

Humility's Vindication

Philippians 2:9-11

"No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit"
1 Cor. 12:3

Introduction: When there is rough air on a flight, pilots often will adjust their altitude, flying higher to rise above the turbulence and enable the trip to go on with our stomachs intact. In our life with Christ, we similarly have to adjust the altitude of our thinking, rising above present circumstances that are tough to stomach or become fearful, enabling us to see the horizon in the distance.

I love when I get questions about applying passages of Scripture we are studying. It assures me there are some that are taking God's Word seriously, seeking to implement in their lives. We talked last week about Jesus example and model of **sacrificial service**, how He *became* a servant, making Himself nothing, and obediently became a man and died on the cross. Since that example does not give us much wiggle room, the question was this, "*Does this kind of being a servant make us a doormat? To what degree do we let people treat us like a servant? Is that right or ok?*" Not only is it good wrestle with these, but these are exactly the right kinds of questions to ask. We struggle in this life with the counter-intuitive, counter-cultural, counter everything principles of humility, selflessness, service, sacrifice, and weakness because they go against what our flesh wants. We (I) struggle with seeing my life totally in Christ, so I fight for vindication, for justice, for acknowledgement and thanks now. This is why the Psalmist wrote, "***How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?***" (Psalm 13:1-2) There is a seeming incongruity in life, and we do not like the thought of being on the short end of the stick.

This final sentence of this section on **humility** and particularly that which was shown by Jesus is the ending of an early hymn, and it answers the questions of "**when**", "**how long**", and "**why**". We left last week looking at the drastic measures Jesus took to die in our place as One who was both Just and Justifier, the One who could satisfy the wrath of God *as* God, and yet substitute Himself for us as *man*. This morning we will look at the fact that Jesus did not stay in this place of condescension, but God exalted Him, raising Him up and giving Him a place and title as Lord over all. In that act of God in Christ, we have hope of our future, raising the altitude of our minds, seeing that through our sacrificial service there will be a day of exaltation.

Exaltation After Condescension (2:9a)

Therefore God highly exalted him

God exalted Christ

As we rewind the story of Jesus entering into humanity, taking on the form of a servant rather than a King or Power broker, we are struck not only with the **irony of it all** (creator of all becomes subservient to His creation, etc), but also the story screams for vindication. We wait for someone to set right what was so heinous, that men were beating, spitting on, and driving nails through the One who created it all. We waited for the Father to break through with angels or simply a Word to end what became *seemingly* the worst and most egregious death ever.

We love when there is vindication and even rightful retribution in stories. One of my favorite stories is the *Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas, where the innocent **Edmond Dantes** is framed by his

supposed friend **Fernand Mondego**, not only putting into the cruel Chateau d'If to die, but also taking his girl. The story is powerful since Dantes not only gets retribution against his conspirators by the training and treasure of Abbe Faria, but also finds peace, forgiveness, and love in the end. But the story would be terrible if Mondego got away with it, Dantes died in prison, and no one knew he was actually an innocent man.

But notice that this is exactly what happened in the life of Jesus, it just came *after He died*. Notice that the emphasis of verses 6-8 is on Christ Jesus, as He is the subject of the verbs and participles, as well as the focus in self-humbling and obedience. But in **verse 9** there is a change, where **God the Father intervenes decisively** and Christ becomes the passive recipient and object of God's own acts. There are **two specific ways God intervened, the first being He highly, or grandiose way**, exalted the Son. He did this in a few dramatic ways:

1) **God raised Christ from the dead** - Jesus was put on the cross by a definite plan and foreknowledge of God, was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, but **God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for Him to be held by it** (Acts 2:23-24, cf. 2:32; 4:10).

2) **He ascended back to the Father**- "*Jesus said to her, 'do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'*" (John 20:17), fulfilling what Jesus prayed for in John 17:5.

3) **Jesus sat at the right hand of the Father** - But Jesus did not simply return as He was before, He returned in an exalted way (Acts 2:33) seated at the right hand of the Father. "*...according to the working of his great might that He worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but the age to come.*" (Eph. 1:19b-21) In other words Jesus was raised in a **coronation**, a place of authority and rule. He was exalted by putting everything under His control. This is great news for us since we are raised with Christ *positionally* (Eph. 2:6-7). "**God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins**" (Acts 5:31)

4) **Jesus was given the position of interceding High Priest** - In being seated at the right hand of the Father, he now intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34), and lives to make intercession for us, "*for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens*" (Hebrews 7:25-26). Not only is Jesus a sympathetic High Priest since He lived our lives and experienced our pain and temptation, but He is an exalted One, able to intercede and **advocate with the Father**, since He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2). The Father did not leave His Son alone and did not allow Him to suffer without action, but rather **vindicated His Son and EXALTED Him after He obediently condescended**.

God exalts the humble

Now, this is a hymn of doctrine, but it is also given as an example to follow. The principle here is clear:

**Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted -
Matt. 23:12**

This principle is repeated often repeated by Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 14:11; 18:14) and Paul (see 1 Pet. 5:5-6) and James (James 4:10). Its clear that there is an opportunity for each person to

humble themselves or God will do it for them. One will result in God's exaltation, the other God's hand of justice. When we seek to push ourselves up, God will push us down. When we are willing to push ourselves down, He will lift us up. This principle goes along with so many seemingly incongruous truths in Scripture: its better to serve than be served, more joy in giving than receiving, we die to live, we lose to gain, and we are strongest when we are weak. This runs so counter to our normal thinking, yet implicationally is clear and pervasive.

Timing of Vindication

The problem with this truth and reality is the nagging sense of timing. The **when** of vindication, when all that we bear up under, all that we humble ourselves in, all that we give will be seen, known, and rewarded is most difficult, since it is clear that whatever we get in this life is a bonus because true vindication and exaltation will come after this life.

This reminds us of the life of **James Gribble**¹, a man who humbled himself, dying to himself, enduring hardships to the glory of God. James was born in 1883, and though he grew up in church and was a nice young man, did not give His life completely to Christ until he was 21. He immediately asked, "**Lord, what wilt you have me do?**" He became an ardent student of God's Word and had a growing passion to go into the world to preach the gospel where Christ had not been named. "**My longings take me into a country where no missionary has ever wished to go.**" His cry was "**Oh God, purge me, and send me and put me always into the very thickest of the fight.**" "**I long to go to the darkest and most densely populated region, to a place where not only has the gospel never been preached, but where no one else plans to preach it.**"

This passion led him to the Eastern coast of Africa, but he was not content to stay where the gospel had been, but instead pushed to the heart of the Continent, where he experienced loss in terms of physical ailments, loss of teammates (3 died along the way), the leaving of teammates, sickness of his wife who had to leave with his daughter, hunger, and waiting. He finally reached the destination where he established a missionary compound in a place called Bassai, and 20 months after arriving, his body gave into the brutal conditions and he passed away on **June 4, 1923**. Six months before he commented at the death of another teammate, "**God is not going to look us over for medals, degrees, or diplomas, but for scars.**"

After his death, Dr. McClain stated, "At first thought it would seem hard to understand why such a missionary life should be cut short with but a few short years of service. **We shall understand some day.** In the meantime, let us not forget that God reckons not according to time but according to accomplishment. In the few years of his missionary service, James Gribble accomplished more than many accomplish in a lifetime. It is not too much to say that perhaps chiefly through the faith and labor of the "**servant of the Lord**" French Equatorial Africa has been thrown open to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. This is his monument, of which he **need not be ashamed in that day.**"

How did God vindicate the humility of James Gribble? It was not seen in his lifetime, but get a glance of what God has done since (video).

Regardless if our efforts yield this type of fruit or not is up to God, but we are called to humble ourselves this way and let God exalt.

Lordship After Servanthood (2:9b-11)

¹ Taken from "Opening Oubangui-Chari", *James Gribble and the Pioneer Missionaries of Central Africa*

*And bestowed on him the **name** that is above every name, **so that at the name of Jesus** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of the Father.*

God's gift of a Name

The second way God intervened in the life of Jesus was that He **graciously gave** or **bestowed** on Him the **name that is above every name**. This was not the name **Jesus**, since He was given this name at his birth (Luke 1:31). Jesus is certainly a great name, but it is also common, since many have been named this or its complement, *Joshua*, and we do not bow down to people named Joshua! No, it is not the name "Jesus" that was given in combination with his exaltation, but rather the name **LORD**.

Notice that it was at the name *of Jesus* that every tongue confesses Jesus Christ is LORD. Also, in Isaiah 45:22-25, it prophesied that, "**Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.'** Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength." In other words, it was not the name of Jesus that would cause knees to bow, but the Sovereign Lord.

The name "Lord" given to Jesus carried with it authority and sovereignty. It is a **title** of majesty, authority, and honor, ranking above and ruling over all beings. In one sense there is nothing that can be added to Jesus. He cannot receive *more* in terms of Deity. But as the God/Man, He was given things, experienced things and received privileges that He did not have before. When Jesus became man in the incarnation, He took on that reality forever. He not only becomes Savior of the world, but Lord, which means He has absolute supremacy and the right to be obeyed as divine master.

Implications of the Name

This new name carried with it massive implications. The entirety of the universe is defined by their response to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is the point of Paul saying that every knee in **heaven, earth, and below** the earth will bow. Those in **heaven** include the angels, who worship before the throne of God and those redeemed who are in His presence (Heb. 1:6; 12:23; Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14). Those on **earth** include the redeemed and unredeemed, believer and unbeliever. Believers welcome and worship His Lordship (2 Thess. 1:10), but those who refuse to recognize Him as Lord or "obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:8-9) will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. In other words, those who refuse to believe will bow their knee in reverential judgment to Christ. Those **under the earth** are made up of fallen angels and those awaiting final judgment (Rev. 20:11-13), The point is that every being ever created will one day acknowledge the fact that Jesus is the rightful Lord over all, either with loving embrace or fearful judgment.

The fact that God made Jesus Lord has implications for us today. The mantra of the early church was simply "**Jesus Christ is Lord**". Since Jesus is both God and Man, and had to be to redeem man, means we must recognize Him as both in order to be saved. Here is what I mean:

- **It matters in terms of salvation** - "*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" Rom. 10:9 We do not "make Him Lord", since only God can do that. But when we believe in Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, we do not separate out the fact that He is our Savior but leave out the reality that He is Lord. He is simultaneously Savior and Master, Redeemer and Owner, Justifier and King.

This does not mean we will not struggle with sin or be perfect, but it means we renounce self-ownership or autonomy of our own life.

- **It keeps us away from deception** - "Not everyone who says 'Lord Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). Talk is cheap. It is not merely verbalizing the word "Lord", but yielding ourselves to Him. When, by faith, we recognize His Lordship, we will by implication seek to obey Him. Our obedience DOES NOT SAVE, but a saved person will obey.
- **It informs what we proclaim** - "*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but **Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake***" (2 Cor. 4:5). This is the message of the gospel: that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is both Savior and Lord, and that is the sweetest, most joyful news we've ever received! This is the message of the beginning of the church at Philippi, where the jailor received the message, "**believe in the LORD JESUS, and you will be saved, you and your household.**" This is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit alone (1 Cor. 12:3). Paul would not have recognized a gospel that preached Jesus as Savior but not Lord, or a message of grace that did not include yielding in obedience. We separate these out, and in so doing, can lose the whole gospel.

Our Hope of Vindication

Jesus glorified the Father, and the Father exalted the Son. They are not jealous of each other, do not compete for our affections, but seek to glorify each other. "Men therefore are not called to worship God through Jesus, but to worship Jesus *as **God.***" (John MacArthur) Jesus said it this way, "The Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself (John 13:31-32; 14:13; Rom. 9:5) So Jesus did all to the glory of the Father, and the Father made Him Lord in order to receive universal glory from all created beings.

So herein lies our vindication. Jesus is Lord. When we embrace that reality in humility today, yielding our life to Him, finding forgiveness from our Savior and security in His Lordship, we experience the you of salvation. However, the reality is also blatant: Jesus is Lord today, whether or not you recognize it. The end is clear. Everyone will not simply say it, they will believe it and respond, but for some/most, this will be in judgment, not glory and rest. So everyone here must answer the evaluative question: **Is Jesus the Lord of my life? Have I yielded myself completely, recognizing that He owns me?** This is not a secondary or marginal issue. This is the difference between salvation and judgment.

Have you gained some altitude this morning? Vindication will come when we die or Jesus returns, and any thing we get before then is a bonus, a gracious gift. If you are struggling with pain, either physical or situational, or grow weary from doing good in the name of Jesus, know that vindication and exaltation are coming, but perhaps not in this life. But it is coming when we are willing to humble ourselves and embrace the sweetest name that is above every name: **Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Discussion Questions:

- **Read 1 Peter 5:5-7, James 4:10, and Luke 18:9-14 - What do you observe regarding humility? What are the limits? Why is it so hard? Why do we have such a hard time with "deferred exaltation"?**

- **Do you think there is confusion over the fact that Jesus is both Savior and Lord? What are the implications if we separate those two realities. What happens to the gospel we proclaim and practice if we tell people Jesus is Savior only and not Lord?**
- **Read Matthew 7:21-23 - What is so hard about this passage? Doesn't it seem like those that are rejected actually said and did the right thing?**
- **What would our lives look like if we embraced humility and God's exaltation? What would change in our relationships with each other? What would change in our desire to share the gospel with others?**