

The Sovereign Who Suffered – Part 2

Philippians 2:5-11

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In Philippians 2:5-11 Paul said, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation.” This is where we get the phrase “emptied Himself.” This is known as the kenosis passage. Christ “made Himself of no reputation” or He “emptied Himself.”

Verse 7, “...taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 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. Therefore God...”—this is God the Father—“...also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This is one of the greatest passages in the whole Word of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more important for you as a believer than to know the person and work of Jesus Christ, or who He is and what He came to do. I propose that all of Scripture has as its central theme Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points to Him coming, and the New Testament points to Him coming back the second time in fulfillment of prophecy. All of Scripture converges in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And no Scripture more beautifully portrays the depth of Christ's humiliation, in verse 5 specifically, than in this passage we are examining.

In part 1, verse 6, we looked at His sovereignty or deity: “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” The word “form” is “morphe,” which means “essence.” Very simply stated, Jesus Christ is God. We'll see that in verse 11, where it says that He is “Lord,” or “Jehovah,” “Yahweh” or “Adonai.” So the deity of Jesus Christ was seen in verse 6.

Then in verse 7, we saw the humanity of Christ. He is the servant. So the sovereign, in verse 6, became the servant, in verse 7. The humanity of Christ is called the “Incarnation.” It is a Latin word which means “made flesh” or “become flesh.” This describes the fact that He took on real humanity and did that in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary, she conceived in her womb and brought forth the God-man, Jesus Christ. He was truly man and truly God in one person, Jesus Christ.

This doctrinal passage is very practical in teaching us to be humble, to sacrifice ourselves and serve others. But you won't understand this passage unless you are Trinitarian. If you deny the Trinity, you're going to have real problems explaining this passage. So Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, came to earth, took on humanity, went to the Cross, verse 8, and died a sacrificial, substitutionary, atoning death for the sins of mankind.

So in verse 6, we have his sovereignty or deity; in verse 7, we have His full, sinless humanity; and then in verse 8, we have His sacrifice, His Crucifixion. Verse 1 says, "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."

I want to make clear that the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was voluntary and substitutionary. Jesus took our place on the Cross. It was a substitutionary, atoning sacrifice for our sins. The one word of many words that best describes the Cross, which gets to the essence of the Cross more than anything else, is "substitutionary." He took our place. He bore our sins. Some describe it as "voluntary and vicarious." He died in my stead. That's Biblical as well. So Jesus Christ, the sovereign, became the servant who suffered on the Cross.

We looked at the seven steps down in verses 6-8. But now we want to move to the second half of our text, to verses 9-11, where we see Christ's exaltation. We saw His humiliation in verses 5-8. Now we will see His exaltation in verses 9-11. Someone said that in verses 5-8, we have the mind of God the Son, and in verses 9-11, we have the mind of God the Father. So we first saw the humiliation in the steps down, and now we have the exaltation in the steps up.

This is all to convey a lesson that is taught in the Bible, in 1 Peter 5:6. It says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." So the whole context of our text was not intentionally designed to be doctrinal; it was designed to be practical. Paul is teaching a lesson about humility, the mind of Christ, who sacrificed Himself to serve others. That's why before He gets to our passage, he says in verses 4-5, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others. Let this mind..."—or "attitude, outlook"—"...be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then he describes the steps down. So he takes doctrine to illustrate practical, humble, sacrificial Christian living.

As we break down our text, verses 9-11, I want you to see four truths about His exaltation. Simply stated, this is a sermon on the exaltation of Christ. First, we see the source of Christ's exaltation, verse 9. Paul says, "Therefore God has highly exalted Him." The "therefore" is there for the fact that Christ left heaven, came to earth, died on the Cross, was buried in a tomb, and God "highly exalted Him."

This is our pattern. When you "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," He will lift you up. Thus Jesus wasn't being rewarded for His humiliation. The fruit or the by-product or the result of His humiliation was His exaltation. So the "therefore" takes us back to verses 6-8.

Notice that the source of Christ's exaltation is God. In verse 9, it was the Father who had "given Him the name which is above every name." So God the Father exalted God the Son, verse 9. What was the Father's response to the Son? Exaltation. And the word "exalted," in verse 9, is used only here in the New Testament and only used of Jesus Christ. The word "exalted" means "to lift above" or "to lift beyond."

There is no one like Jesus. The word "unique" in Webster's Dictionary means "one of a kind,

having no equal.” I thought, That’s Jesus! He’s not one of many prophets. He’s not one of many ascended masters. He’s not one rung on the ladder that you climb up to reach God. He is God. He’s God in the flesh. He’s Emmanuel, which means “God with us.” It’s so clearly taught in this passage. So the Father exalted the Son.

Notice also that Jesus was “highly exalted.” It could have said that God the Father exalted Him, and that would have been pretty cool. But the word “highly” was added. The word “highly” is the Greek word “huper.” We get our word “super” from it. So Jesus is super exalted. So this phrase could be translated in English as “He has super exalted Him.”

This act of God fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13, which says, “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.” I like that. So this is the exaltation of Jesus Christ. It also was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” So Jesus was exalted.

Now what exactly were the steps involved in Jesus’ exaltation? Number one, it started with His Resurrection. Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and He rose from the grave.

“Up from the grave He arose,

With a mighty triumph o’er His foes.

He rose a Victor from the dark domain,

And He lives forever with His saints to reign.

He arose! He arose!

Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

So we have Him coming down, down, down to earth, to die on the Cross, buried in a tomb, but His body was resurrected. And the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational and essential to Christian doctrine and to our salvation.

In Ephesians 1:19-20, Paul says he wanted us to know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power...”—or “dunamis,” His dynamic power—“...toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He...”—“God the Father”—“...worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” So Paul ties that in with God’s power to raise Jesus from the dead and put Him “at His right hand in the heavenly places.”

In Romans 1:4, it says that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” After Jesus’ death, no sinful hands touched Him. Men did their worst to the Savior, but God did His best: He exalted Him.

Now who rose Jesus from the dead? The answer is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. So all three Persons of the Godhead raised Jesus from the dead. Let me give you some verses about this.

The Father raised Jesus from the dead, Acts 2:24. Speaking of Jesus, it says, "...whom God raised up." In John 10:17, it says that Jesus raised Himself from the dead. "My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." And in John 2:19-21, we see that Jesus raised Himself from the dead. "Jesus answered and said to them, "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

When you have a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door, ask that person, "Who raised Jesus from the dead?" They will answer, "God the Father." Then read them John 2:19-21. Jesus said, "In three days I will raise it up." Jesus' hearers were thinking He meant the actual temple of Herod. But Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body. So Jesus raised Himself from the dead, because He is divine.

And the Holy Spirit also raised Jesus from the dead. In Romans 8:11, it says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

So the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all involved in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the Resurrection was a bodily resurrection. Don't let anyone tell you that Jesus "spiritually" or "mystically" rose from the dead. He physically, bodily arose. When the disciples went into the tomb that Easter Sunday, the grave cloths were there, but Jesus' body had disappeared. He was different from anyone else who had died and come back to life. Jesus rose in an immortal, eternal body never to die again. He was the first one to ever do that.

And He is the firstfruits of believers who will be resurrected like Christ, as well. His Resurrection body was a prototype of our resurrection body. You see these doctrines linked together, even in the future hope of resurrection of the believer. So Jesus rose from the dead.

The second step in Jesus' exaltation is His Ascension. He ascended to heaven. It's recorded in Mark 16, Luke 24 and in Acts 1, which is my favorite. Luke, who wrote his Gospel, also recorded it in Acts. On the Mount of Olives, after 40 days of appearing and reappearing, Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," Mark 16:15. In Matthew 28:20, He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And then Jesus went up into heaven. And Acts 1:9 says that "a cloud received Him out of their sight." Back in my hippie days, I called it my "out-of-sight verse." Then His disciples looked up toward heaven, and an angel said to them, "Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven," Acts 1:11. So the angel promised them that Christ, who went back to heaven from where He came, will come back from heaven at the Second Coming.

So the story of Jesus isn't over. He came, He died, He rose, He ascended back into heaven and will come again. What a glorious truth is the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

The third step of Jesus' exaltation is His coronation. So we have His Resurrection, His Ascension and His coronation. Hebrews 1:3 says that after He had provided purification for sins, He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Where is Jesus right now? You might say, "Well, He's in my heart." That's true. You might say, "He's here among us." That's true, because Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them," Matthew 18:20. But Jesus is actually in heaven in a glorified body.

At the moment of conception, which has implication for abortion—Mary could have aborted the Son of God—deity was fused with humanity for all eternity. What a miracle! It's the miracle of Christmas, of the Incarnation. And to think that Jesus is the exalted God-man in heaven.

We're going to see Jesus. We're going to be able to reach out and touch His face. We're going to see the scars in His hands. We're going to feel the scars in His side that He bore for us. His body will be metamorphosized and glorified at the Resurrection. And our bodies will be like His. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," 1 John 3:2. We'll never be divine. We'll never be God. But we will have a glorified, eternal body, for which Jesus is the forerunner or the firstfruits or the prototype of our resurrection body.

Remember when Stephen was stoned, in Acts 7? As the stones were hitting his body, Stephen "gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God," Acts 7:55. This is the only place in the Bible where it says that Jesus is standing. He's usually sitting at the right hand of the Father.

By the way, only God can sit next to God. You can't sit next to God when you get to heaven.

But Stephen, the first martyr, saw Jesus standing. It doesn't say so, but I think His arms were outstretched, and He said, "Welcome, my faithful servant, into the kingdom of heaven." Then Stephen was taken to heaven the moment he died.

So Jesus was in heaven glorified. Revelation 1 gives us the description of Christ in heaven after His humiliation. And in Revelation 19, you have the description of Christ in His glorified majesty and coming back in power and glory in the Second Coming. How marvelous that is!

Jesus' earthly humiliation is over, and He ascended into heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Jesus is our great high priest, Hebrews 2 and 4. And Jesus is also preparing us a place, John 14:2-3. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Jesus has gone to heaven.

And He will raise the wicked dead in judgment and reward the righteous. He will come again to

sit upon the throne of David and will reign forever and ever. This is the vindication of Jesus' humiliation.

What is Jesus exalted over? Over all creation and over the church. Ephesians 1:21 says that Jesus is "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." And then over the church, it says, in Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." So Jesus Christ is sovereign, reigning in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. He arose, He ascended and He was exalted at the right hand of God the Father.

Point number two is, "What is the name of Christ's exaltation?" The source is God the Father, but what is the name of Christ's exaltation? Verse 9 says, "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." The word "above," in verse 9, is the same word translated "highly" in verse 9. It is "hyper." Verses 10-11, "...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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."—or "kurios"—"...to the glory of God the Father."

Now what is "the name which is above every name"? The word "above" means "an exalted supremacy." Some think "the name" is given in verse 10: "Jesus." Jesus is a beautiful name, but He is also called Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,—on and on the names go. What does the name Jesus mean? It is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Joshua, which was actually Jehovah, meaning "God saves."

It's a beautiful name. Remember the angel said, "You shall call His name 'Jesus,' for He will save His people from their sins." But when the Bible uses the word "name," it's not talking about the actual, literal word like John or Jim or Fred or whatever. It's talking about the essence of who a person is. The Bible says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe," Proverbs 18:10. It means that God Himself is a strong tower, and we can run to Him. So the name of the Lord speaks of His person, His nature, His character and His essence—of who He is.

But I don't think that "the name which is above every name," verse 9, is the name "Jesus." I believe it is "Lord," in verse 11, that is given to Jesus. The name Jesus is precious, but I believe "the name which is above every name" is "Lord." In the Greek, there is no break from verse 9 to verse 11. And the end of verse 11 says, "...that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In the Greek, the word "is" is left out. So it would say, "Jesus Christ Lord."

As I said, the word "Lord" is "kurios" in the Greek. But in the Old Testament it would be used as "Adonai" or "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." When the Jews read the Old Testament and came to the name "Yhwh," no vowels, it was on purpose, because they felt the name was so holy, so lofty,

so high that it wasn't even worthy to be on the lips of a human being. So they would come to the word Yhwh in the text—we would translate it “Lord”—they would bow their heads and say “the name.”

But what Paul is doing in this passage is giving the name to none other than Jesus Christ. The name “Jesus” is tied into His humanity. “Christ” speaks of His messiahship. And “Lord” is deity; Jesus Christ, who is Lord. And the word “Lord” is also rendered “Adonai” or “Jehovah.” In the Hebrew Old Testament it is used that way. It is translated “kurios” in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. So “the name which is above every name” is “Lord.”

The Roman government was trying to get the early Christians to renounce Christ and pronounce Caesar as “kurios.” Every Roman citizen would have to put a pinch of incense on an altar and actually say, “Caesar is lord.” Christians wouldn't do that, so they were thrown to the lions and died. But Caesar isn't lord; Jesus is Lord.

Jesus being “Lord” means that He is God, He is sovereign and He is coming back again. He is also the Savior and the Redeemer of mankind. So no other name than “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” has the right to be called “the name which is above every name.” And I think it's important to know that this is a quote from Isaiah 45:22-23. “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” So that's “the name which is above every name.”

Now what is the response to Christ's exaltation as Lord? Two things. Verses 10-11 say, “...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” and “every tongue should confess.” And “every knee” means “every knee.” And he breaks it down for us by saying, “of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.” The idea behind “heaven,” “earth” and “under the earth” is meant to convey a universal scope. It means no one escapes; every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess. What will they confess? “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” How marvelous!

Some say that “heaven” refers to all the angels and redeemed men, who have died and gone to heaven. Some say that “earth” refers to saved men and unsaved men. Some say that “under the earth” refers to hell or tartarus or gehenna, fallen angels in hell. So all who exist will one day bow their knee. So bowing the knee speaks of respect and submission.

Notice also, in verse 11, “every tongue should confess.” And we don't know when they bow their knee and when they confess, but we know the content of what they will confess: “that Jesus Christ is Lord” or “Kurios Jesus Cristo.”

This does not imply universal salvation. There is a damnable heresy—and it is heresy—known as universalism. A modern-day heretic by the name of Rob Bell wrote a book a few years ago titled *Love Wins*. He was part of the progress Christian movement that deconstructs their faith and reconstructs it, which is just a modern Gnosticism or heresy; they're just modern liberals.

He denies the idea that God, who is love, would ever send anyone to hell. He has forgotten that God is also holy and righteous and just.

This idea that everyone would be saved in the end is not Biblical. If that were the case, then why would Jesus have to suffer and die?! If everyone, including the devil, is going to be in heaven, he might be living right next door to you! I don't think so. This is not teaching universal salvation; it's teaching universal subjugation. "Every knee should bow." Every knee.

If you bow your knee now, it's to your salvation. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Romans 10:9. But if you reject Jesus Christ now, then after you die, you will bow your knee and confess Him as Lord to your condemnation. So it's either to your salvation now—bow your knee and submit to His Lordship—or it will be to your condemnation then—you will be judged and forever separated from God. How powerful that is.

Notice also fourthly the purpose of Christ's exaltation, verse 11. "Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."—for what purpose?—"...to the glory of God the Father." Everything God does is for His glory. And God will not share His glory with another.

When you read about our salvation, in Ephesians 1, Paul tells us three times—in verses 6, 12 and 14—"to the praise of the glory of His grace...to the praise of His glory...to the praise of His glory." God saves you for His glory. "I thought it was because of how awesome I am!" No. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence," 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

Everything God does in creation, in the church, in redemption is for His glory. That is why the Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," Ephesians 2:8-9. No one is going to be bragging when they get to heaven about how they got there. All praise, all glory, all majesty be to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord.

So the lesson of our text is, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," 1 Peter 5:6.