

## Philippians 2:5-11

### "The Humiliation & Exaltation Of Christ"

This short section of scripture is quite possibly the greatest, most moving passage Paul ever penned about the Person of J.C.

The opposition from the outside of the church & this seemingly small schism/division on the inside of the church becomes the occasion for one of the greatest theological sections of scripture (relative to the Person of Jesus) in all of the N.T. & In brief it speaks to both His *humiliation* & His *exaltation*. Jesus left the "fame" of heaven to endure the "shame" of earth... It wasn't something He had to be talked into, or convinced of, but He did so willingly, out of His love for you & for me...

Last week I mentioned to you that the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul had a way of taking an unfathomably deep, spiritual truth & somehow rendering it w/an incredibly beautiful simplicity.

To the Corinthians he said it in a single sentence, "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*"<sup>1</sup> In our passage today Paul puts forth this same premise w/a fullness which w/out question is unparalleled.

But it doesn't stop w/the *humiliation* of Christ, we're also brought into the *exaltation* of Christ. Jesus has humbled Himself more than any other. Therefore God has exalted Him high above any other & given Him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, & every tongue should confess that J.C. *is Lord* to the glory of God the Father.

Let's recall that Paul is pleading w/the Philippians to live in unity. To set aside personal ambition & pride; the desire for prominence or prestige, that yearning to be recognized & to have our opinion sought after, our influence accepted & admired... That there would instead be found in their/our hearts an attitude of humility, a selfless desire to serve which was the essence of the life of Christ.

He laid out in a single sentence the *mind* of Christ (Vs 3, 5 read). Now he goes to show us how that mindset displayed (or demonstrated) itself in the *life* of Christ. I want you to notice again that the emphasis of this letter is not rooted in how we *feel* but how we *think*. Outlook determines outcome.

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<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [2 Co 8:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 5-6a

Let's stop right there. "Who, being in the form of God." In order for us to even be able to grasp a *glimpse* (because believe me we'll never understand the fullness) of how far down Jesus came when He humbled Himself; it's important to establish (1<sup>st</sup> of all) exactly how *high* He was.

& Straight out of the gate the apostle Paul wants us to understand something about Jesus & that is this; he speaks of Christ Jesus, "who, *being* in the *form* of God." I promise you there is an entire study wrapped up in that single statement.

This little 5 letter word "being" instantly takes us all the way into eternity past. The Holy Spirit wants you & me to understand something here. We're to understand that Jesus did not come into existence the day that He was born in a manger in that little town of Bethlehem. This word "being" means "to exist in a certain state" it speaks of the nature or essence; the essential, indispensable, unalterable ongoing nature of something.

The point in this passage is that J.C. was continually existing before ever becoming a Man. Are you following me? In what "form" then, did He exist? He was continually, unalterably existing in the "form" of God. Listen, I want you to understand very clearly what's being communicated here. Paul begins this passage by saying that before Jesus appeared in His humanity, that He was essentially, unalterably & eternally God.

Let's focus in on this word "form" for just a minute. There are 2 Greek words that we translate into the single English word "form" (because there's no other English equivalent). They are "morphē" & "schēma". The words both *translate* the same, but they don't *mean* the same.

Morphē is the essential form which never alters; schēma is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. For example, the "morphē" (essential nature) of any human being is humanity, that never changes; but a person's "schēma" is always changing. From a baby, to a child, a young person, a man or woman on into older age, so on & so forth. The "morphē" of humanity never changes. But the outward "schema" changes all the time. Dogs, cats, cows, horses, deer... the morphē, the essential nature is that they're all animals, they share that nature. The outward "schēma" (form) however is different w/each of them.

Here, Paul speaks of Jesus existing (prior to His incarnation) in the "morphē" or "form", the essential unalterable nature of God. What's being carefully, yet intentionally stressed here is the absolute unquestionable deity of J.C.

So don't think of this word "form" as having anything to do w/shape or size. It speaks of an outward expression of an inward/essential nature.

The apostle John said it this way, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*<sup>2</sup> Then (as many of you know) when you reach Vs 14, John continues on, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*<sup>3</sup> The eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead, took on human flesh (which is where Paul is headed here). He *condescended*, He *humbled Himself*. He was willing to let go of His rightful place in heaven, for you & me...

So we're learning here, yes? Jesus existed prior to His incarnation, His essential (intrinsic) unalterable nature was that of "God". Vs 6b "Being in the *form* of God, did not consider it *robbery* to be counted *equal* w/God."

Here's *another* word we need to look at. The word "robbery", it has a couple of different meanings as well. One points to something unlawfully seized. To see it like that would mean that Jesus didn't consider equality w/God something to be unlawfully seized by Him. We can immediately rule that translation out because we just learned that the essential nature of God *belonged* to Him from eternity past. He didn't reach up & somehow achieve godhood & consider Himself to be God's equal therefore it wasn't wrong for Him to be on par w/God. (Satan tried that, remember? He wanted to "be like the Most High").

The other meaning of the word speaks of a treasure to be held onto, clutched & retained at all cost. Now we're getting somewhere. Let's follow the flow here. Jesus (who shared the essential nature of God) didn't consider His equality w/God as a treasure to be clutched onto & retained at all cost. He was willing to lay His place in heaven aside, He willfully, joyfully, not reluctantly (for the joy that was set before Him, Heb 12:2) *humbled Himself*, coming to seek & to save that which was lost...

(Remember, let this *mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*). What mind? The mind that wasn't thinking of self, but willingly placed the needs of others 1<sup>st</sup>. Jesus had some "rights" do we agree? He had the *right* to maintain His place on the throne of God. He had the *right* to His eternal glory, His prerogatives as Deity, the praise of all heaven, His reign & rule over all the universe.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:1-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But Phil 2:6 states something striking & that is this; that He didn't consider His "rights", His equality w/God as something to be selfishly held onto. He wasn't thinking of Himself, He was thinking of you (& of me). His attitude (or outlook) was that of unselfish concern for others. This is the "mind" of Christ.

He didn't feel like He had to hang on to His "rights". Family, this is huge. So many problems would be diffused & done away w/if we could learn to release our "rights". Americans in particular; we're real good at demanding our "rights". I'm just gonna tell you that if *Jesus* would've done that, we could never be saved.

What do you do when your "rights" clash w/someone else's "rights"? You have the night off, you want to go to a movie, your spouse wants to get together w/friends... Who wins? Is it always the "strong willed" one? Unity, relationships that are healthy will (at least occasionally) require a relinquishing of your "rights". "Looking out, not for the things (interests) of ourselves, but the interests of others..."

Now when Paul speaks of "equality" w/God. Understand that he's not referencing the "possession" of His Divine essence. That goes back to the "morphē", the essential nature of God belonged to Jesus. What he's speaking of here is the "expression" of the divine essence. Jesus would not (in fact *could not*) lay aside His deity. God can't not be God... (make sense?) Jesus never laid aside the possession of deity, but the *expression* of deity, the privileges & prerogatives of deity He willingly/joyfully let go of.

What we'll see is that the great objective of Christ wasn't to appear to man as *Divine*, but to identify Himself w/*humanity*. He didn't come to this world emphasizing His equality w/God, that would certainly amaze us, but it wouldn't save us. He took to humanity as His prize, it was *as* a Man, that He could sacrifice Himself on *behalf* of man.

So; though Jesus existed in the essential nature of God, He didn't hold selfishly to the prerogatives that were rightfully His *as* God...

Vs 7

Family, this is one of those passages of scripture that if I could only teach it right... We would all get down on our faces & worship J.C. w/all that we are.

The Most High, made Himself of *no reputation*. That is, He "emptied Himself". & What did He empty Himself of? Not His deity, you can't alter your essential nature. He emptied Himself of the prerogatives/privileges of deity. In other words, though He was fully God, completely cognizant of who He was, where He'd come from, why He was here & where He was going...

He *never* usurped His “rights” as God, but subjected Himself totally & completely to the Father & did everything He did exclusively through the power of the Holy Spirit in & upon His life. Jesus said that like this. He said, *“I can of Myself do nothing.”*<sup>4</sup> & Again, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”*<sup>5</sup>

Everything Jesus did, from His words to His works were accomplished *not* through Him drawing upon His Personal privileges of deity, but through His submission to God the Father & dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit in His life. That’s why you don’t see any miracles happening in is life until *after* His baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon Him in power. He was always full *of* the Spirit, but He was empowered *by* the Spirit for the mission/ministry the Father had for Him at His baptism. He modeled for us what a life lived in perfect submission to God looked like.

So, *“He made Himself of no reputation”* emptied Himself the privileges of deity. He concealed His glory in His humanity... Remember the scene in Matt 17? Jesus took Peter, James & John upon a high Mt & was there “transfigured” before them. He allowed them to see His glory radiating *from* Him. Some people think, “Wow, what a miracle, Jesus *revealed* His glory.” I don’t think so. The miracle was that He could ever *conceal* His glory! It wasn’t that He was unable to assert equality w/God; the glorious miracle of it all is that He was able *not* to assert it!

He left heaven’s glory & came all the way down to where you & I are! The billions of light years that span our universe pale in comparison to the distance that Jesus condescended to be *where* we are & *as* we are... & in reality going *lower* than we are, notice “taking the *form* of a bondservant”.

Remember our word, “morphē”? “The outward expression of the innermost nature”. Same word here. The essential nature of J.C. expresses its self *not* as a Czar, He wasn’t born in a palace, He was born in a stable. Jesus wasn’t on this earth *pretending* to be a Servant. It’s indicative of His nature *to serve*. He *is* a Servant. “I didn’t come to *be* served, but to *serve*.” He came *low* (ladies & gentlemen).

What grace is this? From the fame of heaven, to the shame of earth... From Master, to Servant, from life... to death.

& When He took upon Himself humanity, there was no going back. He continues in that body, eternally (resurrected & glorified, but He *is* as we will *be*, minus deity for us).

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 5:30]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 6:38]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; what does it mean, “coming in the ‘likeness’ of men.” Couple things. 1<sup>st</sup> & foremost it means He was “like” you are & I am. 100% human. He didn’t come in the “likeness” of angels. He came in the “likeness” of men. Yet He was different in that He was also fully God & w/out sin. He wasn’t part man, part God. He was fully Man & fully God.

### Vs 8

From heavenly fame to earthly shame, from Master to Servant, from high to low, from life to death... even the death of the cross.

Think about this phrase, “He humbled Himself and became obedient”. There was humility in the obedience of J.C. When You’re God upon the throne of Heaven, when all things were made *through* You & w/out You nothing was made that was made... who are You obeying? No one! Everyone, *everything* obeys *You*.

Jesus had to humble Himself & leave heaven’s glory to learn *obedience*. The bible says that He learned *obedience* through the things which He *suffered* (Heb 5:8). He humbled Himself & became obedient to the point of *death*. It’s been said that ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If there’s to be any blessing, there must be some “bleeding”.

What does it “cost” you to be a Christian? It cost Jesus His whole life, He was obedient to the point of death... But His wasn’t the death of a martyr, it was the death of a Savior. He willingly laid down His life for the sins of the world... Jesus humbled Himself in every facet of life. In coming to the earth, in becoming a Man, where He was born, how He lived, the company He kept, the disciples He chose, the temptations He endured, obedience to His Father, submission to the Holy Spirit, laying down His life, the agony of His death, the public mocking of His “execution” (sacrifice), in being made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

He humbled Himself & became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The most despised & shameful way for a man to die. So torturous & shameful that it was illegal to crucify a Roman citizen, so shameful that the Jews considered anyone who was crucified to be especially accursed of God... The Philippians were in a Roman colony, they couldn’t be crucified legally, yet this was the selfless humility of J.C.

He didn’t become obedient to a quick & painless death, but to the point of enduring a painful, shameful death. Jesus didn’t just become obedient to the point of a quick and painless death, but to the point of enduring a painful, shameful death. He came all the way down to the bottom rung on the ladder from the Throne of God... to the most despised death of all.



There's no limit to what God will do to demonstrate the fullness of His love & saving grace to man; & the depths of the depravity of our sin to require such a sacrifice...

& As Spurgeon pointed out, the lower Jesus stoops to save us, the higher we should lift Him in reverence & praise & worship...

Think about this; this is the power of God unto salvation... the *humiliation* of J.C. Power isn't only expressed in exaltation & deliverance, but also in glorifying God through humble service & the sacrifice of self. The glory of God can shine brightly through humility.

### Vs 9

The mind of *Christ*? Selfless sacrifice for the sake of others. The mind of *God*? To exalt, magnify & glorify the Lord J.C.

We may not always know where God would have us be or what we're going to do, but I promise you that you will always be in God's will *anytime* you choose to exalt J.C. "Whatever you do, do to the glory of the Lord." God the Father's heart is to exalt His Son.

Jesus humbled Himself more than any other, therefore God has exalted Him higher than any other. The One despised & rejected by *man* has been exalted & honored *by God*.

God loves/honors true humility. You're going to want to write it down so you can look it up, 1 Pet 5:5-6). God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humility facilitates unity, Pride brings about division.

Therefore God has "highly exalted", it means to exalt w/all exaltation. His resurrection, ascension & glorification, it's all included. He's been given the highest possible place. Notice Jesus didn't crown Himself; His Father lifted Him up, exalted Him highly & given Him the name which is above every name. His Person, His character, all that He is, is above all others.

Think about this, what name is there that is higher than God's? There is none, so for Jesus to have the highest name *must mean* that Jesus is Himself God.

### Vs 10-11

"That at the name of Jesus every knees should bow" (in heaven, on earth & under the earth). God will see to it, not only will His Son be exalted, but all others will be *submitted* to Him.

Every knee universally (creation in totality) will bow before J.C. That doesn't mean all will be saved, it means all will be submitted to the Son of God. Again, this is a powerful point regarding His deity. Paul is drawing from Isa 45:23 where God said...

*"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."*<sup>6</sup> Isaiah says that every knee will bow to Yahweh, Paul applies that to Jesus. What does that mean? It means Jesus *is* Yahweh, He is God.

& What is it that every tongue will confess (or agree with). That J.C. is Lord. Again family; when the Hebrew was translated into the Greek the word "Kurios" was used when they translated the name Yahweh from Hebrew to Greek. When we read that every tongue will confess that J.C. is "Lord", guess what the word is, "Kurios". Every tongue will confess that J.C. is God. "To the glory of God the Father."

& This is the chief aim of all that we do. To glorify God. We often long for the glorification but we look to avoid the humiliation. We've spoken of the mind of Christ, the submissive mind. The person w/the submissive mind lives for others, expects sacrifice & service, but its end is glory.

Be submissive one to another, clothed w/humility. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...

### Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your word. Jesus we're so grateful for the example that You've given us. Help us that we not wrestle w/Your will, or resist Your will, but that we receive Your will & walk in Your will for our lives. We're in awe of You & Your willingness to go low, that You might lift us high. May we exalt You in all that You are. Have Your way in us.

God loves you, there's no price that Jesus wasn't willing to pay for you. Even giving His life, that you might have life. Why reject that, open your heart, turn from your sin & trust in J.C. who has loved you & given Himself *for* you.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 45:23]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.