

Please turn in your copies of God's Word to Philippians chapter 2. Last week we looked at Paul's call to the believers at Philippi to strive for unity and display humility. Our text this morning continues this thought as Paul moves from the general call to the example of Christ. Hear now the Word of our Lord from Philippians chapter 2 beginning at verse 5.

Read Philippians 2:5-11

Pray

When we left off last time Paul exhorted the saints at Philippi to display humility one to another. There was the call to put aside all selfishness, all pride, all personal ambition, and to put others first. This is probably one of the things that all believers, whether in first century Philippi or twenty-first century America, struggles with. We naturally are self-gratifying, self-pleasing, self-focused creatures. It is a radical shift from what is natural to us to put the self aside and to see to the needs of others. Nothing within our natural selves looks to be brought low in order that others would be lifted up. There's a phrase that we hear often, 'Nice guys finish last.' That is what our world thinks of those who are soft spoken, who are willing to put others first. The notion is that you will never attain anything in this life if you are not looking out for yourself first and foremost. The implication of this is that you must do whatever you have to in order to benefit yourself. What is interesting is that several years ago there was a research group which did a study to find out whether or not 'nice guys finish last' is true in work environments. It found that overall those who were assertive, who took on aggressive work tactics, who looked out for the good of themselves instead of others got paid higher than those who were the 'nice guys.' This study showed that the world, particularly the workplace, values ambition over humility. And yet we are told in Scripture to be humble, to be made low, to esteem others better than ourselves. These pressures, the external pressures felt in your job or in your school as well as the internal pressures of your own selfish sinful flesh, make it incredibly difficult to truly live a humble life. We need help; we need a pattern,

and example to look to in how to do this. Paul understood this, and so he continues his teaching on Christian humility by giving believers that example which is needed. In verse 5 he says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Christ Jesus is that example of true humility which we are to look to. Paul sets before these believers this perfect example, and it is set before you as well. Brothers and sisters, meditate upon the humiliation and exaltation of Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior. It is in Him that you will find what true humility is, and it is in Him that you will be empowered to truly display godly Christian humility. We will take up this example of Christ by considering three headings: first, the humiliation of Christ; next, the exaltation of Christ; and lastly, the worship due Christ.

First, let us meditate upon the humiliation of Christ. This is found in verses 5 through 8, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” In order to rightly understand Christ’s humiliation, His being brought low, you must understand His original position. This is the second person of the Godhead that we are considering. Prior to His incarnation, He existed in a state of inconceivable glory and bliss. He “had a glory with the Father before the worlds were made.” He “was in the bosom of the Father” from all eternity. He was “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” He had everything because He was the Creator of everything. In Colossians chapter 1 Paul speaks of the loftiness of Christ in His pre-incarnate state, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” This is the Lord of

Glory, the eternally begotten Son, the Alpha and the Omega, the Angel of the Lord, the great I Am.

Paul does not mince words here when it comes to the divine nature of Christ Jesus, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He thought it not robbery to be equal with God because that is precisely what He is. He is God, equal with the Father and Spirit in power and glory. Christ, before the creation of the world, was in the form of God, because from the beginning He had His glory with the Father, as He says in John 17:5. And yet He voluntarily gave up the wonders and glories of heaven in order to take upon Himself the rags of human flesh. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” He was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man. He was really and truly man, took part of our flesh and blood, appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. The Father decreed that His Son should come and enter the scene of history, with all that we know that this would involve — all of the emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual suffering that would be integral to His work among us as sin-bearer and redeemer. And the Son did not clutch at His deity as though afraid of losing it, but rather, in meekness, He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” What a great act of humility this was, to set aside for time the riches of heaven and enter into the poverty of this world.

But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as Mediator, and by which he was obliged to die. What greater act of humility could there ever be than for the God of this universe to condescend, taking on human flesh and a reasonable soul, and dying on behalf of His people? Christ Jesus truly did esteem others higher

than Himself when He bore our sins and paid the penalty for those sins by dying a cursed death on the cross. This is the example of humility that you are to follow. You must walk in the same spirit and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled Himself to sufferings and death for you; not only to satisfy God's justice, and pay the price of your redemption, but to set you an example, that you might follow His steps. David Strain writes, "He died to deal with the sin of the world, to atone for the elect of Adam's race. His death accomplishes what no other could, by virtue of the union of deity and humanity in His one person. But we are to imitate His sacrifice in this regard: just as Jesus gave up His all, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners and the building of the kingdom, so ought all who follow Him. No one who says he knows Jesus Christ, as Paul presents Him to us here, can fail to serve and give and go and suffer and sacrifice for the honor of the Savior's name." Friends, you must meditate upon the humiliation of Christ.

Though Christ was brought low, even to the lowest estate possible, yet He did not remain in that humble state. The Father did not leave Christ Jesus to a constant state of humiliation as the papists display with their blasphemous bloody crucifixes. No, Christ Jesus was brought low, but once His humiliation accomplished its purpose the Father lifted Him up and exalted Him above all else. This leads us now to meditate upon the exaltation of Christ. Look with me at verses 9 through 11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here we see that Christ's exaltation bestows upon Him a particular honor which only He can possess. In that honor He is given a name which is above every name, a title of dignity above all the creatures, men and angels. This name which is above every name is that divine name, Jehovah, which only one who is divine can possess. Charles Simeon says, "At his resurrection, he was declared to be the Son of God with power. At his ascension, he led captivity

itself captive, and, surrounded with myriads of holy angels, went to take possession of his Father's throne. Seated on that, he is elevated above all the works of God's hands; above men, so as to be "higher than the kings of the earth," even "King of kings and Lord of lords:" and above angels also, "all the principalities and powers of heaven beings made subject unto him."

It is not only honor which is bestowed upon the exalted Christ, but power as well. Every knee must bow to him. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the living and the dead. At the name of Jesus; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord — every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer, and that all power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matt. 28:18. It appears as though Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45 and attributing it to Christ in His exalted state. We read in Isaiah 45:22-23, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." All dominion, all power, all honor, all glory, all praise is given unto Christ Jesus in His exaltation. And it is important to note that what we see here concerning the exaltation of Christ is not simply the divine person but is Christ Jesus the God-man. Christ did not shed His human nature at His resurrection. This exaltation was only possible due to His assuming a human nature. The Lord Jesus Christ, as God, was incapable of elevation: but, as man, He was raised from the lowest degradation to the highest degrees of glory. That is the state in which He remains to this day, and thanks be to God that Christ Jesus is the God-man, that He does have a nature which is like our own, and that He intercedes on our behalf as our only mediator.

Dear saints, this exaltation that Christ has is yours today. It is those who are humbled that ultimately are lifted up. The lofty of this world, those who are sitting in the highest positions in government, in workplaces, in society will all be brought low. It is those who are low, not in terms of the things of this world, but those who are brought low through humble submission to Christ Jesus who will be exalted in that last great day. Christ Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Also Matthew 20:26, “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” There is an exaltation that awaits you if you are in Christ Jesus. No, you will not be given the name which is above every name, but you have been united to Him and you bear that name as His own possession. No, you will not be the mediator who rules and reigns over all creation, but you will be co-heirs with Christ and the one to whom the privilege of judging the angels will be given. But friends, this exaltation of the believer which is found in Christ is not simply a future expectation, but is a present reality. If you have been made low, if you have come to Christ in humble submission to Him, then you have been exalted, seated in the heavenlies, and given every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. What a joy that ought to be to your souls. What a comfort it ought to be in the reality of the fallen world you live in. Be humbled and you will be lifted up. You must meditate upon the exaltation of Christ.

And proper meditation upon the humiliation and exaltation of Christ must lead to one thing. Let us now turn our attention to consider the worship due Christ. We have just read, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Because of who Christ is, because of what He has done, all things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth have a duty and responsibility, an obligation, to bend the knee to King Jesus. All of creation owes everything to

Christ Jesus. In heaven we know that all the angels and all the saints who have already passed into glory are constantly offering their praises unto the risen Savior. Revelation 4 gives us a glimpse of this, “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Of the creatures in earth, we know that there are some who render unto the Lord the worship that is due Him, but we also know that there are many who do not. Brothers and sisters, you have been given a charge to go unto all the world and make disciples. You have been given the task to go into the highways and hedges to send forth the invitation to the feast and to usher in those whom the Lord calls. You have been given the duty to go and evangelize the world, telling them of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Go forth. Tell every person you encounter of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Tell them of His wonderful work of redemption and how salvation from sin and misery can be found in Him. Go and compel them to come. Go and make other worshippers of Christ Jesus. We have the promise that one day the Gospel will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. One famous pastor is quoted as saying, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” There is much great truth to that statement. There will come a time when missions, when evangelism, will cease to exist because the whole earth will be full of worshippers of the Lord. But that day has not yet come. So go and fulfill your duty to call all creatures to bow their knee and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord.

These two areas of existence make sense to us. We can easily see the continuous praise offered by those who are in the presence of Jehovah in heaven. We can even wrap our minds around the advancement of the Gospel and one day all earth praising His holy name. But what of those things under the earth? This is very clearly speaking of the demons and unrepentant sinners in hell. How can we say that one day even their knees will bow and tongues will confess that Jesus is Lord? James 2:19 tells us, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." But believing and trembling is not the same as bowing the knee and confessing Christ as Lord. No, that will come at the end. When the day of judgement comes and Jehovah metes out the penalty due those who have rebelled against Him, they will have no choice but to accept defeat. When Christ Jesus comes again in all His glory, not in the form of a servant but in the form of a victorious King, there will be no doubt left in the minds of those who have rejected Him. They too will bow the knee to King Jesus and confess with their parched tongues that He is Lord. Revelation 5 gives us greater insight into this ultimate culmination of praise which will be seen in that last day, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Friends, one day, whether by willful humble adoration of your Lord and Savior or by forceful bending of the knee through the use of His iron scepter, you will bow your knee and confess with your tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father. You must render the worship due Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the example set before you is a perfect one, one which is to be emulated, one which is to be accepted. Paul's call to believers is to live lives of unity and humility in Christ Jesus. Meditating upon His humiliation, seeing how He willingly gave up the glories of heaven, condescending from the greatest height to the lowest low, how then can you be puffed up with pride? Meditating upon His exaltation, seeing how the Father lifted Him up from His

low estate and bestowed upon Him such great and honor and power, how can you be content with the low things of this world knowing that every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus is yours to possess? And meditating upon these things, seeing the magnificent work of Christ Jesus in purchasing redemption for you with His own blood and raising you up with Him seating you alongside Him in the heavenlies, how can you not but render unto Him the worship that is due His name? Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up. Submit yourself in worshipful obedience and you will be given the crown of life. Brothers and sisters, as you live your lives, do so while meditating upon the humiliation and exaltation of Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior.