

Every Knee Shall Bow Updated 9/5/2021

For this reason, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at [in: YLT] the name of Jesus **every** knee **will** bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and **under** the earth, and that **every** tongue **will** [gladly] (1a) confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory** of God the **Father**. Philippians 2:9-11 NAS

Is this forced worship or one offered genuinely from the heart? I have observed 30 points that have convinced me of the latter. And why is this of particular importance? Because if all human beings will one day genuinely worship God, then God's judgments, in this life or the next, *cannot* be endless.

(1) The Greek "**bow**" (*kamptō*, Strong's 2578, "to bend") is used especially of bending the knees in religious veneration (Rom 11:4, 14:11; Eph 3:14; Ph 2:10). [In contrast] *sunkamptō* signifies . . . to bend down by compulsion. See Romans 11:10. (1b).

(2) Ancient **baptismal services** confessed the phrase *that Jesus Christ is Lord* by which those being baptized expressed their commitment to Christ or declared they had been saved through Christ. (2a) This demonstrates that salvific salvation is implied.

(3) *Of those under the earth* affirms the opportunity of salvation after death. Since *under the earth* refers to the abode of the dead (or *hades*), this passage is specifying that even in death an opportunity remains to confess Christ unto salvation (which is further confirmed by the NT tradition of believers being baptized for the dead: 1Co 15:29). Death poses no time limit on God's ability to save anyone, for *God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him* [even those who have physically died]. See Lu 23:37-38 . Since a God of infinite love and power (2b) has all time throughout all future ages to change our hearts and save us all, it makes more sense than ever that Phil 2:9-11 depicts salvific worship. Plus why would this be difficult to believe since there is nothing said in Hebrews 9:27 that contradicts this (as is commonly and erroneously assumed)? (2b)

(4) *No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (1Co 12:3). This further confirms a sincere worship since threats and brute force alone can easily bring about a forced or compelled worship without the need of the Holy Spirit moving the heart. Human despots throughout the centuries have all, too tragically, proven this point.

(5) *Every tongue will confess . . . to the glory of God the Father*. Only genuine, heartfelt worship honors and glorifies God. Jesus said: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth*. John 4:24. A forced, compelled worship is not genuine, and thus not true worship. It cannot glorify God. Common sense tells us that forced adulation would mean nothing to a God of infinite love and power.

(6) God values **heart worship**. *These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. 'But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'* Mt 15: 7-8. What are those precepts that invalidate true worship? *The Lord said, inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward me is taught by the commandment of*

men. Isa 29:13 What is feared more than the false doctrine of an endless hell, to which tradition assigns the vast majority of human beings? This fear blinds Bible readers to the true meaning of hundreds of salvation-of-all promises. This compels many to make the absurd claim that “all” in such texts only means “some;” that Phil 2:10 must be feigned worship. But Jesus rebuked this reasoning saying: *you invalidate the word of God for the sake of your tradition.* Mat 15:6 NAS.

(7) Revelation 5:11-14 amplifies the meaning of Ph 2:10. Judge for yourself: *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands [hyperbole for limitless], saying with a loud voice: **Worthy is the Lamb** who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing! And **every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth** . . . ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders **fell down and worshiped Him** who lives forever and ever.* So then, as this Johannine scene is undeniably true worship, likewise—by extension, so is Paul’s.

(8) The Lamb, in the above scene, confirms salvific worship. *Every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth . . . I heard saying: ‘Blessing, honor, glory, power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb’.* Who is this Lamb? John the Baptist, in seeing Jesus, said *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.* John 1:29. Worshiping the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world can only mean salvific worship!

(9) Mouth confession affirms salvific worship. “If you confess with your mouth the Lord . . . you will be saved . . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:9). *Every tongue will confess.* (Ph 2:11)

(10) Same praise as Christ. The word “confess” is the same Greek word Christ used in praising His Father in Mat 11:25 and Lu 10:21. *Exomologeomai* (Strong’s 1843) is used 11 times in the NT (2c) None of them denote a “forced” praise. They relate to what naturally flows from the heart. Jesus exclaimed: “I heartily praise Thee, Father . . . that Thou hast hidden these things . . .” (Mt 11:25 Wey). The NIV and the NAS read, “I praise you Father.” Ro 15:9 RSV states, “I will praise thee among the Gentiles and sing to thy name” (See the NIV, NAS, TEV, Phillips, Jerusalem Bible, RSV, NEB, WEY, and so forth). The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the OT says *exomologeomai* is the Greek word used in Psalms for “praise” (yadah) and “give thanks” (hoday) in the Septuagint used in Christ’s time. Simply reading Psalms confirms the genuine worship of Ph 2:11. (3)

(11) “In” the name of Jesus implies an “entering into” or an intimacy with His name. Ken Eckerty in an article titled, “The Work of the Cross,” said: “I think it’s significant that the bowing of every knee and the confessing of every tongue is done “in” the name of Jesus, not “at” as translated by the KJV. Scholars such as Vincent, Robertson, Young, Rotherham and Bullinger (just to name a few) all say that it is best translated “in.” “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I” Mat 18:20. Confession “in” His name cannot mean anything but intimacy. (4) See JMTranslation & Commentary

(12) Isaiah 45:21-25 by extension, repeatedly and beautifully amplifies the meaning of Ph 2:9-11. Judge for yourself: *There is no other God beside Me , a just God and a Savior . . . Look to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth! . . . I have sworn . . . the word has gone out of My mouth . . . and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, ‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength’ (v 24). To Him men shall come and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him. In the LORD all the descendents of Israel*

shall be justified and shall glory.' Note carefully all that I have underlined. Only genuine worship from true believers fits this context. Consider each point:

(13) Reflection on a **just God** and a **Savior** fits perfectly in the hearts of those genuinely worshipping God. It would be totally out of step in the hearts of those being forcefully subjugated.

(14) **Be saved, all you ends of the earth** affirms a salvific invitation context. (v 22)

(15) God **swears** to its fulfillment and every person (also by **oath**) responds appropriately. (v 23) Why would God swear to something's fulfillment, if it wasn't a wonderful thing; *especially* when its beneficiaries also respond by *oath* demonstrating an appropriate response? This attests to God's determination to save us all—working in us, as we display our determination through a proper response. See Philippians 2:13; 1:6.

(16) *To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength.* (v 24a)

Such a salvific statement can only be confessed by true believers worshipping the Father and the Lamb in spirit and in truth.

(17) Being **ashamed** is a sign of genuine contrition and repentance. *Those who are incensed against Him shall be ashamed* (v 24). See 2Ch 30:15; Ezra 9:5-7; Job 19:3; Jer 6:13-15, 8:12, 12:13, 31:18-20, Ez 16:60-63, 36:31-33; 2Th 3:14-15.

(18) **All shall be justified and shall glory**—are further salvific statements of genuine worshipers. (v 25) See also Romans 11:26-33

(19) God is **able even to subdue all "things" to Himself** (Ph 3:21)." This is from Paul's same brief letter to the Philippians (the very next chapter). If he was merely referring to God's brute force in compelling submission and adulation, what's the big deal? Why would Paul feel the need to stress the fact that God is **able even to subdue all to Himself** if that's all he meant? It must be something far more impressive! Paul said *God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*, (Eph 3:20). Such massive power that does something this extraordinary must be infinitely greater than brute force. He transforms the wills and hearts of even his enemies into saints! (See #22 below). This is confirmed in the **next** verses of our passage:

Therefore . . . for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Ph 2:12-13) *We are 'His workmanship'* (Ep 2:10). All this together affirms true worship in Ph 2:10. See *God Can Change Anyone: Hope For All*: Anchor 8.

(20) **The prophet Micah's** closing words likely inspired Paul when he said that "God is **able to subdue all** to Himself. Micah says: *Because God delights in mercy, He will again have compassion on us and will subdue our iniquities . . . cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.* Micah 7:18-19 *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* Gen 18:14 *There is nothing too hard for You.* Jer 32:17 *I am . . . the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me?* Jer 32:27 *Who then can be saved? . . . With humans this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* Mt 19:25-26 Jesus said, *Abba Father, all things are possible for you.* Mk 14:36 The angel said, *with God nothing will be impossible.* Lk 1:35-37 What is holding us back from believing that God is at work changing the hearts of every person that is bowing and every tongue that is confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, in Ph 2:10-11, to His glory?

(21) David also testifies that **all shall turn to** and **worship** the Lord, **bowing** before Him; will **come** and **declare** His **righteousness**. This is undoubtedly genuine worship! (Psalm 22: 27, 29, 31) These expressions of genuine, universal worship, closely akin to Phil 2, affirms its salvific nature.

(22) How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You. *All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; they shall sing praises to Your name. Selah. Come and see the works of God; He is **awesome** in His doing toward the sons of men* (Ps. 66:3-5). Imagine! God is described twice as “awesome” in the very context of “enemies submitting themselves” through His “great” power. And this, mind you, is all in the context of “all the earth” worshiping and singing praises to God! David then invites us to come and see how awesome is His doing toward humanity! Where is “forced” worship in this? As well, they are “submitting themselves” not “being” submitted.

Again, relative to Micah 7:18-19, how can a “compassionate subduing” from a God “delighting in mercy” (in the very context of sins cast away) possibly coincide with a forced worship of those eternally being tormented? A compelled submission, by mere force, is not particularly impressive. But a God winning the hearts of His enemies through His sacrificial love on the cross—that is impressive! That’s what makes Him truly a most “awesome” and all powerful God, worthy of all Creations’ worship! Certainly all these similar passages with Ph 2:11 all affirm the same glorious worship beautifully exemplified in Revelation 5:13!

(23) Even the death of the cross. (Ph 2:8) The phrase: *For this reason* (v 9) or *Therefore* [KJV, etc], links Jesus’ horrific death on the cross with His incomparable exaltation and worship. Professor Thomas Talbott asks: “Now just what is the power of the Cross, according to Paul? Is it the power of a conquering hero to compel His enemies to obey Him against their will? If that had been Paul’s doctrine, it would have been strange indeed, for God had no need of a crucifixion to compel obedience. He was quite capable of doing that all along. God sent His Son into the world, not as a conquering hero, but as a suffering servant; and the power that Jesus unleashed as He bled on the Cross was precisely the power of self-giving love, the power to overcome evil by transforming the wills and renewing the minds of the evil ones themselves. (5) The cross of Christ is the greatest power in the universe because it alone can melt the hearts of God’s enemies, and make them His friends. As John Milton, the famous 17th century English author wrote, “Who overcomes by force hath overcome but half his foe.”(6) To deny genuine worship at the foot of the cross is to strip this passage of its greatest meaning. Worse, it insults the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29) denying Jesus’ own words about the purpose of His death on the cross: *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw* [“drag” Gk *helkō*: Strong’s 1670] *all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.* Jn 12:32-33

(24) Salvation is directly linked. *Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore . . . work out your own salvation . . . for God works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure* (Ph 2:11-13). The word “therefore” (v 12) is very significant, and to me conclusive. It associates the confession that “Jesus is Lord” *directly* with salvation.

(25) For [Gk *gar* Strong’s 1063] *it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure* (v 13); who’s pleasure and will includes salvation which He wills for all (1 Tim 2:3; 1 Pet 3:9). Denying true worship in *this* context, in view of this revealing clause is inexplicable to me.

(26) Same Submission as Christ. When all (things*) are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all (things*) under Him that God may be all in all” (1Co 15:28). The Greek word for “subject”

here is *hupotasso* (Strong's #5293). It is the same word applied to Christ. Can it be questioned that Christ's submission to God is not freely given but compelled? No! Moreover, could God be "all in all" in subjects forcefully subjugated? God "all in all" intimates only a glorious and God honoring state with no negative implications. "Every knee" bowing and "every tongue" confessing that "Jesus is Lord" is in perfect harmony with all people being made subject to Christ, which results in God becoming all in all.

(27) God *highly exalted* Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the **name** of Jesus every knee will bow. (Ph 2:9-10 NAS). What kind of worship does justice to Him who died for the sins of the whole world (1Jn 2:2)? Jesus died for all and God's justice requires that He receives all He has redeemed; all belong to Him! Any less than *all* is an infinite injustice to his Name—his person. Phil 2:10 must be genuine worship, for only that highly exalts the Savior of the whole world. (Jn 1:29; 12:47; 1Jn 2:2; 4:14; etc).

(28) Salvific worship is **not meritorial**. Some say, "Of course they'll confess then, it will all be too obvious; there will be no merit to confessing then." But note this truth: we are *not* saved by our merits, we are saved by His merits—His death on the cross. *Where is boasting? It is excluded*. (Rom 3:27)

(29) And every tongue shall **gladly** confess that Jesus the Anointed is Lord. Phil 2:11 (The New Testament: A Translation) Evidently, this renowned, contemporary NT scholar (David Bentley Hart) did not see a forced subjugation in its original language and context. He saw a confession that was *gladly* given, which implies a salvific quality.

(30) Jonathan Mitchell, in His NT translation and commentary on Philippians says this about Phil 2:9-11: "We, the Church, have stripped this passage of its full glory. We have failed to recognize that the incomprehensible love of God will do what His brute power alone could never do—conquer the hearts of His enemies and make them His friends." Did Jesus not die for His enemies? Romans 5:10." (7)

Summary of Points:

- (1) The Greek *bow* negates compulsory force.
- (2) Ancient baptismal services confessed *Jesus Christ is Lord* as a salvific act.
- (3) *Of those under the earth* implies hope in death and by extension, genuine worship in Ph 2:10.
- (4) *By the Holy Spirit*, affirms genuine worship. 1 Cor 12:3
- (5) *To the glory of God* affirms salvation. See John 4:24
- (6) God values heart worship. Mat 15:7-8; Isa 29:13
- (7) Rev 5:11-14 amplifies salvific worship in Ph 2:10.
- (8) *The Lamb* confirms salvific worship in John 1:29.
- (9) *Mouth confession* affirms salvific worship in Rom 10:9.
- (10) The word "confess" meant *praise* on Jesus' lips.
- (11) "*In*" the name of Jesus supports salvific worship.
- (12) Isa 45:21-25 repeatedly amplifies salvific worship in Ph 2:10:
- (13) *A just God and a Savior* contradicts forced subjugation. (v 21)
- (14) *Be saved, all you ends of the earth* affirms a salvific invitation context. (v 22)
- (15) *Oaths* from both God and man support true worship. (v 23)
- (16) *Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength* is a salvific confession. (v 24a)

- (17) Being *ashamed* is a sign of genuine contrition and repentance. (v 24b)
- (18) *All shall be justified and shall glory* are further salvific statements. (v 25)
- (19) Phil 3:21 with 2:11-13 and Eph 3:20 with 2:10 together affirm the salvific worship of Ph 2:10.
- (20) Micah's closing words likely inspired Paul's theology affirming the salvific nature of Ph 2:9-11. Micah 7:18-19
- (21) David also confirms the genuine worship of Phil 2:9-11. See Psalm 22: 27, 29, 31.
- (22) Psalm 66:3-5 powerfully affirms Paul's genuine worship in Phil 2:9-11.
- (23) Every knee bows *because* of the horrid execution of the divine Son of God on the cross! What can inspire true worship more than that? Ph 2:8
- (24) The word "Therefore" (v 12) directly links worship to salvation confirming salvific worship. Ph 2:11-13
- (25) Denying true worship in this context in light of the additional words "*For*" and God's "*good pleasure*" in v 13 is inexplicable. Ph 2:11-13
- (26) Christ's submission (in Greek) is the same as ours in 1 Cor 15:28, also affirming salvific worship in Ph 2:10
- (27) Only salvific worship highly exalts the Savior of the world, he who paid the price to redeem us all. 1 Jn 2:2
- (28) Some say there is no merit to confessing Christ after death. But salvation is not based on merit!
- (29) *And every tongue shall gladly confess that Jesus the Anointed is Lord.* Ph 2:11 The New Testament: A Translation (David Bentley Hart)
- (30) New Testament translator, Jonathan Mitchell, confidently affirms that Paul had an unlimited salvific scope in view when writing Philippians 2:9-11.

We, the Church, have stripped this passage of its full glory. We have failed to recognize that the incomprehensible love of God will do what His brute power alone could never do—conquer the hearts of His enemies and make them His friends. Did Jesus not die for His enemies? See Romans 5:10

Why did I go into such detail over this one passage? This is a well known and frequently quoted passage, the basis of some of our most loved worship songs. Sadly, it is not fully appreciated for its most glorious meaning. I think any honest reflection of these 30 points will reveal that it can only refer to a sincere and heartfelt worship, one which gives us hope for all.

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- 2b See Hope For All: Anchor 8: "God Can Change Anyone" along with Anchor 5, "Hope in Death."
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* Adding “things” often muddies the water when people are the focal point of redemption. Bible translator, J. Mitchell says “all things” in Acts 3:21, is plural as both a masculine and a neuter—panton. It can be rendered “all humans.” The CLT says “all” in both Col 1:19 and Acts 3:21. Paul wrote, “Let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world” (1 Cor 3:21-22). The first three “things” are persons! In Hebrews: “We do not yet see all things put under Him. But we see Jesus [a person]” (Heb 2:8-9). The word “But” means persons are in view! Paul says “all things” are put under Christ’ feet, except God [a person]” (1 Cor 15:27). “Except” means persons are in view! “All things” are subjected to Christ—then the Son (a person) is also subjected to God (1 Cor 15:28). “Is also” means persons are in view! “He is able even to subdue all things [ta panta] to Himself.” Mitchell says, “Ta panta in no way excludes humanity; it excludes nothing!

Paul said, “In... the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things... also we have obtained an inheritance... who works all things... that we... should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:10-12). “Also we” and “that we” assumes persons are included. The introduction of the JMT states: “The Greek word pas (all G3956), is both masculine and neuter in some of its forms. With many translations you will only find the neuter rendered, for example with a plural, ‘all things.’” The JMT gives renderings of both the neuter and the masculine, when such is the case, translating the masculine as “all people; all humanity; or all mankind.” This is the case with Acts 3:21, which is plural as both a masculine and a neuter—panton. It can be rendered “all humans.” (See Jonathan Mitchell Translation, 2014 Edition. Introduction page 2.

The JMT reads: “...until the periods... moving all mankind forward.” “All things” is based on the single Greek word pas G3956 in its various forms. In the KJV it is translated: “all” 748 times, “all things” 170 times, “every” 117 times, “all men” 41 times, “whosoever” 31 times, “everyone” 28 times, etc. See blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3956&t=NKJV

The range of forms of pas are: panta (masc. sing., neut. pl.); pantas (masc. pl.); pantes (masc. pl., neut. pl.); panti (masc. sing., neut. sing.); pantos (masc. sing., neut. sing.); panton (masc. pl., neut. pl.); pas (masc. sing.); pasa, pasais, pasan, pasas, pase, pases (fem.); pasi (masc.pl., neut. pl.); pason (fem. pl.).