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Glory, Humility and Exaltation Philippians 2:6-9

Intro: Last week we made a quick overview of this gem of a passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians. The text from **v5-11** is unique in all of Scripture in that it deals with so many of the important doctrines concerning Jesus Christ all in a few short verses. We have considered some of these doctrines in a general sense, Christ's pre-existence in eternity past, His condescension from heavenly glory to earthly humanity and even lower, and His glorious return to His heavenly throne. We've had the overview, now let's look closer and see what the Holy Spirit has to teach us.

6 – Paul tells us here that in His pre-incarnate state (eternity past), Jesus was in the form of God and equal with God. As we've seen, form is translated from the Greek word *morphe* speaks of the outward appearance of something and its essential nature. It points both outward to the shape of an object and inward to things that can't be detected on the surface. The second word that describes Jesus Christ is *isos*, meaning equal. We see this word in the scientific terms *isomer*, *isomorph*, and *isometric*. *Isomorph* means "having the same form." *Isometric* means "in equal measure." In Phil 2:6 the word *isos* teaches that Jesus Christ is God's equal. As Paul puts it, everything that God Almighty is, so is Jesus! In fact, there can be no true knowledge of the Father apart from an accurate knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ. To know Jesus is to know the Father. To deny Jesus is to deny the Father.

The lesson of **v6** is also conveyed by a phrase used elsewhere that vigorously points to the divine nature and was often used by Jesus. The phrase is the glory of God. Jesus speaks of this glory when He prays in **Jn 17:4-5**. This says 4 things about glory. 1st, Jesus possessed a glory before the incarnation. 2nd, this glory was God's glory. 3rd, He didn't have it after the incarnation. 4th, there's a sense in which He did possess it while on earth for He *revealed* it by finishing the work that God gave him to do. How can this be? How can Jesus possess God's glory, renounce it, and yet still have it? What does the glory of God really mean?

Without getting too far into the weeds with this, the Greek word for glory is

doxa which originally meant to appear or to seem but eventually came to refer to having a good opinion about someone. The noun form came to mean the praise or honor due to one of whom a good opinion was held. Kings possessed glory because they merited the praise of their subjects. If we apply this meaning to God: if you have a right opinion about God, you're able to form a correct opinion of His attributes. The Jew knew God as all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, merciful, faithful, holy, just, loving, and so on. When he acknowledged this he was said to give God glory. God's glory consists of His inherent worth that's rooted in His character. All that can be known of God is merely an expression of it.

This view of God's glory is reinforced by the English word that means almost the same thing as glory: worth. It also refers to intrinsic character. The worth of a person is their character. The worth of God is His glory. Thus, when people praise God they're acknowledging His worth-ship. We've condensed this down to worship. This means that the worship of God, the praise of God and the giving of glory to God are the same thing. It's this glory—God's intrinsic worth and character—that Jesus claimed to possess and made known to His disciples. What did John mean when he said Jesus manifested His glory to the disciples at the wedding feast in Cana? It means the disciples beheld His *character* and it was the character of God.

There is also another, entirely different meaning of glory that was adopted into Greek only through with Hebrew religion and culture. In Hebrew thought any outward manifestation of God's presence involved a display of light so brilliant that a person couldn't approach it. This brilliant outward manifestation of God's presence was described by the word *shekinah*. This glory was the radiance transferred to the face of Moses during the time he spent on Mount Sinai with God ([2 Cor 3:7](#)). It was seen in the cloud over the tabernacle during Israel's years in the wilderness. Glory shone from the angels as they appeared to announce Jesus' birth. It was the glory of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah that the disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration. Glory filled the sky when Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. It is this glory that will cloth Jesus when He returns for those who believe in Him and await His coming.

Together, these 2 meanings of glory give us a clear picture of Christ's equality with God and His humbling when He became a man. Before His incarnation Jesus existed with God and was identical to God inwardly and

outwardly. He fully shared the divine nature and was clothed with the splendor that had always surrounded God's person. During the incarnation, Jesus laid aside the outward glory (impossible to approach) and took the form of a servant. What remained was God's glory in the inward sense. Even in the flesh Jesus Christ was God and retained all of the divine nature. Then, in the garden just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed that He might receive the visible glory He had enjoyed with God once more. He received this when He ascended into heaven to His rightful place with the Father.

If you love Jesus Christ, the idea of His glory should produce praise in your heart. But there is something even more personal than this. If you are a child of God, God is conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ. And this means that since Jesus perfectly manifests God's glory, you are to share that same glory also (**2 Cor 3:18**). That's not all. One day you'll even participate in this visible glory. When all believers stand spotless in the glorious presence of the Father, our glorified bodies will shine like brilliant jewels, refracting the bright radiance of the Father of lights and His Son in whom is no darkness at all. We'll not only point to that radiance, we'll also participate in it, to the glory of God.

7 – This is the incarnation, which means: Jesus became like us so we could become like Him. The incarnation wasn't an end in itself. It was God's way of coming to us that we might be redeemed from the penalty of sin and then transformed from within into the image of His Son. Paul says, 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 (**2 Cor 8:9**).

The 2nd Person of the Godhead, the Son, became like us, or like each of us should be. Imagine that! Can God become like us, to feel as we feel and suffer as we suffer? The Bible says yes. **Isaiah** writes, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given (**9:6**). Note the verbs: born and given. Jesus was always God's Son; so, as a son He was given. In the incarnation Jesus became a man and before that, a child. Thus, as a child He is born, not given. The divine nature is without beginning. His human nature began at the moment of His birth.

Paul intends the same meaning when he says that the One who was in the form of God and was God's equal from all eternity took the form of a man at a particular point in history. He took upon Himself the nature of a servant; he

was made in human likeness. Paul uses 3 different words to describe the eternal Son of God becoming man. The 1st is morphe, the same word used in vs6 (form).” there: in very nature God, now: in the very nature of a servant. Again, morphe refers both to the inward character and to the outward form that expresses the inward character. So, when Paul says Christ took on the nature of a servant, he means that Jesus became man both inwardly and outwardly. Jesus possessed the very nature of God inwardly and displayed it outwardly. So too, He took on the very nature of man inwardly and outwardly. With the exception of being sinful, everything that can be said about a man can be said about Jesus Christ.

2nd word Paul uses to describe the incarnation is likeness. Jesus was made in human likeness. Where morphe refers to man’s nature; the word homoioma refers to the outward appearance of humanity. Jesus didn’t just have a man’s feelings, or intellect, or outlook on life; He looked like a man too. He was born a Jewish baby, and as He grew He looked like everyone else in His town. From a physical standpoint, He was perfectly a man.

3rd word is schema (v8) Jesus was found in appearance as a man. The idea here is conformity to human experience. Paul says that Jesus was not only man inwardly in all His feelings and emotions, not only man outwardly in the sense of physical likeness, but He was also a man in the sense that He endured all that we endure in this world—its pressures, longings, circumstances, influences for good or evil. Jesus knew all this. Thus, there’s nothing about being human that was not also part of Jesus’ experience.

Jesus became like us in temptation. Heb 4:15 says He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. We have the account of this in Matt 24 but temptation followed Jesus around just as it does us. Jesus also became like us in suffering, though His was undeserved. Yet, in His suffering, He provides an example to follow in our own suffering. Jesus also became like us in disappointment. How painful it must have been for Him to condescend so far from the glory of heaven to come to this earth with the power to forgive and save only to be rejected, ridiculed and murdered.

How comforting this should be to every believer. Jesus was just like you and He experienced everything you have experienced. He knows your problems so He can help you in the midst of them. He can provide salvation, not just at death but for this life too, as you triumph over the things that constantly

try to force you into the image of the world.

8 – This is the low point of Christ's humility: His death on the cross. The cross is the central feature of the NT. The Gospels devote an unusual amount of space to Jesus' final week in Jerusalem ending in His death and resurrection. 2/5th of Matthew's Gospel; 3/5th of Mark, 1/3rd of Luke, and almost half of John. The cross overshadowed His life even before the last week. His very name presupposes an act of saving significance; as the angel told Joseph, "and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Jesus often spoke of the suffering that was to come and associated the success of His mission to the crucifixion. For that matter, the cross is also the central theme of the OT. All the sacrifices prefigure Christ's suffering, and the prophets explicitly foretell it. Jesus taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus that the OT foretold His death and resurrection: (Lk 24:25-27).

The cross stands as the focal point of the Christian faith. Without the cross the Bible is a confusing puzzle and the gospel of salvation is an empty hope. But why did Jesus have to suffer? What do His sufferings really mean? The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ died to remove sin; to satisfy divine justice and to reveal God's love. In what way?

1st, Jesus died to remove sin. He did so by bearing the penalty of sin Himself. Heb 9:26 says Christ has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Peter teaches the same thing when he says of Jesus, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness (1 Ptr 2:24). This idea may sound strange to our modern ears, but it wasn't strange in Jesus' day. It's an idea birthed from the world of religious sacrifices. To them a sacrifice spoke of the removal of sin.

A ceremony from the Day of Atonement helps us understand the meaning of sacrifice. Early in the day 2 goats were selected, 1 as a sin offering for the sins of the people and 1 to be the scapegoat. The high priest would lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat, identifying himself and Israel with it; he'd confess their sins, symbolically transferring them to the animal that was then led out to the wilderness. That's what Jesus came to do; remove our sin by bearing it on Himself. Sin separates men from God, but Jesus removes that sin. He was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). Have your sins been

placed upon Him? You only need to ask Him to do it. The Bible says He will do it if you will confess your sin to Him and then trust Him to remove your sin forever.

2nd, Jesus died to satisfy divine justice. The justice of God calls for the punishment of sin, and the punishment of sin is death. Jesus paid that penalty by dying in our place, satisfying divine justice and leaving nothing for us but God's heaven. This aspect of the cross is also taught by a 2nd ceremony observed on the Day of Atonement. [Lev 16](#) talks about 2 goats. 1 was the scapegoat. But what was the other one for? This goat was used as a sacrifice and its blood was placed before God within the Most Holy Place in the temple.

The temple (and tabernacle) was composed of 2 rooms. The inner room held the ark of the covenant. The ark was a box made of acacia wood covered with gold that held the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments. At either end of the ark facing inward stood the figures of two cherubim. Between them, directly over the ark at the heart of the temple, God was believed to dwell. It's a terrifying picture: God's perfect law lies inside the ark bearing mute witness against all humanity. God's holy presence hovers above the law, ready to condemn. The scene speaks of judgment, and the ark in this form bears a sentence of death against all people.

But there's more to it than this. There was a cover on the ark called the mercy seat, and on that cover once a year on the Day of Atonement the high priest placed the blood of the sacrificial goat. The animal was an innocent substitute: a type of Jesus Christ. So between the law that man had violated and the holy presence of almighty God stood the blood. A substitute intervened and the wrath of God was stilled. Thus, a person can come to God without fear of being devoured by His wrath. Similarly, because of Jesus, God doesn't violate His righteousness and can show Himself to be a God of mercy, grace, and love. Jesus satisfies God's justice. Through faith in His shed blood there is peace with God and access into His presence.

3rd, Jesus died to reveal God's love. People love to say that God is love and ignore the fact that He is also holy, righteous and just. God's love is not a blind, pushover, sinful love. It's a love that sees things as they are and yet

moves to punish sin that love might be established in righteousness. This is the love of God that is seen at the cross.

The cross is the measure of God's love for you (**Rom 5:8**) manifested, showed, revealed. Look to the cross and marvel at the extent of God's love for you.

9 – Paul's poetic telling of the story of Jesus has hit rock bottom. Pouring Himself out in self-sacrificing love, Jesus took on the form of a slave and suffered the ignominious death of a slave. He has voluntarily sunk as low as can be. But it doesn't end there! Jesus' story isn't a tragedy; it's a rescue mission and His loving sacrifice vindicates His mission. If God is just, there must be a payback for innocent suffering, a balancing of the books, as it were, that affirms the loving purposes of God. And there is! The One who freely gave of Himself now receives, being raised up again! Paul's word is literally "hyper-exalted" meaning God the Father has fully vindicated Jesus and then some (if more is possible)! The term highly exalted relates to the resurrection, ascension and present reign of Jesus Christ.

This is the climax of Paul's story—the exaltation of Jesus Christ and this exaltation is symbolized in Him being given the name which is above every name. What is that name? What could it be? We'll look at that next time.

It shouldn't be too difficult to see how the story of Jesus' humility would serve as a fitting example to the Philippians, who were in need of humility themselves. Some contend that this description of Christ's exaltation takes away from the example but that's not the case at all. Just as it was necessary for humility of Jesus to be vindicated, so it is also necessary to balance Christ's call to discipleship. Jesus called His disciples to lose their lives but this was only so that they might gain eternal life (**Mt 16:25**).

The way of the cross is not an end in itself and suffering and self-denial are merely necessary steps on the way to resurrection. If Paul calls his readers to a life of humility and service, to denial of self and concern for others, it's because this is the character of God that is inherent in the new life we have been given. It's the way we must take to become more than conquerors, to share in the risen life of Jesus Christ.

Are you walking in the fullness of the mind of Christ? Are you fully trusting in Him for the forgiveness of your sin, the salvation of your soul, ensuring a

place with Him in heaven for all eternity? 😊