



## Exegeting the Christ Hymn, Philippians 2:1-13

<sup>12</sup> Not If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself

and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

1. The if/then conditional structure of this passage assumes the condition to be true: “if you have any encouragement, and you do . . . .” [For grammar nerds: this is a First Class condition with the verb assumed.]
2. The “if” is God-centered; the “then” points us to the horizontal implication of our union with Christ. There is an underlying concern for the unity of the church even with all Paul’s thanksgiving and rejoicing.
3. Paul gives us one of the most important pictures of the incarnation and hypostatic union: Divinity pouring out its privilege in order to take on humanity. Jesus really took on all of humanity: became “nothing,” humbled himself and became obedient, which are elements of true humanity.
4. Paul echoes Isaiah 45:23 to show that Jesus IS the *Yaweh* of the Old Testament.
5. Paul is calling believers to follow more than Jesus’ attitude – we also follow the Jesus pattern of servanthood and exaltation.
6. We *kataergodzomai* because God *energeō* in us! (In science, energy is the ability to do work or cause change.)

## Human like Jesus

1. The initial application of our encouragement, comfort, tenderness and compassion clearly point us inside the body of believers (see 4:2-3 for Paul's example). But, just as the consequences of Christ's exaltation are universal, so are the implications of our union with him.

*<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup> The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Galatians 6

*But <sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"*

*<sup>27</sup> He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

*<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

*<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

*<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'*

*<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

*<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

*Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

The Good Samaritan, Luke 10

2. The "Jesus Pattern" is the one miracle which, according to Lewis, best tells the Christian story and reveals God's glory. It tells me how much to "pour out" and how much I gain.

The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him. It is precisely one great miracle.

C. S. Lewis, "The Grand Miracle"

*<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1 (Note: the pattern of God "coming into nature" begins in Genesis 1-3)

3. Paul now show us our part in the work that God began in us back at the opening prayer of this epistle. The parallel passages in Ephesians and Colossians will help!

*<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 1

*<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup> But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Colossians 3

## Resources for studying Genesis, Book 4

I found these commentaries helpful:

Peter O’Brien, *NIGTC: Epistle to the Philippians* (Eerdmans, 1991)

William Hendriksen, *Philippians* (Baker, 1962)

Homer Kent, *Philippians in EBC* (Zondervan, 1981)

Spurgeon addressed this text with these sermons: [Consolation in Christ](#) (2:1), [The Exaltation of Christ](#) (2:9-11), [Working out What is Worked In](#) (2:12-13), [The Way of Humiliation](#) (2:8), [Lights in the World](#) (2:14) and [Your Own Salvation](#) (2:12).

Bob Deffinbaugh has his series of sermons on Philippians at <https://bible.org/series/live-christ-study-book-philippians>

Gordon Fee is always worth reading on Philippians. [Here is discussion of Philippians 2:6-11 as hymn or prose.](#)

Martin Lloyd-Jones has a [wonderful message on working out our salvation from 2:12-13.](#)