We enter the New Year with our hearts and minds full of the Incarnation of the Lord in the manger at Bethlehem. Turning to Philippians chapter two, we see Christ taking the form of a servant in His Incarnation and then exalted in our nature with the name above every name. May God help us to appreciate the role of each person of the Trinity in this work of salvation.

**Mon/Tues: Read Philippians 2:1-8 Example of Examples**

Philippians chapter two is the earliest account of the birth of Christ.

The first written account of what Christmas means is found not in the Gospels, but, surprisingly, in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. This letter was written about twenty years after the death of Jesus, and at least fifteen years before the first of our Gospels was written down.

 *New Horizons*, Dec 2016, M&W Radius

What occasioned this description of Christ’s origins? Paul wrote to address the Philippians about conflicts between different personalities in their church. He uses as his example Christ’s willingness *to humble Himself by taking the form of a servant*, and from this example argues that they should in like manner adopt a servant attitude towards each other in the church at Philippi.

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, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:1-4 NIV)

**Meditate and Pray:** What a sermon illustration! We are to humble ourselves in our relationships in the church because of Christ’s example of humbling Himself, even to the point of death! How hard this is for us. Let us flee to God in prayer right now, since we in our own strength cannot take one step in imitating Christ as we ought.

Great God in Heaven, You humbled yourself as our Father to give up your Son for our salvation! What a lowering of yourself as our Father: You came down from your Throne, rolled up your sleeves, and created a body for your Son by your Spirit in the womb of a simple young maiden. You then commanded your Son in our nature to be “about His Father’s business,” learning continually about the necessity of the Cross.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that your learned from your Father how to interpret your high station as God’s Son – you became obedient. You demonstrated both your submission to your Father’s will and your great love for sinners!

Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you can bring into our new lives that very same humble servanthood which the Son crafted in our nature. Please cause Christ’s graces, especially His humble obedience, to grow within us as a church family, that we truly might learn how to put the interests of others in the body of Christ before our own! Amen.

**Weds/Thurs: read Philippians 2:5-11 A Hymn to Humility**

“Have this mind among yourselves which is your in Christ Jesus.” What challenging words Paul writes for us in Philippians 2:5. Paul was so concerned that the Philippians learn the key ingredient of humility in church life that he recited what scholars think was a current hymn in the early Church.By this hymn, Paul knew he could move the Philippians to recall the extent of Christ’s humble obedience!

Think of Philippians 2:5-11, again, and read it as a hymn this time. What type of hymn tune would you think would suit these words?

*Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus:*

*Who, being in very natureGod,
    did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**rather, he made himself nothing
    by taking the very nature of a servant,
    being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
    he humbled himself
    by becoming obedient to death—
        even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
    and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
    to the glory of God the Father.*

What is your experience when you hear the words of one of your favorite hymns? Should we not sing with all our hearts when the deepest truths about God are expressed for us memorably and musically? James White describes what he thinks happened to the Philippians when they heard a hymn well-known in their day:

In our day, it is common for a minister to incorporate a reference to a well-known and well-loved hymn so as to make a strong point. Many close a sermon on the grace of God, for example, by saying, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!” The minister doesn’t need to tell us what hymn number he is referring to. He doesn’t need to give us the name. Just a line or two is enough. “I once was blind, but now I see” is sufficient to bring our minds the entire message contained in the song. I believe that is exactly what Paul is doing … In these words Paul takes us to the highest points of scriptural revelation, speaking of great eternal truths. Yet he does so through the words of a familiar song.

 *The Forgotten Trinity,* James White

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, may we store up in our heart the key hymns of the Faith so that the Spirit can recall them for comfort and instruction in all future times of need.

**Friday: Read Philippians 2:1-4 and 2:9-11 A Three-Personed Salvation**

The truth of the Trinity is clearly something that the Apostles experienced before they ever wrote about it. In other words. As eyewitnesses, the Apostles first saw the Trinity at work in the circumstances of their own lives and in the lives of believers in the church. They found the Trinity to be the only explanation for the work of grace that saved them. They became Trinitarian by experiencing Christ’s saving power, and then naturally wrote about it in their inspired writings.

For example, the Apostle Paul brackets His words about Christ’s birth in Phil 2:5-8 with allusions to the work of the Spirit in Phil 2:1-4, and with words about the Father exalting Jesus in Phil 2:9-11. We cannot understand what it means for Christ Jesus “as the very essence of God” to take the very form of a servant, without understanding the Holy Spirit and the Father’s role in the incarnation.

It is through “fellowship with the Spirit of God” that the Philippians have experienced comfort from God’s love, and encouragement from Christ (Philippians 2:1-2). It is likewise because the Father has exalted Christ Jesus that He receives glory as the exalted Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). We worship Christ because God the Father has exalted Him through the Resurrection and Ascension. And we personally find great encouragement in the bonds of our union with Christ because the Spirit has poured God’s love into our hearts through that bond we share with Jesus. Without this Triune work *experienced by every believer in Christ’s church,* we could not worship or work out this great salvation we have been given!

**Meditate and Pray:** Give thanks that we can *experience* the reality of the Trinity by sharing the blessings of being united with Christ, being comforted by His love, sharing the Spirit with each other, and receiving the tenderness and compassion of the Father, as described in Philippians 2:1-4.

**Sat/Sun: Read Philippians 2:9-11 and Hebrews 10:5-7 Enhanced by Humility**

Why did God the Father so exalt Jesus, and reveal Him to us as the Lord, giving Him the “name above every name”? It is because of Jesus’ obedience to His Father’s will in taking up His role as the suffering servant, obedience to death! The exaltation, then, which Paul describes here, is the exaltation of Jesus *in His office* of Savior. As Jesus Himself declares as in Hebrews 10:7: “Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.”

But let us be careful here. Christ Jesus is eternally exalted as One “in the very form of God” *before He comes to earth to be our Savior.* He already has the “name above every name” as the fully Divine Son of God. From eternity He is the Lord who lives within the triune glory of the Godhead. But when Christ voluntarily took up our nature to die for us on the Cross, He brought new glory to God the Father and was exalted as the God-Man, because He fulfilled His duty to His Father by being our Redeemer!

The key point is that the Son of God revealed His eternal love for His Father through His act of becoming a servant. He *did not* become less Divine to save us. Rather, He *added* to His glorious, Divine status as God’s beloved Son *by also* taking on Himself the form of a servant. In this way, He chose to reveal the sacrificial love at the heart of the Trinity - by *adding* the true form of a servant who would die on the Cross!

He who fully possessed all the qualities which make God all that God is … also took to Himself “the form of a servant” …all those essential qualities which belong to being “a servant”.

 B.B. Warfield

**Meditate and Pray:** What a strong foundation we have for our salvation! Jesus Christ, the very fullness of God (Colossians 2:9), who has always possessed the full glory and Divine nature of God, takes the lowest place in order to “make His life a ransom for many.” No wonder the Father exalts Christ Jesus above “every name” in Philippians 2:9-11. Let us as a church, therefore, learn with the Philippians what it means to magnify Christ’s servanthood in our worship in this New Year, as we are led by the Holy Spirit to glorify the Son in all He did for us, and in all that He is as God (John 14:26 & 16:14).