

Philippians XV – The Other Side of Humiliation (Phil 2:9-11)

Introduction – The story of Israel is the story of God and the story of the second Adam. It is the story of the church as well. Humiliation is God's path to exaltation. Jesus did not come to the cross because He loved suffering. He sought to have the cup pass from Him if possible. But He did endure the cross for the joy set before Him. He knew the will of the Father and submitted. But He also knew the will of the Father included the promise of vindication and exaltation.

The Text – *“Therefore God 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.”*

Isaiah – Behind vv 5-11 is the prophecy of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. That prophecy begins, *“Behold, My Servant... He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.”* The Father promised the Son that following His humiliation, His rightful exaltation would be world-wide (Psalm 2:8). Specifically, behind vv 9-11, we see the prophecies of Isaiah 45 (vv 22-25, but then 15, 18, and 21 as well). And while there is no promise of universal salvation, the prophecy of victory is of the one named *“Savior.”* His victory is the salvation of the world.

The Name – The Father loves the Son, but He loves the people of His Son as well and so made Him to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). But the Father had heard the prayer of Jesus as well, *“Father...glorify Your Son...”* (John 17:1,5). Exaltation and Salvation are the result of Christ's humiliation. His name, which includes the idea of His character, His person, and His office, has been ‘super-exalted’ above every other name. And while Jesus already had the glory of God, He now has the glory of the exalted Adam, the Man who rules over every other man – the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 17:14, 19:16).

Overt Threat – In Philippi, as in Rome, there was a welcomed pluralistic religious tolerance. But everyone bowed the knee to Rome, to Caesar, who had taken on the title of the divine one as well. Paul is encouraging those who are under any persecution that their King has been raised and will share His glory with no other. We must understand that while the scriptures do acknowledge a proper separation of church and state, there is no acknowledgment of the separation of God and state. There is no lawful autonomy for any individual or society from the King of kings.

Bowing and Confessing – Here is the reason that Jesus has been given the name above every name – that knees would bow and that tongues would confess.

Acts of Homage – While ‘*bowing the knee*’ certainly is the common biblical (and almost universal) idiom for the giving of homage and the recognition of authority to a god or a person and therefore represents the attitude and a variety of actions, should it not also include the actual physical act of bending the knee, or kneeling? Throughout scripture we find men kneeling in prayer. We never hear that they were sitting. Does it say something about our culture, awash in enlightenment-thinking, that we put such great emphasis on “what we said” and “what we confess”, so often to the exclusion of what we do with our bodies in worship? The Son of God is God-Incarnate, and our worship must be incarnate as well. Certainly, the disposition of the heart matters and what the body is doing does not prove the state of the heart. But heart-obedience will seek the scriptures for proper outward profession and action.

A Man Now Sits On the Throne – The story of redemption is also the story of man's victory. Created in the image of God, He was placed in the garden to be a creator himself, taking dominion of all God had bestowed upon him. That first man fell. But this second Adam succeeded. He now sits at the right hand of God and rules the nations (Psalm 110). All of the nations have been given to Him (Psalm 2). God has put all things under Christ's feet (Psalm 8). *“You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”* (Heb 2:8-9)

The Context/The Application – Has all that Christ has done made us more humble-minded? He has been brought low and, in Christ, we must be brought low. He has been highly exalted and, in Christ, we are more than conquerors.

Because He is Exalted – you (y'all) must love and forgive your neighbor (Phil 1:9, 2:4, Col 3:12f).

Because He is Exalted – you (y'all) must suffer as He suffered (Phil 1:12, 20b, 28).

Because He is Exalted – you (y'all) may long for and look for your final vindication as well (Phil 1:21-23).

Because He is Exalted – you (y'all) must bow the knee and confess with great thankfulness that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.