

Opening Words:

People speak of Christ's death, resurrection, and *ascension* but they are missing the mark on that last point. It was not the physical act of "ascending" that was so important. Rather, it was the fact that he was exalted to the place of highest honor.

26 Phil Have the Attitude of Christ the Lord

Today, I get to share with you the greatest news in the world – Christ's death on the cross was not the end of the story. If it were, this world would be a different place. Christianity would not exist, and Jesus would be only a footnote in history. He would be another Jewish martyr among the thousands that the Romans nailed to wooden crosses. But it wasn't the end of the story! He rose from the grave, God highly exalted him, and gave him the name above all names!

Let's hear Paul again in his majestic words!

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What a passage! What an example! Even though Christ was God he did not hold onto his rights as God to use them for his self advantage. Instead, he showed the true heart of God by divesting himself of outward glory, taking the form of a servant and obeying the Father completely – even to death on a Roman cross.

But that Roman cross was not the end. The pagan empires of the world did not conquer. God conquered through Jesus Christ because three days after his death, the greatest news ever to reach the ears of anyone began to circulate – Jesus isn't dead anymore! He is alive! He has risen from the grave!

And so after explaining how Christ humbled himself all the way to death on a cross, Paul explained that God highly exalted him and gave him the name above all names.

Paul said, "For *this reason* also God highly exalted him." For what reason? For the reason of humbling himself more than any other person in history. It's unusual for a person to humble himself. Most people don't do that and in the culture of the ancient world humility was looked down upon as groveling or abject servitude. Humility was not a virtue to express but a vice to be

avoided. Yet here is *God* in the flesh turning the values of the world upside down by humbling himself all the way to death on a Roman cross.

The world acts in pride. John speaks in 1 John 2:16 about the boastful pride of life. That's the way of the world – be proud, boast about yourself, save face, pursue your goals even at the expense of others. But the true God, the God of creation, the God of Israel empties himself in service to others and humbles himself in obedience that brings him shame and a painful death. What a contrast! Paul writes these words so that we will follow this example. Remember, Paul writes because he is seeking to make an attitude adjustment in the church – have this attitude that was in Christ Jesus, the attitude of empty-ing oneself in service to others and humbling oneself even if it means pain.

This is a difficult path to follow. Again, humility does not come naturally and while we want to obey God, obeying even if it brings pain or death is not something natural for us. We naturally want to avoid pain and death. But Jesus blazed a trail that turns the values of the world upside down, and a trail that doesn't end in misery, pain, and death, for on the other side of his death is resurrection and on the other side of humility is honor.

This is why James 4:10 says, “humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up.” He lifted up Jesus! He will lift you up because he is the faithful God who cares for you just as he cared for Jesus. What would happen if every Christian and every church lived this way! You know what would happen! We would see more resurrection power in our lives and in our churches. And that's what we need – the resurrection power of Jesus.

Let's get back to the text. Paul says in verse 9 that God did two things for Jesus. First he highly exalted him and second he bestowed a name upon him.

Let's talk about his exaltation first. After Jesus was raised from the dead, he spent 40 days on earth with his disciples. He had certain objectives to accomplish. First, he had to gather them together as they were beginning to scatter. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus? They were on their way out of Jerusalem and headed home. But they hurried back to Jerusalem after their encounter with the risen Christ. One wonders how many others were starting to leave, but Jesus soon had them all back together and united around him.

Second, Jesus had a lot of explaining to do. He went through his entire ministry and reviewed it with them. There were many conversations when Jesus said, “Remember when I did this or said that? Here's why I did it and why I said it.” Now that he was raised from the dead, their confusion was cleared up.

Third, Jesus had to prepare them for the future. Now that they knew he was the Messiah and that he had inaugurated the promised kingdom of God he needed to point them to the future. What did the future hold? The future held the whole world before them. Jesus wanted them to take the kingdom message and mission that he had taken to Israel and spread it to every nation of the world.

But before he did this, there was one thing they needed – the power of the Holy Spirit, and they would not receive the power of the Holy Spirit until he had been highly exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God.

When the 40 days of training were over, Jesus commanded them to return to Jerusalem and to wait for the Spirit. Then, he ascended into heaven and was enthroned at the right hand of God, or, as Paul says, he was *highly exalted*.

This is one of the most under-taught messages in the church today – the exaltation of Jesus. People speak of his death, resurrection, and *ascension* but they are missing the mark on that last point. It was not the physical act of “ascending” that was so important. Rather, it was what happened to him once he finished ascending into heaven. What happened? He was enthroned at the right hand of God and given glory, honor, and praise. He was exalted to the place of highest honor.

Listen to these verses:

Ephesians 4:10 – He ascended far above all the heavens so that He might fill all things.

Acts 3:13 – The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified his servant Jesus.

Hebrews 2:9 – Because of the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honor

1 Peter 1:21 – God raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

And my favorite:

Revelation 5:11-12 - ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Can you imagine what that was like for Christ and His Father? Think what it was like for him to receive spitting and beating and whipping and nails and mocking. Think what it was like for the Father to see His beloved enduring it all when he was innocent and doing it for the ones who were guilty of these crimes. Christ had to endure the humility and the Father had to lead him on this path for it was the only path that could rescue rebellious and prideful men from their sin. But once that was finished, God’s hand was unleashed to shower the praise, the honor, and the glory of heaven and earth upon His Son. Thus, God highly exalted him.

Paul uses a word that has within it the word *hyper* from which we get our word *hyper*. We use *hyper* to refer to people who are overexcited, overstimulated, or fanatical. Sometimes we talk about people being “over the top” and we sometimes use the word “hyper” to talk about people who are over the top with their words or actions. Well, that comes from this Greek word that Paul uses and it means to exalt supremely. Paul used a word to try to express the magnitude, the supremacy, and the matchless glory of Jesus that the Father gave. God highly exalted him.

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This is one reason that we say frequently – it's not about us. It's not about me. It's not about any one man and if anyone thinks that or has thought that, they have missed the point. It is all about the glory and honor and praise of Jesus Christ – the one that God has supremely exalted. If God has done that for Jesus, then you and I should do that too.