

Philippians 2
From Humiliation to Exaltation

Anyone recognize this fresco painting? It is on the US Capitol Rotunda



<https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/apotheosis-washington>

The Apotheosis of George Washington, completed after the Civil War depicted George Washington rising to the heavens in glory, flanked by female figures representing Liberty and Victory (The word "apotheosis" in the title means literally the raising of a person to the rank of a god, or the glorification of a person as an ideal)

What does this painting tell us??

We are prone to elevate creatures to the place of God. – Romans 1:25

It can happen in politics, in culture, in sports, etc.

“MAN, THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS”- Protagoras 490-420 BC

John Lennon - March 1966 “We’re more popular than Jesus”

How many sports stars have been referred to as “a God?”

Everyone knows that college football is a “religion in the South”

Consider the church in the earliest centuries: They lived in a time when rulers / emperors were worshipped as gods. Throughout the span of human history, many cultures have referred to their kings or rulers as God – Herod 12, Incas, Japanese Empire, North Korea, Romans. Many Christians refused to make the confession “Caesar is Lord” and they lost their lives.

So many lived lives of gospel humility, faith, courage, and selfless love that they impacted the Roman Empire. They lived surprising lives.

Do our lives ever surprise anyone, in a GOOD WAY?

Phil 2 shows what a surprising counter-cultural life looks like.

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, Which is yours in Christ Jesus,

6 Who, though he was in the form of God,

Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

7 But emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, Being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form,

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,

Even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
And gave him the name that is above every name,
10 So at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
In heaven and on earth and under the earth
11 And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

Verses 1-4 – Call to unity, Basis for Unity, the Look of Unity rooted in Humility.

Paul caps it off with an appeal to THE MODEL OF Christ V. 5-11

HUMILITY IS SOMEONE WE MEET BEFORE IT IS SOMETHING WE EXPERIENCE.

If we bow the knee to Christ to the praise and GLORY OF God, then we should also live to the glory of God. v. 11

Dwight Edwards – “to glorify God means to be supremely satisfied in Him over all competitors. It means living a life that flaunts His excellencies before a watching world. And it means that our lives will pack an element of supernatural surprise. God can’t be glorified in lives that fail to go beyond what religious flesh can pull off on its own.”

PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOCUS OF THIS PASSAGE: It is NOT so much a treatise on the nature of the God-Man as it is an exhortation to gospel humility, with Jesus as the example. If you get wrapped around the axle of trying to decipher all the fine points of the two natures of Christ, then you’ll miss the main point.

Spiritual growth is seen in Christ-centered humility

v. 5

Have this mind among yourselves, Which is yours in Christ Jesus,

I have said many times that salvation means that we don’t simply look to Jesus as an example to follow, but as a Savior to trust. If we could “do what Jesus did” then we wouldn’t need a savior. I came to faith in college when I saw that I didn’t need another example, I needed a Savior...

But that doesn’t mean that Jesus ISN’T AN EXAMPLE, as we see in v. 4-5.

Jesus is the example of what authentic spiritual growth looks like – laying aside of rights to take the form of a bondservant by considering others as more important than ourselves.

Jesus did NOT do this in order to show off his spirituality or to one up anyone else.

This mindset / attitude is WHO HE IS. It is a reflection of the very heart of Jesus.

There is one verse in the four gospels in which Jesus describes the posture of his heart.

Matt 11:28 **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

In the one place in the Bible where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who he is, we are NOT told that he is “austere and demanding in heart.” We are NOT told that he is “exalted and dignified in heart.” We are NOT even told that he is “joyful and generous in heart.” Letting Jesus set the terms, his surprising claim is that he is “gentle and lowly in heart.” Dane Ortlund

If Jesus had a blog, the dropdown box under “About Me” would read – “Gentle and Humble in heart.” (Dane Ortlund)

That makes me very uncomfortable because I’m not like that.

Lest you think that Jesus loses his “humility crown” by saying that He is gentle and humble of heart, just remember who we’re talking about....

6 Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped or (did not consider it robbery to be equal with God) i.e. Jesus could have justly and fairly laid claim to His rights as God – it would not have been robbery – BUT HE DID NOT DO SO. No one could have accused Jesus of getting above his station in life by claiming equality with God. That would have been totally legit, but Instead...

But emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Again, don't miss the point of the verse by getting hung up on what was the "form of God" experienced by the pre-incarnate Christ. He is God, was God from eternity, and "in the fullness of time" He was born of a woman, while remaining fully God and fully man. YES, IT IS A MYSTERY, but it's NOT the point of the passage.

The Focus of the passage is that though he was equal with God, He did not regard that as something to be held on to. He was not afraid that it would slip through his fingers. He didn't keep a tight grip on His rights and perks that would be His as God.

Let's be honest. We ARE NOT in the form of God, but don't we count equality with God a thing to be grasped? How many times in a single day do we want others, and even God, to treat us as if we were God? We may not say it out loud, but that is often the posture of our hearts.

Those pesky interruptions that come our way ignite our 'God-complex' that is lurking beneath the surface. "How dare you treat me that way!" "How dare you overlook me? Don't you know who I am?" "I didn't get what I deserve; how dare you?"

EX: BE GLAD you didn't or don't get what you deserve because what we deserve is HELL – the wrath and curse of God.

v. 6 ...if anyone had reason to grasp at equality with God it would be Jesus. He did not use His position in the Godhead for His own advantage, but He leveraged it for the sake of those who were rebels, for those who loved the darkness more than the light. He used His position as God to benefit others, even to His own hurt.

Do we use our position for our own gain or for the good of others?

What title or position or recognition are you grasping for and how is it causing the problems described in v. 2-4? (selfish ambition and conceit / vain glory)

8 And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, Even death on a cross.

v. 7-8 Note the relationship between humility and obedience

the humble heart is the obedient heart. A disobedient rebellious heart is not humble.

The autonomous heart says, "I'll do things my way, no matter what God says", or it will fall for the lie from the garden of Eden, "Did God really say?"

One indicator of Christ like humility is our approach to the Word of God. How did Christ view the Word? When Jesus went one on one with Satan in the "Duel in the Desert" the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread (Matt 4). Jesus responded, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

To cultivate Christian like humility we must know and obey the Word.

The obedience to the point of death is rooted in the eternal will and Word of the Triune God.

ISAIAH 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Matt 26 Then He *said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”

ACTS 2: 23 this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

Jesus was born to die, and He knew that he had come to give his life as a ransom for many. Because of His humility, He was exalted... FOR Jesus THE WAY UP WAS DOWN – humiliation to exaltation

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place And gave him the name that is above every name,
10 So at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, In heaven and on earth and under the earth
11 And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

The phrase “being on the right side of history” has been thrown around a lot in recent years. Well HERE IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE... at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, In heaven and on earth and under the earth 11 And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” , and this passage shows us that ultimate justice is found before the throne of King Jesus. The only way to love and desire justice is to find salvation in Christ. Apart from Him, justice is a scary reality because justice would bring us the wrath of God.

There is only one king or ruler who deserves and demands total obedience – King Jesus.
All others must take a lower place.

WCF SC – Christ as King??

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Jesus gets exalted and we get exalted with Him. As beloved children, we are co-heirs- Rom 8:17

How does this king, who is gentle and lowly of heart, deal with us?

(Dane Ortlund Gentle and Lowly)

When Hebrews 5:2 says that Jesus “can deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward,” the point is that Jesus deals gently and only gently with all sinners who come to him, irrespective of their particular offense and just how heinous it is. What elicits tenderness from Jesus is not the severity of the sin but whether the sinner comes to him. Whatever our offense, if we come to Him by faith he deals gently with us. If we never come to him, we will experience a judgment so fierce it will be like a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth at us (Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21).

King Jesus is building His kingdom, even if it doesn't look like it. He will always have a remnant and it isn't based on race or nationality. Christ is bringing in His elect and His kingdom will not fail.

This leads us to the invitation to COME TO THE TABLE - This is where God meets us to strengthen our hearts in the Gospel.

(Dane Ortlund – paraphrase)

When we sin, we are encouraged to bring our mess to Jesus because he will know just how to receive us. He doesn't handle us roughly. He doesn't scowl and scold. He doesn't lash out, the way many of our parents did. And all this restraint on his part is not because he has a diluted view of our sinfulness. He knows our sinfulness far more deeply than we do. His restraint simply flows from his tender heart for his people.

But why? Why does Christ deal gently with us? The text tells us: "He emptied himself taking the form of a servant." He knows what it is like to be tested, to be in a place of sinless weakness.

Look to Christ. He deals gently with you. As long as you fix your attention on your sin, you will never see how you can be safe. But as long as you look to this exalted King, you will not see how you can be in danger. He took the path of danger for us when he went up to Calvary.

Jesus will never cast out those who come to Him by faith. This Table is a place where we can come and be nourished spiritually by the living Christ.

Amen

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