

## Lesson 8

### Exaltation and Humiliation

Philippians 2:9-13

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. For every act of obedience the Christian performs, there will be reward in heaven. In context, the act of obedience the Apostle Paul is speaking of is humility. Last week, in 2:1-4, we saw how the Apostle Paul was exhorting the Christians at Philippi to have the mind of Christ whereby they thought the interests of others more important than their own interests. There was strife and division in this church and the way to eradicate this warring was to have a humble spirit.
- B. In 2:5-8, we saw how Paul took the life of Christ as an example of one who truly practiced humility. Christ, the eternal Son of God, was equal with God in substance, nature and attributes, sharing the infinite glory of God. Yet, He emptied Himself of this glory and became a servant of God, taking upon Himself a real humanity, yet without sin. This One, the God-Man, humbled Himself beyond anything the human mind could comprehend. In becoming a man, Jesus Christ became obedient to the Father's will, even to the point of dying on the Cross as a despised criminal. Why did He do it? Because this was the Father's plan for the redemption of sinners. There was no other way to save men. Jesus humbled Himself so that all who are His followers might be clothed in His righteousness and become exalted children of God. The application is obvious. Since Jesus did this great deed of humility, we who are Christians ought to have a spirit of humility towards one another.

#### II. EXALTATION OF CHRIST 2:9-11

- A. ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*** -- The obedience of Christ in His spirit of humility did not go unrewarded by the Father. The Father "super-exalted" Him as the Greek says. Christ was resurrected from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and was given a name that was exalted above all of God's created beings. He was given the title and officially recognized as Jesus Christ, the Lord. Lord means supreme ruler who is in charge of the universe. Christ must bear a name which suits His character, nature and exaltation. He is Lord because He is I AM, Jehovah, sovereign one, eternal one, the very nature of God. He is the conqueror over sin, evil spirits and death. Christ is heir of all things, creator of all things, preserver of the universe and purifier of sin. His name is Lord. He is Lord of all. If Christ is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all!

- B. ***That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth;*** -- It is the Father's plan that all created beings will one day worship Jesus Christ. Christ is worthy of every created being's worship now but many hate Him. Yet, at the second coming of Christ, the whole body of created intelligent beings in all departments of the universe will worship Jesus Christ. NOTE: All will someday bow their knees to Jesus as Lord, even those who die without salvation, being lost forever. This verse is not teaching universalism; that is, all men will be ultimately saved. Good angels and redeemed human beings will bow to the Lord joyfully, but wicked angels and damned men will do it reluctantly and remorsefully.
- C. ***And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,*** -- There is a day coming when every created intelligence will agree with the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord. The infidels, atheists and skeptics will all bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, even when experiencing the pangs of eternal punishment. The moral man, who did not have time for Jesus because he was too busy trying to do good works, will cry out in hells torments that Jesus is Lord. The religious man, who was so sure his way was right and took himself and multitudes of others down the road to destruction, will plead for the Lord to help but it will be too late (***Matt. 7:21-23: Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"***). NOTE: If you are not a Christian, I warn you on the authority of God's Word that if you will not acknowledge Christ as Lord in this lifetime, you will do so in the next life, and it will be hell enough to know He is Lord and be eternally separated from Him. The scriptures make it plain that now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to receive God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of no second chances in eternity to respond to the Lordship and Saviorship of Christ. Let us bow our knees and bend our proud hearts to Christ while there is still time.
- D. ***To the glory of God the Father.*** -- This great exaltation of Christ will bring glory to the Father, for all things are working in this life according to the counsel of His own perfect will and for His own infinite glory. NOTE: Although Paul doesn't develop this theme because it isn't the line of argument he is pursuing, it is true that when we are willing to set aside our rights God will exalt us. When we are willing to be of no reputation and not insist upon our rights, God will honor us. Jesus taught this same truth in ***Luke 14:11: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."***

### III. HUMILIATION OF THE CHRISTIAN 2:12,13

- A. Salvation Is Man Working Out 2:12

1. **Therefore, my dear friends,** -- The “therefore” connects what is about to be said back to the immediate context which is about humility producing unity in the local church. Paul is going to exhort these Philippians but before he does, he calls them “my dear friends” or more literally “beloved.” We see here again the tremendous love which the Apostle Paul had for the Philippians as their first pastor.
  
2. **As you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but now much more in my absence** -- This sentence is filled with insinuations and one of these is that the Philippians had a tendency to be a man-follower. There was a tendency to lean too heavily on Paul; that is, on his physical presence with the church at Philippi. The Philippians had to learn two lessons: 1) Pastors come and go but the saints are to do the work of the ministry all the time no matter who the pastor is, and 2) They had to obey and do God’s will without any help of any man no matter how great he might be. NOTE: A local church should never be built around a pastor. The people must grow in grace and mature so they will become self-sustaining believer-priests. One’s motivation for Christian obedience must come from God, not from any one man or men in general.
  
3. **Continue to work out your salvation** --
  - a. The Philippians are told to work out their own salvation. “Salvation” in this context refers to having a spirit of humility so as to produce unity in the local church. In 1:27, they were “to stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.” In 2:2, Paul exhorts them to have “love, being one in spirit and purpose.” Then in 2:14, the Philippians are told, “Do everything without complaining and arguing.” Right between these thoughts are the words “work out your salvation” so he must be specifically thinking of humility as it is related to unity in the body of Christ.
  
  - b. In the broadest sense, “work out your salvation” refers to any and every aspect of the Christian life. The first thing to note is that this is your salvation. It does not say work at or work towards a salvation you may get.” The Philippians already possessed this salvation. They were to work out something which is already possessed. Paul is not thinking about losing one’s salvation. If a person is once saved, he can never be lost and this is backed up by the promise of Christ Himself (**John 10:27-29: My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.**). If a person can be saved and then lost, the word of Christ is meaningless; in fact it is a lie. Yet, Christ does not lie and His word is truth and can be trusted. NOTE: The spiritual truth is that what we Christians possess in principle, we should be working out in a practical way in life.

The ancient Roman scholar Strabo (64 B.C.), who wrote in Greek, has an account of the once famous silver mines in Spain, in which he refers to the working out of those mines, using the very same word as Paul uses here. Strabo meant, of course, that the Romans were operating, exploiting, and getting the utmost value out of what was already securely in their possession. Such, it seems clear is the Apostle's meaning of work out. We are to work out the precious silver of God from our silver mine of salvation.

- c. We should also note that the salvation spoken of here is not initial salvation from the penalty of sin or future salvation from the presence of sin but present salvation from the power of sin in one's daily life. The Greek actually says, "Constantly be working out your salvation." Salvation is not something which just happens when we receive Christ so that we receive the forgiveness of sins and get a ticket to heaven. Salvation is also taking place in the Christian now. Salvation is not a huge, initial surge followed by a lifelong continual coast or glide in this life until we get to heaven. The Holy Spirit works in the Christian and the Christian has the responsibility every day to live the Christian life. There is no place in the Christ-life to glide, coast or to shift into neutral. Paul was continually challenging the Philippians to progress, to move on and not to be content with their present state of salvation. Paul said to the Philippians in 1:9, "This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more." He also had this same high standard for himself, for he said in 3:12, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect (mature), but I press on ..." NOTE: In working out present salvation from the power of sin, the Christian is to be very active. He is not to be passive or dormant, so as to say, "I'll just let go and let God!" No! God has given the Christian the will to pursue, follow after, press on in the contest, the race, the fight of the Christian life. The Christian is in a battle on three fronts – the world, the flesh and the devil. Now there is a time to "let go and let god" but it is not in our struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil. We must learn to relax and "let go and Let God" in dealing with providential circumstances over which we have no control. We must relax and rest in God being passive as we watch God work it all out. Yet, when it comes to fighting sin and working out our salvation, we must be dynamically active. We must never be passive about sin.
- d. We should also note that this is a command. It is not optional that we work out our salvation. It is mandatory. This is our human responsibility. There is no place for pious passivity and inactivity in the Christian life. We do not shift our spiritual transmissions into neutral and wait for God to rev us up and put us into gear. We must pray, witness, love, give, care, bear-burdens, serve, fight sin and do it continually. NOTE: There is no such thing as a Christian who is not showing some evidence of progressive spiritual growth. Every person who professes Christ must show evidence of present salvation to some degree or that person is not truly saved. Working out present salvation is not only nice for the Christian to do but absolutely necessary. The Christian never obeys perfectly but he does obey. God is at work in him. Every Christian needs to hang a sign around his neck, "UNDER

CONSTRUCTION. TRINITY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AT WORK!" NOTE: We also must remember that Christians do not work to keep themselves saved but they work because they are saved.

- e. ***With fear and trembling***, -- God has placed upon every Christian the grave responsibility of working out his own salvation and each should do it with fear and trembling. This is not a slavish fear or the fear of losing one's salvation which is impossible, but the fear of failing God, who has given the Christian so great a salvation. It is also the fear of God's discipline when we are not obedient to Christ. NOTE: "Fear and trembling" does not connote a frightening fear which terrifies the soul. The words "fear and trembling" are used in I Corinthians 2:3 where Paul came preaching the gospel (***1 Cor. 2:3: I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling.***). Paul knew he could not win men to Christ in his own strength. He knew it had to be done in the power of God. He had no confidence in his own abilities and talents but great confidence in God to work through him. "Fear and trembling" is an attitude of total dependence upon God, a leaning upon God for results, an acknowledgment that God has to do what we cannot do. "Fear and trembling" then is not a frightening fear which terrorizes the soul but a fear of dependence, a fear of not wanting to do something in the flesh, a fear of not trusting wholly in God for results. Salvation is an impossible task if pursued in the flesh.

B. Salvation Is God Working In 2:13

1. ***For it is God who works in you to will and act*** -- Now Paul tells us why we can work out our salvation because God is working a mighty salvation inside every child of God. The "for" shows the relationship between the Christian working out (human responsibility) and God working in the Christian (divine sovereignty). The child of God can struggle to work out his salvation because he has the confidence God is working in him. Whatever hardships, demands or crisis the Christian faces in the outworking of salvation, he is assured that God is working a mighty salvation in him. It is God who gives the will (desire) and the ability to act and accomplish. God grants motivation, desire and the power to act but God does not act for the Christian. The Christian acts by his will which is stimulated by the power of the Holy Spirit. NOTE: Paul is not saying, "You do your part and God will do His. You do your thing and God will capitalize on it, making something of it." No, what Paul is saying is, "Because God is working in you, you can work out your salvation." In fact, if Christians are not working out salvation they should wonder whether God is working in them. NOTE: This verse teaches us that when God places any human responsibility on us, He also gives the divine power to carry it out. God gives power, strength, ability and motivation, and because of that truth, we Christians can obey. NOTE: There is a mystery between divine sovereignty and human responsibility which we will never put together. God is sovereignly working in every true child of God and every true child of God must work out salvation through faith and obedience. The Christian can only effectively work out salvation when he is walking in close fellowship with the God who is working in him. The key to effective Christian

living is a life lived in dependence upon God. NOTE: Let me give a word of caution not to blame your sin on God. It is quite easy for a Christian to rationalize, "I sinned but God is working in me; therefore, He could have caused me to avoid this sin in my life but because he didn't, I assume God wanted me to do it." God never wants us to sin. If we gossip, show up late, fail to keep commitments or whatever, "we dare not say, "Well, it happened so God wanted it to happen!" This happened only in the permissive will not the directive will of God. We can never use the sovereignty of God as a cop-out for our sin, laziness and indifference. God is never pleased with our sin. What Paul is teaching us in 2:12-13 is that every act of faith and obedience we do is ultimately from God and every act of disobedience is from our sin nature and we are held responsible for it. Yet, at no time does our sin take God by surprise or throw His plan into a tailspin.

2. ***According to his good pleasure.*** -- God is working in the Christian for His won good pleasure and He will receive the glory for every detail of our present salvation (***Phil. 1:6: Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***). Paul wants us to clearly understand that every spiritual act, every good work, every exercise of faith, every accomplishment of obedience we have ever done, God did for us. He gets the glory because He is a sovereign God.

*"Tis not that I did choose thee,  
For, Lord, that could not be;  
This heart would still refuse thee,  
Hadst thou not chosen me.  
Thou from the sin that stained me  
Hast cleansed and set me free;  
Of old thou didst ordain me,  
That I should live for thee."*

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Saved. What is Paul teaching us Christians? A life of dependence on Christ is a life of humility and those who are humble will have a spirit of unity in the local church. We are to work out our salvation by showing love, humility, tenderness, kindness and all the things which make for unity. Christians, we never plateau in our Christian lives. We are either going forward or backward, and Paul says, "Press on! Abound more and more in love! Stand firm in one spirit!" When these things show up, we know God is working in us His salvation.

- B. Unsaved. For you without Christ, I want to remind you that you are going to bow your knee to Christ as Lord one way or another. You are either going to bow to Him as your Lord-Savior in this world, acknowledging His right to rule in your life, or you will bow to Him as the Lord-Judge in the next world under the most horrible and excruciating circumstances. You will face an angry God in eternity if you do not bow your knee to Christ in this life. If you do bow to Christ now, you will meet a loving God in eternity with His arms stretched wide open to receive you into your eternal home.