

Philippians 2:5-11 - The Hymn to Christ

Introduction: CS Lewis wrote (*Mere Christianity*, p108-9): “There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking of is Pride.”

If there is one truth the Christian church in America is sorely deficient in understanding it is: *the nature of true conversion*. I fear that there are vast multitudes of professing Christians in churches all across this land who have been badly misled by unbiblical forms of evangelism. One truth we must work long and labor hard to recover is the fact that God has from all eternity predestined not only the salvation of His elect people, *but also their being conformed to the image of Christ*. Scripture makes this truth explicitly clear:

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

In this text of Scripture, we get, through what is likely a fragment of an ancient hymn of the early church, a God-breathed picture of the Lord Jesus in both of His estates - His estate of humiliation and exaltation. It is to be like Jesus that is our highest goal, our highest desire, and the deepest cry of our soul - ***if we are Christians***.

God hates the pride and arrogance of men. 3 times in the Word of God we are told directly that “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” - 1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6; Prov 3:34.

Isaiah 13:9-11 Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. [10] For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. [11] "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; **I will halt the arrogance of the proud**, ...”

The irony: We who have no grounds for pride are arrogant, and He who alone is worthy of all exaltation, glory, and majesty has volunteered to rescue such people from what they justly deserve *by humbling Himself!*

John Calvin wrote: “Christ’s humility consisted in his abasing himself from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest disgrace: our humility consists in refraining from exalting ourselves by a false estimation. He gave up his right: all that is required of us is, that we do not assume to ourselves more than we ought.... Since, then, the Son of God descended from so great a height, how unreasonable that we, who are nothing, should be lifted up with pride!”

- 1. The Willing Humiliation of Christ - v5-8;**
- 2. The Exaltation of Christ and His Name - v9;**
- 3. The Adoration Which All Will Render to Christ - v10-11**

1. The Willing Humiliation of Christ - v5-8

[5] Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Point: After pleading with the Philippians to live an “other-centered” life in which they as individuals held others to be better than themselves, Paul exhorts them to have the same mind and posture of humility that Jesus Himself had.

Application: this is quite an exhortation when one considers how profound the following statements are in this passage. “This mind” “which was also in Christ Jesus” - Paul is saying, “Let this mind be in you.”

[6] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Point: the phrase “the form of God” means: being or essence of God. Jesus Christ is God - in the fullest sense of the Word. Prior to His incarnation - to His adding to Himself a human nature in the womb of Mary - Jesus Christ was “in the form of God.”

Point 2: Jesus Christ is a distinct person from God the Father.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Point 3: God, as He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible, is *Tri*-personal. And the only access point that man has to God is through God the Son - the one who became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ.

Application: And so we must reject what I call “generic god-talk” that dominates our society. Whether it comes from Oprah, Joel Osteen, liberal pulpits, the media, or wherever, **if we are Christians, we are loyal to and follow the Triune God of Scripture -**

Q6 of WSC: How many persons are there in the godhead? There are three persons in the godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Point 4: God the Son did not consider it “robbery to be equal with God” - meaning, that God the Son did not *aspire* to or *climb up* to this position. He did not steal it.

The Commentator John Gill said it so well: “for if he was in the same form, nature, and essence, he must be equal to him [God the Father]...; for he has the same perfections, as eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and self-existence: hence he has the same glorious names, as God, the mighty God, the true God, the living God, God over all, Jehovah, the Lord of glory, etc. the same works of creation and providence are ascribed to him, and the same worship, homage, and honour given him: to be “in the form of God”, and to be “equal with God”, signify the same thing, the one is explanative of the other: and this divine form and equality, or true and proper deity, he did not obtain by force..., by robbery and usurpation, as Satan attempted to do, and as Adam by his instigation also affected; [**“robbery” is the best way to translate the noun here: *harpagmos* - it’s specific usage in this verse is “a violent seizure of property, robbery. The ESV / NAS translate it as “a thing to be grasped” which is not as accurate**] and so the mind of a wicked man, being a lover of itself and impious,..., “thinks itself to be equal with God”, a like phrase with this here used; but Christ enjoyed this equality by nature; he thought, he accounted, he knew he had it this way; and he held it hereby, and of right, and not by any unlawful means; and he reckoned that by declaring and showing forth his proper deity, and perfect equality with the Father, he robbed him of no perfection; the same being in him as in the Father, and the same in the Father as in him; that he did him no injury, nor deprived him of any glory, or assumed that to himself which did not belong to him.

Application: When Satan aspired to be “like the most high” - *that* was robbery - *that* was coveting and trying to bring upon himself what was neither his, nor what he deserved. When men aspire to glorify themselves, they are engaged in **violent seizure of property or robbery -**

it is us trying to take what *is not rightfully ours - glory.*

The main point of v6: Jesus Christ, God the Son, is God - He is deity equal to God the Father. Even Jesus' Jewish opponents knew that this was exactly what He was claiming:

John 5:17-18 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." [18] Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, **making Himself equal with God.**

Theological Point: God the Son has always been God - from all eternity and for all eternity. But at a point in time, he **added to Himself** a human nature - while remaining fully God. The next verses help explain:

[7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Point: God has been about the business of making a name for Himself and showing His power and glory in creation itself and in His dealings with men - particularly Israel and their deliverance from Egypt. But in the incarnation - in adding a human nature to His divine nature, God - the King of kings and Lord of lords, the one who dwells in light unapproachable, the one to whom every king and ruler on earth must do homage, *make himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and came in the likeness of men!*

Application: Is it not a soul-stirring thought to think of a very pregnant Mary traveling with Joseph to Nazareth? The God who spoke to Moses at the burning bush and told him, "take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground!" The God who destroyed Egypt with the plagues. The God who shook Mt. Sinai so that the Israelites shook with fear.

Application 2: And why did He come? Even his disciples, when they faced rejection, wanted to call down the power of God to destroy. And our Dear Savior turned to them and rebuked them and said: **(Luk 9:55-56 NKJ)** "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

[8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Point: He who was in the form of God - He who was and is and will for all eternity be the Creator and sustainer of the universe - the one before all men must tremble - he **humbled** Himself and **became obedient**. And how obedient was He? The point of death - even the death of the cross.

Application: And here we run up into wondrous mystery and glory. God, who gave us the law would now be born under the law to fulfill it and redeem us who lay helplessly under its awful curse:

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Christ's Missions was a bitter one - He would be made to drink the cup of the fulness of the wrath of God against all the sins of all His people - but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would do so spectacularly:

Listen to what is a very short catalogue of Christ's accomplishments:

Col. 2:13-15 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, [14] having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. [15] Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them in it.**

2 Tim. 1:8-10 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to

His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, [10] but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who **has abolished death** and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Indeed, this is what isaiah prophesied long ago: Isaiah 53:11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

Application: Whatever you and me might have to our name, it must fade into utter nothingness when compared to the accomplishments of Christ. Fallen men, still bearing the image of God and endowed with incredible gifts, **no matter what he may accomplish in this life must glory only in this: that he knows God and is known by Him through Jesus Christ.**

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

2. The Exaltation of Christ and His Name - v9

[9] Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Point: Having been perfectly obedient to the estate of humiliation for which He came - and having accomplished and finished the work the Father sent Him for - Christ has now entered into an estate of exaltation. There are two critical questions in our shorter catechism:

⇒ **wherein consisted Christ's humiliation:**

Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross, in being buried and continuing under the power of death for a time.

⇒ **wherein consists Christ's exaltation:**

Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

Application: This ought to encourage us - no matter how weary our souls might be in this life. Jesus Christ, a man of sorrows who was intimately familiar with pain, loss, sadness, and the awful pain of death is now magnificently arrayed in glory with the glory He had before the foundation of the world. Christ who came in the frailty of mortality has put on immortality and lives for eternity in His glorious resurrection body - a body whose likeness we who truly know Him shall also one day enjoy. A body free not only from physical infirmity, but emotional heartache, sadness, and loss too.

Illustration: Many here I have, I know, lost loved ones who have died in Christ and gone on to glory. As sad as death always is, does it not comfort your heart to know that your loved ones who died in Jesus are now in glory and been perfected in holiness and made fully blessed in the full enjoying of God?

Application: We love our friends, family, children, and churches don't we...? But how much more love do we who are true believers have for the Lord Jesus? Does it not fill your heart with happiness to know that our Savior, the one who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, now enjoys the most unspeakable joy in the heavenly places where He sits enthroned and exalted above all earthly thrones and powers?

Application 2: And here we are not speaking of a child dear to us, a spouse dear to us, a brother or sister - but our Creator, who because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sins and trespasses, bore a scourging and a Roman cross for us - He shed His precious blood and suffered in agony upon that cross - *where He bore our sins*. Here we are speaking of the greatest fact in all the universe - what follows - He will get what He

is due from every living creature!

3. The Adoration Which All Will Render to Christ - v10-11

[10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, [11] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Illustration: I watched a debate on-line between the Christian John Lennox and the Atheist Richard Dawkins (both Oxford University professors) on the existence of God and at one point, John Lennox, the Christian, related a private conversation he had had with Richard Dawkins on the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Dr. Lennox presented a number of lines of evidence to Dr. Dawkins, and Dr. Dawkins response was: "Why would you care? Why would anyone even be remotely interested in whether or not that actually took place?"

Application: In a certain way, I can understand Dawkins' question. Remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus? "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."? Dr. Dawkins cannot see the 50 trillion ton boulder he lives his life under. It is nothing more than God's good pleasure that allows Dawkins to continue blaspheming the one who by His sovereign power holds that boulder over Dawkins' head and prevents it at any moment from crushing him.

Application 2: the point here is, of course, that Dr. Richard Dawkins will bow before Jesus and confess that He is Lord the glory of God the Father.

"of those in heaven* [angels in the heavenly realms], ***and of those on earth* [those now living], ***and of those under the earth* [the dead],"***

All will acknowledge the absolute Lordship of Christ over all things and over them. They will acknowledge openly that Jesus Christ is Lord over all - ***and that they were not.*** **And all this 'to the glory of God the Father'** - As Jesus Himself said:

John 5:22-23 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, [23] that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Benediction:

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, [25] To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.