

Scripture references from ESV

**Philippians 2:1-11** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, <sup>8</sup>being born in the likeness of men. <sup>9</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>10</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>11</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul has started this letter by handing out plenty of encouragement to the whole congregation of the Philippian church, including the overseers and deacons. He reminded them of their partnership in the gospel and of the good work that God had begun in them. The overflowing of thankfulness for them, and his yearning to see Christ in them are what sustained Paul in the midst of his afflictions. He thanked them for their prayers (**Phil 1:19** see p4) and expressed his hope that he would meet with them again. As an encouragement to his readers, Paul made it clear that living for Christ was the way forward and the way the Gospel would be advanced.

Then he moved on to deal with the issue of humility and centred his arguments around the cross. This is the place to which we must always turn with all of our issues and grievances. It is at the cross that we find our deliverance. What is the condition of your heart today? Have you made the choice to read this, as God has put the desire in your heart to live more like Christ? This longing is founded on Christ, who is our example.

**He is God our Saviour through the fulness of his grace, the cleansing power of his blood,  
his perfect righteousness and sacrifice.**

Paul constantly brings his readers to focus on Christ and in this letter, he showed how the cross is central to the work of God in transforming us and making us more like him.

**1. Putting aside (v7above).** In the awesome work of salvation, this verse helps us in our understanding of what Jesus did for us. Jesus **emptied himself**, but we must be careful not to think that this was like a bucket of water being emptied, where you can never get the water back in again! It might sound as if Jesus gave up his divine attributes when he chose to leave the throne of heaven. However, scripture shows us that Jesus carried his power with him, and when he needed to, he showed total authority over people's lives and over creation.

- Jesus gave bursting nets of fish to his followers
- He fed the many with very little
- He calmed the storm with a word
- He healed the paralytic
- He raised the dead.

When God became man, Jesus did not lose any of his divinity, but chose to lay aside the perfection of heaven to live in the imperfect world. He created the universe and his delight was to create man in his own image, to have a likeness of his glory that even the angels cannot comprehend.

The relationship between God and Adam and Eve was one of perfect harmony, as they walked with God in the garden. That harmony was lost because of disobedience and so sin entered the world. Yet that is not the end of the story!

**For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,  
by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19)**

Jesus, the Son of God, in holy obedience, willingly humbled himself, emptying himself but he never ceased to be God or became less than part of the Trinity - Father, Son and Spirit.

**For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (Col 2:9)**

For each one of us, God laid aside his throne and the privileges of heaven, choosing to make himself nothing. He chose to veil his glory and to take up the form of a servant. From the glorious wonders of eternity, he humbled himself and counted us more worthy and more significant than himself.

On his journey to save us, Jesus did not use any of his divine powers to make it easier. He worked, ate and slept as we do. He grew up, as we grow up. He was hungry and thirsty at times. He was known as a carpenter, as Joseph was. He did not escape the cross by calling on legions of angels to deliver him. Instead, he said to the Father '**Not my will but yours be done.**' (Luke 22:42)

**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich,  
yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9)**

He humbled himself and took on our way of life, but ultimately he, the perfect spotless lamb, would take on his flesh the sin of us all.

**2. The depths to which he descended (v6 above).** When he came to Earth, Jesus could have demanded that everyone should grovel at his feet, and serve him, but Jesus came to be a servant to all he had created. Yet he put his position aside and took on the nature of a servant, humbling himself and giving his life to serve others.

Consider how far down he chose to descend so that we can enjoy a relationship with our heavenly Father that is equal to his relationship with the Father. How deep is his love for us, and how deep an abyss he descended for our sake. (v8 above).

Jesus was given the cruellest form of execution (death on a cross), a punishment reserved for criminals who had broken the law and were justly punished. The perfect Son of God was humiliated, and slain for our disobedience. His perfect body was broken and his precious blood was poured out for you and me so that we, who deserve the punishment, can go free.

We cannot truly grasp what this means. The heights from which he came (and to which he returned) along with the depths to which he descended are beyond our capacity to understand.

**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,  
and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.**

**After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3)**

In all of this, God was in perfect control. (John 10:17-18 see p4). The cross could not hold Jesus and we can rejoice that it is empty!

Jesus, our blessed Saviour, has risen from the dead. He is high and lifted up, the name above every name. Death could not destroy Jesus. He is now filled with his glory, having emptied himself while he was on Earth. All that he put aside is now adorning him again. **He laid down his life that he might take it up again.**

Jesus took the depths of our sin and crushed it, totally removing all past, present and future sin, through his death and resurrection, meaning that all who bow the knee to King Jesus are restored, rescued and reunited with him. Where do you stand? Have you met this amazing Jesus? Are you listening to his words? He left the gaze of glory, emptying himself to come and live among us, so that you can be with him in his glory.

- Will you look to Jesus and proclaim **that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (v11 above)**?

When you are weary and surrounded by grief of all kinds, feeling exhausted and worn down by life, the perfect Saviour who took on our poverty to give us the riches of eternity will not abandon you. Jesus will be with you all the way through and will lift you to his glory. All we face now will be as nothing in the light of eternity.

- Look again to Jesus and confirm your confession of him, **because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**

**(Romans 10:9-11)**

As we look to the example of our Saviour, Paul shows us what our response should be (**vv3-4** above). Just as Jesus did, we should set our minds to serve others and to count their interests more significant than our own. As we live in the Spirit, loving one another, we will show Jesus to others, reflecting his character to those around us.

- 3. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Col 3:12-14)**

Paul calls us to put on those qualities. We are to be of one mind (**vv2,5** above). That is the mind that sees Jesus in the midst of the sinful actions of our hearts, holding us back from pursuing selfish ambition or conceit.

**If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal 5:25-26).**

Living in the old way, we looked down on others, doing all that we did with wrong motives. Paul has shown us the right and beautiful way. It is Jesus' way.

**Christ is our perfect example as we bear with one another and seek to serve one another in love.**

**Jesus put his glory aside and humbled himself to save the lost.**

Paul brings the Philippians to the place of the cross where there is healing. As we humble ourselves before Jesus, bowing low in confession of our sin, we will always have food for our soul as we remember the sacrifice of our beloved Saviour who emptied himself to save us for his glory.

**However young or old we are, we need to come before the one who, at such great cost, makes us whole again.**

Spend some time meditating on the words of the passage

**Phil 1:19** for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

**John 10:17-18** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”