

## LEARNING FROM THE HUMILITY AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST IN EASING CONFLICT

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the significance of Christ's humility and sacrifice, particularly through His incarnation and death on the cross, and its implications in alleviating interpersonal and social conflicts. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study employs literature review and content analysis methods to examine biblical texts, theological works, and modern theories on conflict and reconciliation. The research focuses on how the principles of Christ's humility and sacrifice, exemplified in His self-emptying action to serve humanity, can be applied to resolve conflicts and restore relationships between individuals. The findings of this study indicate that Christ's teachings provide a relevant model for reconciliation and peacebuilding, both in personal life and on a broader social scale. The novelty of this research lies in linking the theological values of Christ with contemporary conflict resolution theories, offering new insights into the role of humility and sacrifice in addressing social tensions. This study contributes to understanding the relevance of Christ's teachings in the context of current conflicts.

Keywords: christ's sacrifice; conflict resolution; incarnation; humility; reconciliation

### INTRODUCTION

The humility and sacrifice of Jesus Christ through His incarnation is a profound theological concept at the heart of Christian teaching. In the context of human existence, marked by social conflicts, divisions, and tensions, Christ's example of humility offers a powerful perspective on addressing these issues. From His humble birth in a manger to His ultimate sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ exemplifies the unparalleled act of self-emptying, humility, and prioritising the welfare of others over personal interests. In this sense, Christ's

incarnation not only forms the foundation for humanity's salvation but also provides a path for the restoration of broken social relationships, caused by selfishness, greed, and the desire for power.

The central theme of this article is "Learning from the Humility and Sacrifice of Christ in Easing Conflict," which focuses on how the actions of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice can be applied in human life to alleviate and resolve societal conflicts. Christ's humility, manifested in His act of kenosis (*ἐκένωσεν/ekkenosen*) and His choice to live within limitations, despite His boundless divine rights, teaches us the importance of renouncing personal ambition and prioritising love and service to others. In this light, the research seeks to explore the relevance of Christ's teachings in addressing both interpersonal and social conflicts, offering solutions for the restoration of human relationships in an increasingly fragmented world.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to examine and link the concepts of Christ's humility and sacrifice with the reconciliation of conflicts in social and interpersonal contexts. While many theological studies discuss the incarnation of Christ, few specifically focus on how His self-emptying can serve as a model for reducing tensions and repairing broken social relationships. Consequently, this article contributes new insights into the practical application of Christ's humility in the context of social conflicts and human relationships.

The research method employed is a literature review using content analysis, a qualitative research approach. This study examines biblical and theological texts, Christian doctrine, and relevant literature to analyse the meaning and implications of Christ's humility and sacrifice, as well as how these principles can be implemented to ease conflict in human life. Through a critical analysis of existing sources, this research aims to uncover fresh insights that can be applied to contemporary social and interpersonal challenges.

By focusing on the example set by Jesus Christ in addressing conflict through humility and sacrifice, this study aims to offer valuable insights for the development of peace theory and practice in various contexts, including personal life, communities, and broader society.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing literature review and content analysis methods to explore the central theme of "Learning from the Humility and Sacrifice of Christ in Easing Conflict." The primary focus is to examine the meaning of Christ's humility and sacrifice, particularly through the events of His incarnation and crucifixion, and their implications for alleviating conflict in both personal and social spheres of human life.

The qualitative approach was chosen due to its capacity for in-depth exploration of theological and social values embedded in Christ's actions. This methodology enables the study to uncover the multidimensional significance of humility and sacrifice as transformative principles for conflict resolution, ensuring a nuanced understanding that resonates with contemporary issues.

The literature review method involves a comprehensive examination of diverse sources, including biblical texts (with particular emphasis on Philippians 2:6-11), theological writings, and scholarly works addressing Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. Additionally, theories of conflict, reconciliation, and forgiveness are critically analyzed to connect Christ's teachings with established conflict resolution frameworks. These sources serve as the foundation for identifying how Christ's humility and sacrifice provide practical solutions to conflicts in daily life.

Content analysis is applied to identify and interpret key themes within relevant texts. The analysis focuses on the motifs of Christ's incarnation and suffering on the cross, emphasizing how these elements exemplify principles of humility and sacrifice. Special attention is given to how these themes intersect with the dynamics of repairing human relationships and resolving conflict.

To align with contemporary trends in biblical studies, the research integrates elements of contextual hermeneutics, which considers the socio-cultural dimensions of the texts, alongside intertextual and cross-textual readings. These methods allow for a richer interpretation of biblical themes, highlighting their relevance across diverse cultural settings. Exploring humility and sacrifice through these lenses not only strengthens the originality of the study but also underscores their enduring significance in addressing human conflict.

Theological and social synthesis is conducted to bridge the relationship between Christ's humility and sacrifice and practical conflict resolution. This approach examines the implications of Christ's teachings for broader social and political conflicts, linking theological doctrine with ethical and cultural considerations. By incorporating these perspectives, the study presents a holistic view of how Christ's principles can serve as a model for fostering peace and reconciliation.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary integration of theology and social theory, which connects Christ's humility and sacrifice with contemporary conflict resolution. By investigating how the principle of Christ's incarnation—centered on self-emptying and service to others—can address both interpersonal and societal conflicts, the study

offers a fresh contribution to the discourse on peacebuilding. This approach not only enriches theological scholarship but also highlights the practical applicability of Christ's teachings in resolving today's global tensions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Joy in Christ and the Importance of Church Unity: Lessons from the Epistle to the Philippians

Paul, formerly known as a persecutor of the church, is a unique figure in Christian history. As a Pharisee, he possessed a strong background in the Torah (תּוֹרָה) and was committed to upholding its commandments without fault. Prior to his conversion, Paul—known as “*Sha’ul*” (שָׁאוּל) in Hebrew—was a zealous adherent of Jewish law, fiercely defending its purity. He was actively involved in efforts to suppress the spread of teachings about Jesus Christ, even participating in the persecution of Christ's followers and pursuing those he considered to have deviated from Jewish law (Acts 8:3). This reveals that, at the outset, Paul's motivation and dedication were focused on defending the Torah in a radical and fanatical manner (Fee, 1995: 43).

However, on the road to Damascus, Paul underwent a profound transformation when he encountered a divine revelation that completely altered the course of his life (Acts 9:3-6). This event marked a monumental turning point. When Jesus addressed him, saying, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*” (Acts 9:4), Paul realised that his struggle against the followers of Christ was, in fact, opposition to God Himself. This encounter with Jesus led to a new understanding of the Torah, opening his heart to the concept of God's grace. This grace, referred to in Greek as *χάρις* (*charis*), became the foundation for understanding salvation (Romans 5:15). Through this spiritual experience, Paul no longer relied on adherence to the Torah for salvation but believed that salvation came through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16).

Following his conversion, Paul not only became a follower of Christ but also a zealous missionary, spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles, or *ἔθνη* (*ethnē*). He became a central figure in the expansion of Christianity, focusing his ministry on those outside the Jewish community (Sanders, 1993: 76). His success as a missionary was aided by his deep understanding of Jewish teachings, which enabled him to communicate effectively with both Jews and Gentiles.

As an apostle, Paul was not only known for his missionary work and teaching but also for his influential writing. The letters he wrote to the churches he founded in various cities

served not only to instruct and comfort but also to strengthen their faith in the face of challenges and internal conflicts (1 Cor. 15:10). In these letters, Paul frequently emphasised the importance of God's grace and peace, which form the core of his teaching. This peace, known in Greek as *εἰρήνη* (*eirēnē*), symbolises the harmonious relationship attained through Christ (Eph. 2:8). Through this relationship, Paul stressed that both Jews and Gentiles could have access to God (Eph. 3:6).

Paul's letters later became an integral part of the New Testament canon, recognised by the Church as authoritative. One of these letters is the Epistle to the Philippians, written during a challenging period when Paul was under house arrest in Rome, around 60-62 AD. Despite his imprisonment, Paul maintained his fervour in encouraging the Philippian church, which he held dear for their constant support of his ministry, both financially and in prayer (Philippians 1:3-5).

The Philippian church was special to Paul, as he had founded it with Silas during his second missionary journey, around 49 AD (Acts 16:9-10). During this journey, Paul received a vision in Troas calling him to cross into Macedonia, a region in Greece and part of Europe. This vision marked the beginning of the Gospel's spread into Europe, with Philippi becoming the first European city to receive the Gospel through Paul and his missionary team.

Philippi, a Roman colony, was a city populated by many Roman veterans who enjoyed the status of Roman citizenship. This gave the Philippian church a distinct character, living as it did amidst a culture proud of its Roman identity and ideology (Polhill, 1992). Nevertheless, Paul reminded the Philippians that their true citizenship was in the heavenly kingdom, not in the earthly Roman system (Phil. 3:20).

In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul expresses his gratitude for the Philippians' unwavering support, particularly their financial assistance to his ministry. They were the only church that consistently supported him, even when he was far away (Phil. 4:15-16). Their help reflected a deep relational bond with Paul, based not only on faith but also on tangible love and care.

Beyond material support, the Philippians inspired Paul to teach about rejoicing in all circumstances, both in hardship and in success. Even though Paul was suffering as a prisoner, the Epistle to the Philippians is infused with a message of joy, or *χαρά* (*chara*) in Greek (Philippians 4:4). For Paul, true joy came from fellowship with Christ, not from external circumstances. This teaching underscores Christian values, emphasising faithfulness and spiritual happiness that transcends worldly conditions.

Overall, the Epistle to the Philippians highlights the relationship between Paul and the church he founded, reflecting his profound understanding of a life centred on God's grace. Through this letter, Paul imparts teachings on fundamental aspects of the Christian faith, such as humility, sacrifice, and surrender to God's will (Phil. 2:5-8).

In the Epistle to the Philippians, the central theme Paul wishes to convey is "Joy in Christ." Despite his imprisonment for the sake of the Gospel, this letter consistently emphasises joy, a theme mentioned around sixteen times throughout the text. The repetition of the word "joy" or "rejoice" (*χαρά, chara*) by Paul indicates that joy in the Christian life is not dependent on external situations, but on a strong relationship with Christ (Phil. 4:4). Through this emphasis, Paul teaches the Philippians that living in faith must be accompanied by a joy that surpasses physical suffering or worldly difficulties (Fee, 1995).

One specific reason Paul wrote this letter was to address an internal conflict within the Philippian church, involving two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Both were likely prominent leaders in the church—possibly Elders or Deacons—and had been active in the ministry of the Gospel alongside Paul (Phil. 4:2-3). Paul urges them to live in harmony for the sake of the church's unity. This dispute appears to have significantly impacted the fellowship and harmony of the Philippian church, prompting Paul to remind them of the importance of living at peace in Christ. The tension between Euodia and Syntyche reflects that even within committed Christian communities, conflicts can disturb the unity that should characterise the body of Christ (Polhill, 1992).

Although Paul does not provide specific details about the nature or causes of the conflict, he is clearly sensitive to the need for reconciliation and to ensure the church remains focused on its shared mission: to live out the true testimony of the Gospel in a challenging world. Therefore, Paul exhorts the church to preserve unity, humility, and love for one another.

In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul not only teaches about joy rooted in Christ but also stresses the importance of maintaining church unity. Despite his suffering in prison, Paul continues to advocate for true joy that does not depend on external conditions but on an intimate relationship with Christ. The internal conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, which may have disturbed the harmony of the Philippian church, serves as a reminder to all members to prioritise humility, sacrifice, and love as the foundation for unity within the body of Christ. Through this teaching, Paul encourages the Philippians to uphold peace among themselves, remembering that unity in Christ is the true identity of a church that faithfully lives out the Gospel, even amidst challenges.

## Unity and Humility in Church Life: Paul's Teachings to the Philippians

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul offers profound counsel regarding the perfection of the joy he experiences through the proclamation of the Gospel. In Philippians 2:2, he urges the congregation to “make my joy complete” by being “like-minded, having the same love, being of one spirit and of one mind.” This joy is not solely rooted in the success of evangelism or the increase in the number of believers, but also in the reality that the life of the church and its servants reflects the Gospel itself. For Paul, true joy is only attainable when the church lives according to the principles of the Gospel, which teach unity, love, and a shared purpose (Hawthorne & Martin, 2004).

Paul stresses the importance of unity within the church, which must be built upon understanding, love, and a common goal. In Philippians 1:27, he reminds the believers to conduct their lives “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,” meaning that their daily actions and attitudes should reflect the truth of the Gospel. An essential aspect of living in harmony with the Gospel is having “one mind” (*ομοθυμαδόν* or *omothymadon*), signifying a deep unity among believers. This unity is not only in thought but also in love and shared purpose, which together support the glory of God (O'Brien, 1991).

However, Paul also identifies challenges within the Philippian church that could hinder the realization of this unity, namely selfish ambitions and vain conceit. In Philippians 2:3, Paul writes, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.*” Here, Paul addresses two factors that could undermine unity: personal ambition and the desire for honour. The term *ἐριθεία* (*eritheia*), translated as “selfish ambition,” refers to the desire to elevate oneself above others or act for personal gain without regard for the common good (Fee, 1995).

The ambition Paul speaks of often manifests as a “will to power,” a desire to dominate others and elevate oneself, typically disregarding the welfare of others. In the context of the Philippian church, this could lead to division and conflict among God’s servants, contrary to the unity in Christ that Paul advocates. Alongside selfish ambition, Paul critiques the pursuit of empty praise, a desire for recognition without genuine merit, known in Greek as *κενοδοξία* (*kenodoxia*). Such empty praise refers to the craving for social recognition based on superficial standards, which ultimately destroys the unity established in Christ’s love.

In his letter, Paul not only warns the Philippians against selfish ambition and vain conceit but also provides the perfect example in the life of Christ. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul



encourages the church to adopt the mindset of Christ, who “made himself nothing” and “became obedient to death—even death on a cross.” Christ’s humility serves as the foundation for the Philippians to live in mutual consideration, prioritising others’ needs above their own. Thus, Paul’s teaching on humility speaks not only to relationships among believers but also to the posture one must adopt before God and others, following Christ’s example.

The crisis within the Philippian church, particularly involving Euodia and Syntyche, demonstrates the significance of the principles Paul taught. In Philippians 4:2, Paul urges both women to “be of the same mind in the Lord,” a call for reconciliation and a return to a shared purpose in Christ. The conflict between Euodia and Syntyche reflects how personal ambitions and the pursuit of praise can disrupt the unity of the church. Paul’s teachings are thus highly relevant, as he emphasises the importance of living together in love and humility rather than in rivalry or the quest for social status.

The divisions within the Philippian church caused by personal conflicts between God’s servants are not isolated to that era. Such conflicts continue to arise in contemporary churches, particularly when individuals prioritise personal ambitions over unity in Christ. In many cases, church leaders and congregants involved in rivalry or a “praise-seeking” mentality often lose sight of the church’s primary purpose: to glorify God and spread the Gospel. The desire to exalt oneself and gain recognition from people can obscure the true mission of the church as the body of Christ.

The underlying issue in the Philippian church, as analysed by Paul, is not only relevant in its historical context but also remains highly pertinent for contemporary churches. Selfish ambition and the pursuit of empty praise continue to be significant obstacles to the formation of true unity rooted in Christ’s love. This calls for ongoing self-reflection from all members—both church leaders and congregants—to return to the calling of living in humility and genuine love. By emulating the humility of Christ, the church can avoid unnecessary conflict and strengthen its unity in Christ (Bruce, 1988).

In conclusion, Paul’s admonitions to the Philippian church remain crucial for the life of the modern church. Unity within the church must be grounded in love, humility, and a shared goal—namely, the glorification of God. Conflict arising from selfish ambition and the pursuit of empty praise must be avoided, with each member prioritising the needs of others above their own. In doing so, the church will become a faithful witness to the world, living out the Gospel of Christ in true unity.



Paul's letter to the Philippians directly addresses the core issue within the church—conflict caused not merely by differences in opinion or ministry approaches, but by personal ambition that undermines unity and fellowship. Without any unnecessary elaboration, Paul provides a clear and direct solution to the root problem: personal behaviour and motivations that are out of alignment with the Gospel. In Philippians 2:3a, Paul stresses that unity can only be achieved when members avoid the tendency to seek their own interests or vain praise. Selfish ambition and the pursuit of hollow praise (*κενοδοξία/kenodoxia*) will only exacerbate conflict and widen the divide among church members (Boice, 1999).

Paul links the primary cause of tension in the Philippian church to selfish ambition (*ἐριθεία/eritheia*), which refers to the desire for personal gain or recognition, often leading to struggles for dominance and the defeat of others for self-interest. In many instances, such ambition results in discord that harms the harmony of the Christian community. Paul makes it clear that there can be no compromise: for unity to flourish, every individual must relinquish the desire to prioritise themselves, even in seemingly minor matters. As Jesus taught in Mark 9:35, greatness among others is achieved through being the servant of all, not through seeking honour or status.

The second step Paul offers in resolving these issues of unity is the teaching of humility. In Philippians 2:3b, Paul calls for each person to “consider others better than yourselves,” using the Greek word *ταπεινοφροσύνη (tapeinophrosunē)* to describe the humility in question. Humility, for Paul, is not an inherent trait that emerges automatically upon receiving salvation; rather, it is the result of the Holy Spirit's formation in the believer's life. This process involves a transformation of the heart, often counter to the natural tendency to feel superior or better than others. Humility is a form of self-denial that not only removes the desire for personal recognition but actively seeks the welfare of others. In this regard, Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of humility, as He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but humbled Himself to serve humanity, even to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8) (Fee, 1995).

The formation of humility in believers does not occur instantaneously but through a prolonged process of sanctification. Over time, through teaching and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a believer can experience profound inner transformation. Humility is not merely an outward action but an inward disposition that acknowledges that all things are gifts from God. This is the key to resolving conflict within the church: prioritising others' interests over one's own.

The third step Paul suggests is that believers should not only look to their own interests but also to the interests of others. In Philippians 2:4, Paul explicitly states that each person should not look to their own interests but also to the interests of others. This attitude is described as a lifestyle to be applied in every interaction among believers. The desire to prioritise personal interests is one of the factors contributing to the conflicts within the Philippian church. When church members focus more on their own interests than on the needs of others, unity and harmony within the body of Christ are threatened. Therefore, Paul reminds the Philippians that true Christian living is characterised by a focus on others, not oneself (O'Brien, 1991).

Paul shows that true joy in Christian life is not derived from personal ambition or the pursuit of vain praise but from living in unity and harmony with others in Christ. As noted in Philippians 1:27, living in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ is a life of joy that is untainted by selfish ambition or the tendency to seek honour from others. In this respect, ambition and the pursuit of hollow praise obscure the true meaning of a joyful Christian life (Boice, 1999).

An essential principle in overcoming church conflict is modelling the attitude of Christ. In Philippians 2:5, Paul urges the church to “have the same mind as Christ Jesus.” Christ’s example is the perfect model of humility and self-denial. Through His incarnation, life of obedience, and death on the cross, Jesus exemplifies how His followers should live in humility and love. Jesus, though Lord, chose to humble Himself and serve humanity, even unto death for the salvation of the world (Phil. 2:6-8).

Paul views Christ as the ultimate model in all aspects of Christian life, especially in the relationships among members of the church. Through Christ's perfect life, Christians are called to emulate His selflessness and prioritisation of others’ needs. Jesus teaches that a meaningful life is one given in service to others, not in seeking personal gain or status (O'Brien, 1991).

Furthermore, Paul reminds the Philippians that true Christian life is not about attaining a particular position or status but about loving and serving others. Christ did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). This is the essence of Christ’s example, which must be followed by every believer. In the context of the Philippian church, Paul encourages each individual to prioritise the welfare of others, not to strive for position or personal recognition.

The process of cultivating such an attitude in believers requires time and patience. As Paul emphasises, living in a manner worthy of the Gospel necessitates a deep inner

transformation. This character development cannot occur without the presence of the Holy Spirit, who guides believers to imitate Christ in all things. Humility and service to others are not the result of human effort alone but the work of the Holy Spirit within the believer (Fee, 1995).

By following the example of Christ, the Philippian church can live in unity and harmony, overcoming conflicts arising from selfish ambition or the quest for praise. In a community that prioritises others' interests and follows Christ's example, true joy will manifest. As part of the body of Christ, each member is called to support one another, prioritising shared interests, and living in humility as taught by Christ.

Moreover, Paul's teachings lead to a profound understanding of the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who stands as the ultimate model for the Philippian church. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul encourages the church to emulate Christ's attitude of humility, self-sacrifice, and even His willingness to die on the cross for the salvation of humanity. Christ's incarnation—coming as a servant and laying down His life—represents the perfect example of true humility. This teaches that unity within the church is only achieved through mutual sacrifice and prioritising others, as exemplified by Christ. When each church member lives according to Christ's example in everyday life, they not only strengthen the unity of the body of Christ but also become living witnesses of His love and sacrifice to the world.

It is important to emphasise that the application of Paul's teachings to the Philippian church is highly relevant for the modern church. True unity in the church cannot be achieved if each individual still prioritises personal gain or seeks vain recognition. Paul's teachings demand that the church humble itself, prioritise others' interests above its own, and live in unity built upon shared love and purpose. In this context, the necessary reform involves each church member becoming more introspective in their motivations, forsaking personal ambition, and modelling the humility of Christ as a way of life. In this way, the church will become a united body of Christ, living out the Gospel sincerely, and bearing witness to the world.

### **The Seven Sacrifices of Jesus Christ: Theological Aspects of the Incarnation, Mission of Salvation, and the Example of Conflict Resolution**

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul offers profound advice regarding the conflict between two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who were in disagreement concerning their service to the church (Phil. 4:2). This discord not only affected the individuals involved

but also impacted the unity of the Philippian congregation as a whole. Paul exhorts them to adopt “the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2), a call for humility and selflessness, placing the interests of others before oneself, as exemplified by Jesus Christ. This conflict serves as a reminder that humility and a willingness to sacrifice for others are essential for fostering unity within the body of Christ.

The genuine humility that Paul teaches is clearly reflected in the sacrifices made by Jesus Christ, as outlined in Philippians 2:6-11. Jesus, who is the eternal and sovereign God, chose to relinquish His divine glory and humble Himself for the sake of human salvation. This sacrifice provides a perfect model for how every Christian should live, not only in the face of personal conflict but also in their relationships with others. Through His great sacrifice, Jesus demonstrates that true humility is not merely about a reduction in status, but involves willingly sacrificing one's own interests for the well-being of others. As Paul urges the Philippians to live in humility and unity, Jesus' sacrifice offers a robust theological foundation for such teaching.

Philippians 2:6-11 highlights seven significant sacrifices made by Jesus Christ for the benefit of humanity, each of which illustrates a crucial aspect of the incarnation and the mission of salvation. All of these sacrifices culminate in the exaltation that God the Father grants to Him. This theological narrative explores each of Jesus' sacrifices as recorded in the biblical text, referencing the original Greek terms and their relevant transliterations.

The first sacrifice, recorded in Philippians 2:6, is that although Jesus existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited. This verse affirms that Jesus Christ is truly God, possessing all the glory inherent to the eternal God. As divine, He was fully entitled to retain this glory, yet He chose to relinquish it for the sake of humanity's salvation. This renunciation did not involve abandoning His divine essence or His divine nature (or *νοούμενον/noumenon*), but rather a decision not to display His glory in an extraordinary or majestic manner, in keeping with the mission He had to fulfil (Matt.1:21). In this act, Jesus demonstrates an attitude entirely contrary to *eritheia* (*ἐριθεία*), a self-serving ambition for praise and honor, which was absent in Him (Fee, 1995).

The second sacrifice, noted in Philippians 2:7, is that Jesus “emptied Himself” (*ekenosen ἐκένωσεν*). The Greek term *ekenosen* (*ἐκένωσεν*) is derived from *keno* (*κενόω*), meaning “to empty” or “to make void.” This expression describes Jesus' voluntary decision to limit Himself by not fully exercising His divine attributes in His incarnate state. It is important to note that while Jesus emptied Himself, He did not cease to possess His divine essence as the

Word made flesh (John 1:14) (O'Brien, 1991). The emptying was not a relinquishment of His divine rights but a self-imposed restraint, a voluntary act to accommodate the mission of salvation. By this, Jesus abandoned any pursuit of worldly glory, choosing instead to focus solely on His redemptive purpose. Thus, He emptied Himself of *kenodoxia* (κενόδοξία)—the human desire for praise—without losing His divine substance (Dunn, 1998).

The third sacrifice, also found in Philippians 2:7, is that Jesus took the form of a servant (*δοῦλος/doulos*). In the ancient world, a servant or slave was regarded as lowly, marginalized, and devoid of personal worth. By assuming the form of a servant, Jesus willingly chose to descend to the lowest of human conditions, a decision that stood in stark contrast to His status as God. In His incarnation, Jesus identified Himself with the most marginalized members of humanity. This act shows the extent of His humility—He chose to become part of the oppressed, for the purpose of fulfilling the salvation entrusted to Him by the Father.

The fourth sacrifice in Philippians 2:7 is that Jesus became “in human likeness” (*ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων/homoiomati anthropon*). This expression implies that Jesus, who is ontologically the Word who was with God and is God (John 1:1), voluntarily chose to become like humanity. Though transcendent and qualitatively distinct from humans, Jesus willingly became immanent, entering fully into the human condition. As theologian Karl Barth emphasizes, this act was a monumental step on God’s part, as He chose to become like His created beings (Barth, 1961). This sacrifice reveals the immense love of God, who, although not obligated, chose to become like the creatures He made.

Next, in Philippians 2:8, Paul records the fifth sacrifice: Jesus humbled Himself even further by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. This act of obedience underscores the depth of Jesus’ commitment to His mission of salvation. His obedience to the will of the Father, which required that salvation be accomplished through suffering and death on a cross, represents the pinnacle of His sacrifice. This was not a mere death but a death marked by extreme suffering and humiliation. Jesus never wavered from His purpose, even when His life was met with rejection and threats, beginning from His birth, where He was laid in a manger, a symbol of rejection and imminent danger.

The sixth sacrifice, noted in Philippians 2:8, is that Jesus was willing to die on the cross. Crucifixion was one of the most brutal and humiliating forms of execution employed by the Roman Empire. The cross was not merely a symbol of physical suffering but also a symbol of profound disgrace, as stated in Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13, which declare that anyone hanged on a tree is cursed. Nevertheless, despite the shame and suffering associated

with crucifixion, Jesus chose to face it, embracing this form of death as a necessary part of fulfilling God's plan of salvation (Lightfoot, 1885).

All these sacrifices were aimed at fulfilling the will and glory of God the Father, which ultimately resulted in the exaltation of Jesus after His suffering on the cross, as recorded in Philippians 2:9-11. The glory that Jesus had emptied Himself of was restored not because of any personal desire for recognition but because of His obedience in emptying Himself, undergoing the incarnation, and completing His redemptive mission. Thus, after completing His work through the incarnation and crucifixion, God the Father exalted Jesus Christ to the highest place, giving Him a name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Fee, 1995).

It is also crucial to recognize that these sacrifices of Jesus not only provide a deep theological understanding of the mission of salvation but also invite Christians to emulate His pattern of life in sacrifice, humility, and obedience. Each of Jesus' sacrifices calls us to live not for ourselves but for the benefit of others, following His example of prioritizing the good of others over personal interests. Therefore, Christ's sacrifices in the context of His incarnation call believers to build communities marked by love, mutual support, and concern for those in need. Thus, this teaching provides a practical framework for every Christian to live out their calling as followers of Christ in the world.

It must be noted that the sacrifices of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-11 not only offer a theological picture of His incarnation and mission of salvation but also teach us how to live as His disciples. By following the humility and obedience of Jesus, Christians are called not to focus solely on personal interests but to prioritize the welfare of others. His extraordinary sacrifices teach us the importance of self-sacrifice in building unity, love, and peace within the body of Christ. Through Jesus' example, we are urged to strive for harmony within the community, supporting one another, caring for those in need, and embodying God's love in tangible ways.

In conclusion, the example of Jesus' sacrifices provides a firm foundation for building communities of love, mutual support, and common good. As Paul exhorts the Philippians, Christian life should reflect the same humility shown by Jesus—a humility willing to sacrifice for others. By emulating Jesus' example of self-sacrifice and humility, we are equipped to face conflict with hearts full of love and compassion, working towards unity and reconciliation in Christ, and becoming witnesses of God's love in this world.

## Humility in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ: An Example of Self-Emptying and the Restoration of Conflict

Humility lies at the heart of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whose incarnation epitomized divine self-emptying and sacrificial love. By relinquishing His glory to become fully human, Jesus exemplified the profound depth of divine humility. This act was not merely extraordinary but also a moment of unparalleled risk: the Creator of the universe willingly embraced the limitations of human existence. In doing so, Jesus altered His relationship with creation and revealed His boundless love. The apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:7, captures this act of self-emptying using the Greek term *ekenosen* (ἐκένωσεν), signifying that Jesus “emptied Himself,” not of His divine essence, but of His divine privileges, choosing instead to live as one with His creation.

The term *ekenosen* (ἐκένωσεν) conveys a profound theological truth: Jesus willingly set aside His divine attributes and chose to function within the limitations of humanity. This self-emptying reflects His absolute submission to the Father’s will and His unwavering commitment to the salvation of humankind. Though fully divine, Jesus refrained from clinging to His divine prerogatives, instead embracing the humility of human existence. His incarnation represents a profound descent from glory, vividly contrasting with His preexistent status as the all-powerful and infinite God.

This humility is starkly illustrated in the circumstances surrounding His birth. Jesus, the King of all creation, was born not in splendor but in a humble *phatne* (φατνή), a feeding trough for animals, symbolizing His identification with the lowliest members of society. As Luke 2:7 recounts, “*She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger,*” highlighting both His vulnerability and His willingness to embrace the most humble of beginnings. This *phatne* stands as a tangible emblem of His self-emptying and the limitations He accepted for humanity’s sake (Hays, 1993).

The humility of Jesus’ incarnation did not shield Him from adversity. From the moment of His birth, Jesus faced rejection and danger. King Herod’s paranoid jealousy, which led to the massacre of Bethlehem’s male infants, foreshadowed the continual opposition Jesus would face throughout His life. Simeon’s prophecy in Luke 2:34-35, that Jesus would be “a sign that will be opposed,” underscores the costly nature of His mission. This hostility culminated in the crucifixion, the most humiliating and agonizing form of death, which Jesus accepted in obedience to the Father’s will (Fee, 1995).



The cross, as the climax of Jesus' incarnation, encapsulates the paradox of divine humility. In Philippians 2:8, Paul emphasizes that Jesus "became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." For the Romans, the cross was a symbol of utter shame and suffering, a fate reserved for the most despised criminals. Yet, Jesus transformed this instrument of disgrace into a symbol of redemption. By voluntarily embracing the cross (*stauros* / *σταυρός*), He bore the curse of sin on behalf of humanity, fulfilling the redemptive plan of God and restoring humanity's broken relationship with Him (Lightfoot, 1885).

Jesus' ultimate glorification by God the Father further affirms the theological significance of His humility. As Paul writes in Philippians 2:9-11, "*God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name.*" This exaltation is a divine affirmation of Jesus' perfect obedience and sacrifice. It serves as a reminder that true glory comes not through self-promotion but through selfless service and obedience to God.

Beyond its salvific implications, Jesus' incarnation provides a model for addressing the conflicts that plague human relationships. Many conflicts stem from selfish ambition (*eritheia* / *ἐριθεία*) and the pursuit of empty glory (*kenodoxia* / *κενόδοξία*). *Eritheia* denotes the desire for dominance and personal gain at the expense of others, while *kenodoxia* reflects the vain pursuit of praise and recognition. Both are rooted in the human tendency to prioritize self-interest over communal well-being.

Jesus, however, embodied the antidote to these tendencies. His self-emptying in Philippians 2:7-8 counters *eritheia* by demonstrating that true greatness lies in humility and service. Similarly, His rejection of worldly glory overturns *kenodoxia*, showing that the pursuit of eternal significance, not fleeting human accolades, is the path to true fulfillment. By following Jesus' example, Christians are called to renounce selfish ambition and embrace humility in their relationships. This shift in mindset can foster reconciliation, harmony, and the restoration of broken relationships. Through humility, humanity can mirror the peace and unity that Jesus' incarnation was meant to bring into the world.

The humility of Jesus' incarnation stands as a cornerstone for understanding His mission of salvation and its implications for human relationships. His self-emptying, obedience, and sacrificial love provide a model for overcoming the root causes of conflict. By imitating Jesus' humility and prioritizing the needs of others, Christians can work toward peace and reconciliation, reflecting the transformative power of the incarnation. In doing so, humanity not only honors the sacrifice of Jesus but also fulfills the divine purpose of unity and restoration in the world.

## Learning from the Humility and Sacrifice of Christ in Easing Conflict

The humility and sacrifice demonstrated by Jesus Christ not only underpin His salvific mission but also provide a practical framework for addressing and resolving conflicts in human relationships. In a world rife with division, rivalry, and misunderstanding, Jesus' example serves as a beacon of hope and a guide for fostering reconciliation and harmony. His life reveals transformative principles that can be applied in various contexts—personal, communal, and even global.

At the core of Christ's approach to conflict resolution lies His unparalleled humility. Jesus taught His followers to prioritize others' well-being, urging them to forsake pride and ego for the sake of unity. Philippians 2:3-4 underscores this teaching: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Fee, 1995a). By practicing this principle, individuals can shift their focus from self-centered desires to a broader concern for mutual understanding and respect, thereby easing tension and paving the way for reconciliation.

Jesus exemplified this in His interactions with those who opposed Him. Whether confronting the Pharisees' accusations or enduring betrayal by His closest disciples, Jesus responded not with retaliation but with grace and forgiveness (Hawthorne & Martin, 2004). This posture invites His followers to adopt a similar attitude, rejecting vengeance and instead seeking restoration in their relationships.

Beyond humility, Christ's sacrificial love is a powerful model for overcoming conflict. The incarnation and crucifixion demonstrate that genuine peace often requires a willingness to bear the cost of reconciliation. Jesus' willingness to endure suffering and lay down His life for humanity's redemption highlights the transformative power of selfless love (Boice, 1999). This principle can be applied in human conflicts, where sacrifice—whether in the form of time, effort, or pride—often plays a pivotal role in bridging divides. A willingness to concede personal advantage or extend forgiveness, even at great cost, reflects the sacrificial love of Christ and creates space for healing and restoration (Bruce, 1988).

The humility and sacrifice of Christ offer profound insights for addressing conflicts in contemporary settings. In families, humility can mend strained relationships by fostering empathy and open communication. In workplaces, leaders who model servant leadership, prioritizing their team's needs over their own, can create environments of trust and cooperation

(Fee, 1995b). On a larger scale, nations and communities embroiled in disputes can learn from Christ's example by pursuing dialogue, understanding, and mutually beneficial resolutions rather than domination or retribution (Barth, 1961).

The Church, as the body of Christ, also bears a responsibility to embody these principles. By promoting humility and sacrificial love, the Church can serve as a catalyst for peace and reconciliation in society, providing a tangible witness to the transformative power of the Gospel (Lightfoot, 1885).

Learning from the humility and sacrifice of Christ is essential for easing conflicts and fostering unity. His life and teachings provide a timeless model for addressing the divisions that afflict humanity. By embracing His example, individuals and communities can move beyond selfish ambition and vain glory, choosing instead the path of humility, sacrifice, and love. This approach not only resolves conflicts but also reflects the divine purpose of reconciliation and the ultimate fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that the principles of humility and sacrifice, as demonstrated by the life and death of Jesus Christ, have profound and practical relevance in alleviating conflict, both within personal relationships and in broader social contexts. Through a comprehensive analysis of Biblical texts and theological interpretations, this study concludes that the actions of Christ—His self-emptying (*ἐκένωσεν* / *ekenosen*) through the incarnation and His sacrificial death on the cross—serve as a primary model for conflict resolution applicable to human life. His choice to live in humility and His willingness to suffer for the sake of humanity not only offer a pathway to salvation but also provide essential principles for addressing tensions and divisions within social life.

The novel contribution of this research lies in its application of the theological values embedded in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ within the framework of modern conflict resolution theory. This approach provides new insights into the efforts for reconciliation and social peace, emphasizing that, in many cases, conflict resolution requires not only practical or political strategies but also deeply rooted spiritual values. By linking Christ's teachings on humility, self-emptying, and sacrifice with contemporary concepts of conflict resolution, the study asserts that these qualities—humility (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*/*tapeinophrosynē*) and self-sacrifice—are crucial for restoring interpersonal relationships and achieving true peace in an increasingly polarized society.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the essence of Christ's humility and sacrifice extends beyond reconciling individuals with God; it also aims to restore relationships among people fractured by selfishness, power struggles, and social divisions. In this context, Christ's sacrifice—His identification with the marginalized, the lowly, and those deemed insignificant by society—teaches us that effective conflict resolution must begin with self-emptying: the relinquishment of personal ambition and a focus on the common good. This teaching is particularly relevant in addressing conflicts often driven by egocentrism and the desire for power or worldly recognition (*κενδοξία* / *kenodoxia*), which exacerbate social tensions.

Significantly, the principle of Christ's sacrifice—culminating in the cross as the apex of His incarnation—serves as a powerful symbol within the context of conflict resolution. The cross, though a symbol of humiliation and suffering, becomes a path to restoration and reconciliation. Self-sacrifice, embraced humbly even in the most demeaning circumstances, represents the highest form of love, capable of mitigating division and creating space for healing. In contemporary society, where conflicts frequently arise from imbalances of power, injustice, and clashing values, the model of sacrificial love underscores the necessity of relinquishing self-interest for the greater good.

This research proposes that true reconciliation requires individuals and societies to shed their personal ambitions and egos, prioritizing service to others. Sacrifice in this sense is not limited to passive endurance of suffering but extends to active commitment: placing the welfare of others above one's own interests and surrendering personal desires for the common good. Such an approach challenges prevailing paradigms of power and dominance, urging a shift towards a more inclusive, equitable, and service-oriented perspective.

The implications of this study resonate deeply within the global context, where increasing polarization and conflict demand innovative pathways to peace. By connecting Christ's teachings with modern understandings of conflict and reconciliation, this study reaffirms the enduring relevance of spiritual principles in addressing contemporary challenges. It highlights the transformative potential of humility and self-sacrifice not only in mending fractured relationships but also in fostering societal change and unity.

In conclusion, this study underscores that the humility and sacrifice exemplified by Jesus Christ are foundational to the pursuit of peace and reconciliation. Through His incarnation and His ultimate act of love on the cross, Christ provides a timeless model for overcoming conflict—not through coercion or domination, but through self-emptying and unconditional love. These principles, while deeply spiritual, offer practical insights for

resolving conflicts in personal, communal, and global contexts. By embracing these values, individuals and societies can move toward a more harmonious and compassionate world, embodying the transformative power of humility and sacrifice in healing divisions and cultivating enduring peace.

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