

The Highly Exalted Christ

Philippians 2:5-11

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14)

LTS: Eph. 1:15-23

In Philippians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul is teaching us the kingdom ethic of humility. In the kingdom of God, where the Father’s will is perfectly done on earth as it is in heaven, people strive – even sacrifice – to fulfill the needs and interests of others over their own. They delight in the opportunity to serve rather than being served. In the kingdom of God, there is no act of service so base, so low to which they are unwilling to stoop for the good of another.

Where does this ethic of humility come from in the kingdom of Christ? It comes from the King Himself. He not only commands it, but he demonstrates it in ways that far exceed any act of humility to which you and I could ever be called.

Think about this for a moment. The Eternal King of heaven and earth actually laid aside his royal robes and crown,

- stepped down from His highly exalted throne,
- humbled Himself to become a human baby completely dependent upon his mother,
- suffered the indignities of childhood,
- the awkwardness of adolescence,
- the reproach of jealous siblings,
- and the rejection of the very people he had created
- Additionally, despite his unquestionable power to miraculously heal the sick, feed the hungry, calm storms, cast out demons, raise the dead, and lead the people into truth,
- they rejected Him,
- Betrayed Him,
- Falsely accuse Him,
- And in an ultimate travesty of Justice, sentenced Him to death for breaking the very law that He perfectly fulfilled every moment of his life.

WHY? Why did he subject himself to such humiliation? Why did he humble Himself in the extreme? He did it because it was the only way that we, who are hard-wired to reject Him, could be saved. *“All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”* (Isa. 53:6). The sovereign King of heaven and earth humbled Himself and died in our place that we might be saved. This is divine humility.

But it's not the end of the story! This epic narrative of the humble sovereign doesn't end in shameful death. Because you see, Jesus is King NOT only over heaven and earth but also over death and hell! Therefore, death could not hold him! The grave could not keep Him! And the undeniable proof is that He rose again from the dead, just as He said!

We have spent two weeks working through Paul's testimony of the humiliation of Christ. Today, however, we have gathered to worship the Highly Exalted Christ!

Read Phil. 2:5-11

We have talked much about Jesus' response to the mistreatment and humiliation he received, but the question I want to answer this morning is, How did the Father respond to His Son's humiliation?

I. The Father's Response to Christ's Humiliation.

1. In verse 9 we read, *“Therefore, God highly exalted Him...”* “Whenever we study the Bible the word “Therefore” is often a key to understanding the text. So, we must ask what is that “therefore” there for? Well, in this case it's here to point us back to Christ's willing, obedient humiliation on our behalf. Paul is telling us that it is on account of Jesus' obedient self-humbling that God the Father highly exalted Him.

2. I suppose that God the Father could have responded to the mistreatment and abuse of His son in any number of ways. At the scene of the cross He could have retaliated immediately by sending a single angel to execute divine justice on all who perpetrated this crime as He did in the days of Hezikaiah (2 Kings 19) when an angel of the Lord stuck down 185,000 soldiers in one night. HE could have caused the ground to open up under the Sanhedrin and thrust them into an untimely and unmarked grave as he did to the the family of Korah in the days of Moses.

3. To be sure, God has promised one day to bring the sword of Justice to bear upon sinners who finally reject His Son. But that frightening truth doesn't help Paul communicate to the brothers and sisters in Philippi the need for and motivation to relate to one another in all humility.

4. Don't miss this! Paul is calling the Philippians (and by extension, everyone who are united in Christ) to relate to one another in all humility. Then, to press that point home he offers two things: the ultimate Model for Humility and the ultimate motivation for humility. The Model of Humility is Jesus Christ who, although He existed in the form of God, humbled himself, took the form of a servant by becoming a man and served his people by dying in the most painful and shameful way possible for our sakes. This is the ultimate model of humility.

5. Now Paul is teaching us something of the motivation for humility; namely, that God rewards those who willingly humble themselves for the benefit of others and the glory of God. And that's what we see here. God is rewarding His Son for His Emptying Himself and making Himself as nothing so that we could become children of God. And it all begins coming to light for us in the word *Therefore* ("For this reason" NAS).

6. "*Therefore because the Son of God obediently humbled Himself, God Highly exalted Him.*" The term "Highly exalted" is only one word in the GK and is only used here in the NT. It means "*to exalt above and beyond,*" or *to Super-Exalt*. The Father is lifting Jesus higher in rank and status than anyone else or everyone else put together. Because He obediently humbled himself to accomplish the Father's will on the cross for sinners, God has elevated Jesus to the loftiest heights where he receives the place of highest honor and majesty and is once again seated at the right hand of God on His throne.¹

7. The promise of God is, "*he who humbles himself will be exalted.*" Jesus, having humbled himself infinitely lower than anyone else ever did or could, is afterward lifted to the highest heights of exaltation. Notice how the author of Hebrews repeatedly mentions it.

¹ Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 113.

- Heb. 1:3 “After making purification for sins [Humiliation], he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high [Exaltation],
- Hebrews 2:9 “But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels [Humiliation], namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor [Exaltation] because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”
- Heb. 12:2 “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame [Humiliation], and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” [Exaltation]

8. My friend, it certainly matters how you respond to Christ’s humiliation. But the response that really matters for eternity is how the Father responded to His son’s humiliation. The best you and I can do is depend upon and trust Him for eternal life. But God the Father had the power to exalt Him. And this he did when Jesus arose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and was seated at the right hand of the Almighty.

9. This is The Father’s Response to Christ’s Humiliation. Second, notice II. The Father’s Gift for Sovereign Administration

1. Notice what Paul says (9), “*Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on him a name that is above every name.*”

2. In response to Christ’s humiliation, the Father “*bestowed on Him*” a name. The phrase “bestowed on Him” means to give as a gift. But it carries the tone of giving something whole-heartly.

3. You see, the Father is in no way threatened by the elevation of the Son. The Father, Son, and H.S. are not demigods constantly coniving, strategizing, and jockeying for supremacy. Rather, they are delighted by the exaltation of Christ. The three Person’s of the God-head exist eternally as one in essence, with one will, one motive, one in purpose on every matter. So, it was the Father’s great delight to exalt the Son and bestow upon Him this special gift.

4. What is that gift? The gift is a Name. It is a Title of supremacy. It is an appellation of divine majesty. “After a lifetime of self-humbling and obedience there comes to

Jesus in the Father's good pleasure the very thing He might have grasped."² He is rewarded with the very glory and rank he had divested himself of in His humiliation. And it is all wrapped up in a Name. What is that name?

5. Well, at first blush we might think he is referring to the name Jesus. In actuality, however, the name "Jesus" only tells us who is poised to receive this gift. It is not the gift itself.

6. William Hendriksen is helpful here when he explains that,

In biblical usage the name is that which expresses that person's character, reputation, dignity, work, power, or his peculiar position in the divine economy. Hence, often the name keeps pace with the person. For example, Abram becomes Abraham. Sarai develops into Sarah. Jacob changes to Israel. Solomon received the name Jedidiah. Simon is called Cephas, that is Peter.³

7. The same kind of thing is happening here. In his earthly ministry the Son's name was Jesus, meaning *Yahweh Saves*. Now that his work is complete and His exaltation has come, this same Jesus is given a new Name (a new Title). And that name is... Lord.

8. Again, listen to Paul (9-11)

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

9. You see, beloved, God's goal in redemptive History was not merely to save sinners. IN fact, we might say that the salvation of sinners is the Penultimate goal of Christ's humiliation. The Ultimate goal is that in the end all things (all history, all people, all rule, all authority) will be summed up in Jesus Christ. Hence we read certain N.T. passages that say things like:

² Rienecker, Fritz, and Cleon L Rogers, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980),

³ Hendriksen, William, *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 117

- Eph. 1:9-10 [God] made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in [Christ] with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.
- Eph. 1:20-22. “[God] raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.
- 1 Cor. 15:25–27 “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.”
- Matt. 28:18. On his last day on earth, “Jesus came and said to [his disciples], “All authority *i*n heaven and on earth has been given to Me.⁴

10. You see, beloved, there is coming a Day, a great Day, a glorious Day, and a terrible Day when everything and everyone will be handed over to Christ, the sovereign Ruler of all. And every intelligent being who has ever lived...

- “In heaven”: The cherubim and seraphim, and all the ten thousand times ten thousand good angels, including archangels; And also all the redeemed of humanity who have departed from this earthly life and entered the presence of the Lord.
- “On earth”: These are people alive on earth on that great and terrible Day.
- “Under the earth”: All the damned in hell, along with the malevolent demons. One day ALL will, by the sheer force of His Supreme and Sovereign authority, bend the knee and fall on their faces before Him declaring that Jesus Christ is the Victor! Jesus Christ is the Ruler! Jesus Christ is Lord!

11. The earliest confession of the first century church was this: Jesus is Lord. Oh how it must have strengthened the suffering saints in Philippi to know and believe that in the ultimate sense Caesar is NOT Lord. Nero is not Lord. And for us. the Supreme court is not Lord. The democrats are not Lord. The Republicans are not Lord. Rather, Jesus Christ is Lord.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 28:18). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

12. And this brings us to the final point. We've seen the Father's Response to the Son's Humiliation. The Father's gift for a Sovereign Administration, and finally

III. The Father's Ultimate Glorification

1. The last words in passage are simply "To the glory of God the Father."
 2. Even now, though Jesus is being exalted above all rule and authority, and every Title that has ever been named, He still maintains his humility. He still lives to glorify the Father.
 3. And this was the plan all along, wasn't it? In John 17 on the night that Jesus was betrayed and was about to be arrested, he prayed, "*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.*" Even now, on the eve of His most catastrophic humiliation, the Son was seeking to elevate the Father. Everything He did was according to the will of the Father, in obedience to the Father, for the Glory of his Father. And as He humbled Himself, the Father lifted Him up.
 4. And this fits perfectly with Paul's teaching on the kingdom ethic for the church. Paul's purpose is to exhort and inspire the members of the church in Philippi (and by extension, the church in Fort Worth) to live in harmony with one another. He was concerned about their unity. He knew it could only be maintained through humility. So, he offers the example of Jesus who humbled Himself and then experienced the glory of having God the Father lift him up.
 5. And this is how God designed it NOT only for Jesus but for we, His followers, as well. The pattern is, whoever humbles himself will be exalted. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be great in the Kingdom of God. The difficulty is that there is a conspicuous difference between greatness as defined by the world and greatness as defined by God. In the kingdom of this world greatness is all about self-advancement and self-promotion. In the kingdom of God, however, greatness is defined by humility, others-centeredness, and servitude – virtues that this world abhors.
3. We see this pattern throughout the N.T.
- Matt 23:11-12 when Jesus exhorted his disciples not to take upon themselves human titles of honor, he said, "*the greatest among you shall be your servant.*"¹²

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and *whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

- 1 Peter 5:5–6 Peter exhorts believers to “Clothe yourselves, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.*”
- James 4:10 The author calls his readers to humbly repent before God declaring, “*Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you.*”
- Luke 18:14 Jesus told the story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in the Temple. He concluded the story by saying of the humble Tax collector, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*”

4. You see, the whole text of Phil. 2:5-11 offers us the ultimate model and motivation for how to live as members of the kingdom of God. That’s why Paul said “*Have this mind (this attitude) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.*” And I think it’s safe to infer from these other passages that living like like this, and relating to one another in Christ-like humility, is good for us. It is the path of personal and corporate blessing in the church. And it is how we glorify the Father.

5. And one more thing before we close. When we get to heaven I think we are going to discover that this is how everyone will live and relate to one another. The theme will be both humility and exaltation... even for Jesus.

6. Consider these astounding words from Jesus in Luke 12:37

Blessed are those slaves [that’s you and me] whom the Master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that He will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.”

7. You see, this is the kingdom ethic of humility that brings exaltation and glory.

“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

