and the role of a servant, giving His life for His people. God responded and did two things which Paul listed here.

(1) Therefore, God also exalted Him to the highest height (9a)

God raised Him up above everything. God exalted Him to the very highest point of honor. Christ voluntarily made Himself low, and God raised Him high. Christ gave up His privilege and honor, and God gave Him the highest privilege and honor. Christ was humbled for a time, and for a purpose, but God would not allow His time of humiliation to be permanent. This is not only because God is just, and honor is Christ’s deserved reward. But this is also because Christ’s exaltation was the ultimate purpose of His going through humiliation all along. Like Hebrews 12:2 says, Christ endured the cross for the joy set before Him. He knew His resurrection and exaltation was all part of the plan from the beginning. This is exaltation back to the equal status with God the Father which He had before the incarnation. But it also included a new status of having completed the plan to save humanity, and being the resurrected Lord of the new humanity.

(2) And He granted to Him the Name which is beyond every name (9b)

His Name surpasses other names, meaning that He is more exalted and excellent and glorious than all others. In this period, a person’s name was more than just a title. It signified their character and status. So, the Name of Christ refers to His inherent being. Jesus now has the very highest honor over anyone else. In one sense, He already had that honor, being equal with God. But here Paul emphasized that, as a result of His ministry, Christ is publicly, officially acknowledged by the Father as having the highest status.

If a list were made of the most important people of all time, Jesus’s Name would be at the top. And this is not just a popularity context or the result of a press agent promoting His image and brand. This is reality. Jesus really is Lord over all, with the highest glory, honor, and authority. He really is infinitely better than anyone else. And this means that when we tell people the good news, we are not just trying to force *our* opinion on them. We are trying to help them find and recognize reality. Jesus genuinely is worthy of all praise and honor. His salvation really is the greatest thing that can happen to any human being. And we are spiritually blind if we don’t see it. And God validated all this in response to what Christ had done.

b) Purpose: So that everyone will acknowledge Him as Lord (10-11)

God did all this for a purpose. This is a singular purpose, described in a few phrases.

(1) So that every knee – in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth – will bow at the Name of Jesus (10)

This is a sign both of submission, acknowledging Christ’s Lordship and greatness, but also of an act of worship, delighting in that greatness. And Paul emphasized that *every* knee will bow, in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. The good guys and the bad guys will all submit to Christ and acknowledge His Lordship.

(2) And every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord (11)

(a) And every tongue will confess to the glory of God the Father (11a)

Notice again, that this is *every* tongue. Everyone will eventually acknowledge Christ. Some will joyfully, willingly confess because they are saved, having believed in Christ. But others, even as they will be punished eternally, will acknowledge that they were wrong all along about Christ.

And all this, Paul wrote at the end of this passage, is for the glory of God the Father. Because the Father and Son share the same glory and glorify each other for all eternity. Again, this is the doctrine of the Trinity.

(b) That Jesus Christ is Lord (11b)

This proposition is simply the content of what will be confessed, as described in the previous proposition. The fact is that Jesus is the Ruler, Master, and King of the entire universe. In the context of the Philippian church, with their Roman citizenship, this meant that Jesus was Lord over Caesar, and the church's loyalty to Christ should be greater than their loyalty to Rome. And this obviously applies to every Christian of every age, no matter what political system they live under. Christ is a greater authority than anything else, and so, deserves greater loyalty than anyone or anything else.

These two phrases together are another confirmation of the deity of Christ – that He is God. Because in Isaiah 45:23 (which Paul was alluding to), God swore that every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will swear by Him, that He, the LORD, is righteous, and His enemies will be put to shame. And this is in a context where He says that “there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior, there is none but me.” (v. 21). And in Isaiah 42:8, God swore that He would not share His glory with another. So, here in Philippians it says that God's purpose is that Christ will receive the glory that is due to God alone, which is clear evidence that He is God.

There are two things we should grasp from God's response of glorifying Christ to the highest: First is that Christ truly is exalted, and worthy of all our worship and trust and obedience. He is Lord and God, with the Name above all names. So, our knee should bow and our tongue confess, even now.

And second, notice that Paul included this exaltation after humbling as part of the pattern to be taken as our example. This was to encourage his readers in their own humble attitude of service. The implication is that just as God rewarded and exalted Christ after He had humbled Himself and served others, we also can expect that if we genuinely humble ourselves and serve others, then God will reward and exalt us as well. Of course, we won't be exalted as high as Jesus, because we didn't do as great an act of humility as He did. But God will in some way lift us up and bless us, as we put others first and take the role of a servant. This is the theme I call “V for Victory.” The way up is first to go down in service, trusting that God will lift us up.