

## "FROM THRONE TO THRONE BY WAY OF THE EARTH"

(Philippians 2:5-11)

*"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (King James translation).*

*"Keep on fostering the same disposition that Christ Jesus had. Though He was existing in the nature of God, He did not think His being on an equality with God a thing to be selfishly grasped, but He laid it aside, as He took on the nature of a slave and became like other men. Because He was recognized as a man, in reality as well as in outward form, He finally humiliated Himself in obedience so as to die, even to die on a cross. This is why God has highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus everyone should kneel, in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld, and everyone should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the praise of God the Father" (Williams translation).*

*Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal. That is why God has now lifted him so high, and has given him the name beyond all names, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, whether in Heaven or earth or under the earth. And that is why, in the end, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (J. B. Phillips paraphrase).*

*"Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first; yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death — death on a cross. Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow — in heaven, on earth, and in the depths — and every tongue confess, 'Jesus Christ is Lord', to the glory of God the Father" (New English Bible).*

*"Let this same attitude and purpose and (humble) mind be in you which was in*

***Christ Jesus. Let Him be your example in humility -- Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God (possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God), did not think this equality).with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained; But stripped Himself (of all privileges and rightful dignity) so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form He abased and humbled Himself (still further) and carried His obedience to the extreme death, even the death of the cross! Therefore (because He stooped so low), God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, That in (at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, And every tongue (frankly and openly) confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (The Amplified Bible).***

The study of the doctrine of the Person of Christ is technically called "Christology." This great doctrinal passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians is nothing less than a systematic Christology. In fact, it is so full of great truths about Jesus Christ that it is easy to turn it into a *mere study*, and the heart fails to rise in praise to Jesus as it should before such a parade of truths. Every serious Christian should use this passage as a vehicle for adoration, pausing regularly in the passage to worship and adore the Person who is presented here. In this passage, we read of such breathtaking truths as the Preexistence of Jesus, the Incarnation of Jesus, the Humiliation of Jesus, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Ascension of Jesus, and the Exaltation of Jesus. So it is indeed a systematic Christology! And the way these great truths are presented is even more remarkable. The passage contains a chain of mysterious and marvelous statements about Jesus, any one of which might make the subject for an entire volume of study. As a matter of fact, I have one volume of Christology in my personal library (A. B. Bruce's The Humiliation of Christ) which is essentially about one word (Jesus "stripped," or "emptied," Himself) in the text — and Bruce's large volume contains 447 pages! So the substance of eternity is contained in this paragraph of Scripture.

However, we must note the innocent setting in which such great truth is found. The church in Philippi had a small-scale problem of division in it. The tiny signs of a church split could be seen by a concerned observer. And Paul writes to nip this problem in the bud. In doing so, he incorporates into his statement the greatest paragraph on the Person of Christ ever written in human language. What is an *incidental* in the Philippian letter is the most *fundamental* of revelations about the Person of Christ. This is just like the Holy Spirit! How many times He hides *fundamental realities* in *incidental occurrences*, or *sublime realities* in *simple settings*. This passage spans the eternities; in fact, it could be called, "Jesus From Eternity to Eternity." It begins with Jesus in eternity past, follows the dizzying drop of His incarnation and humiliation, then attends Him in His Heavenly exaltation, which will continue forever. This passage will only be understood by the personal combination of an *anointed mind* and an *adoring heart*. Christ's redeeming activity has two great movements in it. First is His *human emptying* and second is His *heavenly exaltation*. Each of these two movements must be examined carefully.

## I. HIS HUMAN EMPTYING

The first large movement in the text concerns the human emptying of Christ. We might study this humiliation of Jesus under four divisions which are revealed in verses six through eight. Each division contains a staggering truth about the condescension of Jesus.

Movement Number One: *He who was totally God also became truly man.* "Christ Jesus...being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." "Being in the form of God, ... He was made in the likeness of men." Study carefully the various translations at the beginning of this study (and any more you may have). Compare the separate phrases in the different translations. We will need every possible shade of meaning in every word and phrase to see into these great truths. The Phillips paraphrase says that "Jesus had always been God by nature." The New English Bible says that "the divine nature was His from the first." The Williams paraphrase says, "He was existing in the nature of God." The Amplified Bible translates it: He was "essentially one with God, and in the form of God (possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God)."

At the very doorway of this great passage, we are confronted with the great *fact* of the preexistence of Jesus Christ. *Jesus is a uniquely eternal Person!* His life did not begin when He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, or when He was born in Bethlehem. Oh, no! The word "being," or literally, "existing," clearly indicates that our Lord had a previous existence before Bethlehem. He Himself preceded and predated all the events of His own earthly life! The word used here for "being" occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament and every time it has reference to prior existence. Prior to His birth at Bethlehem, Jesus the Son of God had existed for all eternity with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus, with the Father and the Spirit, is everlastingly the living one.

Jesus Himself claimed preexistence. He often proclaimed His eternal existence to those around Him. In a classic passage in John six, He said that He "came down from heaven," and He indicates that He will return to where He was before. In another classic passage, He said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). The Jews understood His claim, because the text tells us that they immediately picked up stones with the intention of killing Jesus, for they recognized that He was implicitly identifying Himself as God, and they thought He was guilty of the "blasphemy" of making Himself equal with God. In John 17, the chapter which records the great High Priestly prayer of Jesus, verses five and seventeen refer directly to the eternal preexistence of Jesus. He asks the Father for the very glory which He had possessed with the Father "before the world was."

Jesus' claim of preexistence agrees perfectly with all of the writers of the New

Testament.

Consider briefly the testimony of the Apostle John. In John 1:1-2, he used a verb ("was") which indicates that Jesus *always was*, and that there was never a time when He was not. Consider, too, the testimony of the Apostle Paul. In II Corinthians 8:9, he wrote, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Jesus could only have been "rich" *in Heaven before coming to the earth and becoming a man*. Therefore, He existed prior to coming to this world. Furthermore, we can see the *nature* of Christ's incarnation in this verse. When a rich man becomes poor, his mode of existence has changed, but not his nature as a human being. When Jesus became "poor" in His incarnation, His mode of existence changed, but not His nature as God. Then, in Colossians 1:17, Paul said, "He (Jesus) is before all things, and by Him all things consist." The preposition that is used denotes that which is prior in time to all other things. All created things had a point of origin, but Christ did not. In fact, the Bible tells us that "all things were created by Him (Jesus)." The One through whom everything was called into existence necessarily existed before all else was created. Just as the artist existed before the portrait that he painted, and the architect existed before the building that he designed, so God the Son existed before the universe that He brought into being. The writers of the New Testament unanimously agree about the preincarnate existence and glory of Jesus Christ.

But this passage tells us much more. It not only reveals the *fact* of His preexistence; it also points out the *form* of it. "Christ Jesus, existing in the *form of God*." "Existing in the nature of God," the Williams translation says. "Being essentially one with God (possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God)," the Amplified Bible puts it. "He had always been God by nature," the Phillips paraphrase translates it. The word translated "form" in the King James translation does not refer to a physical or outward form or shape. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and does not innately possess outward form or shape. The word "form" in our text means "essence" or "reality." Jesus was throughout eternity past in the "essence" or "reality" or "nature" of God. To say that Jesus was "existing in the nature of God" is the highest possible claim that He is *totally God*, or as the old creed says, "He is very God of very God." Jesus is Himself absolute Deity, a co-participant with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in that Divine essence which constitutes God, God. So Jesus Christ is perfectly identified here with the being, nature, and personality of God — *Himself being God!*

While the great astronomer, Johan Kepler, was observing the stars one night, he explained his activity with these words: "I am thinking God's first thoughts after Him." But the thoughts expressed in our text predate the stars! Here, we are thinking over again the first thoughts of God. Here the vastness of eternity unfolds before us.

Now we come to the "dizzying drop" which I referred to earlier. He who was totally God *became truly man*. Again, Phillips translates it, "He who had always been God by nature, did not cling to His rights as God's equal." "He did not snatch at his rights," another translation says. We are great "snatchers" of rights and advantages — just look at the daily newspapers! "He did not regard His equality with God a thing to be seized upon." The word means to "clutch," or "cling," or "hoard." Jesus was so

absolutely sure of His Godhood — of His total equality with God *as* God -- that He did not have to hoard it. He could freely give up His rights, advantages, and powers, knowing that no loss could permanently threaten Him.

Here was the contest of redemption. The first Adam made a frantic attempt to seize equality with God (Genesis 3:5); but Jesus, the last Adam, being sure of Godhood, voluntarily gave up His Divine rights and advantages.

"And He was made in the likeness of men." Let these words reach the deep of your person: *God became man!* The word "likeness" means *similarity but with a difference*. Jesus became a man, similar to each of us — but with a difference! Though He was genuinely human, He was unique among humans in that He was without sin. The New Testament writers use an impressive array of words and phrases to present the incarnation ("in-fleshment") of God in Christ. John 1:14 says that He "became flesh." Galatians 4:4 says that he was "born of a woman." Romans 1:3 says that "He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." I Timothy 3:16 declares that "God was manifested in the flesh." Hebrews 2:14 indicates that "He became a partaker of flesh and blood." And His time on earth is referred to as "the days of His flesh" (Hebrews 5:7).

We must never allow the incarnation of Christ to fade in our minds or hearts. "Jesus" is the human name of God! And we must not confuse this truth. The incarnation is not the *deifying of man*; it is the *humanizing of God*. It is not man rising into Godhood; it is God condescending into manhood. In His incarnation, He was as perfectly united with man as He had always been -- and remained -- perfectly united with God. This incredible fact brings many previously impossible things into the human situation. For example, when God became man in the incarnation of Christ, for the first time in His eternal existence, God's nature had substance. And for the first time in His eternal existence, *God now had a nature that was capable of dying!* So the stage is now set for a transaction of eternal redemption to be made. God is on earth as a man, with a mortal human nature — something awfully big is in the making! The vital ingredients of a coming Calvary are now in place.

C. S. Lewis, the British scholar and Christian, wrote these helpful words:

"Did you ever think, when you were a child, what fun it would be if your toys could come to life? Well, suppose you could really have brought them to life. Imagine turning a tin soldier into a real little man. It would involve turning the tin into flesh. And suppose the tin soldier did not like it. He is not interested in flesh; all he sees is that the tin is being spoilt. He thinks you are killing him. He will do everything he can to prevent you. He will not be made into a man if he can help it. What you would have done about that tin soldier I do not know. But what God did about us was this. The Second Person in God, the Son, became human Himself; was born into the world as an actual man — a real man of a particular height, with hair of a particular color, speaking a particular language, weighing so many pounds. The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but a babe, and before that a fetus inside a woman's body. If you want to

get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a snail or a crab."

Think of it! The great *Creator* has become a *creature* in His own *creation* — in order to *recreate* both the sin-tainted creation and the sin-infected creature, man. The glorious Son of God voluntarily forsook the splendor of His pre-existent state in Heaven and became as genuinely human as we ourselves are — *and all for our sake*.

Some years ago, I read with great pleasure Ernest Gordon's partial autobiography entitled Miracle On the River Kwai. Gordon was a British Highland soldier captured by the Japanese during World War II. He was kept in a POW camp in a Burmese jungle. The prisoners of war were forced to build a railroad for the Japanese in the jungle. Gordon nearly starved along with the other prisoners, and became the victim of numerous tropical diseases. He was not a Christian when he was placed in the death house and left to die. However, a fellow prisoner took Gordon out, shared his meager food rations with him, and nursed him back to health. This friend also introduced Gordon to Christ. The story is the remarkable story of faith's triumph over the many obstacles that stood against it, or the story of *Christ's triumph* among His helpless people. Years later, when Ernest Gordon was chaplain at Princeton University, he wrote that Jesus Christ "came into our Death House, to lead us out and deliver us to full spiritual health." But before He could come "into our Death House," He first had to become a man. When Jesus came to the earth, He might have said, "I *am* what I *was* — **God**. I was *not* what I *am* — **man**. I *am* now both — **God and man**." The Son of God became also the Son of Man. He who was totally God became truly man.

Movement Number Two: *He who was the Greatest Somebody in the universe became the least nobody in the universe*. The King James Version explains it by saying, "He made Himself of no reputation," and "He humbled Himself." The Amplified Bible says, "He stripped Himself (of all privileges and rightful dignity)." The Williams translation says, "He laid it aside," and "He humiliated Himself." The New English Bible says, "He made Himself nothing." Jesus Himself said that He was "set at nought" (Mark 9:12). All of these statements are attempts to explain one of the biggest words in the Bible. The root word is "kenosis," and refers to the self-emptying of Jesus in coming to the earth. But what did Jesus strip from Himself, or empty Himself of, in coming to the earth? P. T. Forsyth used an extraordinary term for it; he called it Christ's "self-disglorification." What did Jesus strip Himself of in Heaven before coming to this earth? This is a delicate and difficult question, and requires suitable thought and effort to answer.

John Milton, one of the greatest of Christian poets, wrote:

"That glorious Form, that Light insufferable  
He laid aside: and here with us to be,  
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay."

But just exactly what did Jesus "lay aside" in Heaven? Did He lay aside His

Godhood, His Deity, His *Divine Nature*? Certainly not! Indeed, He *could not* lay aside His very "nature." He was just as much God when He walked the streets of Nazareth as when He trod the courts of Heaven. Did He strip Himself of His *sinlessness*? Certainly not! He was just as surely sinless and perfectly pure on earth as He had always been from eternity. He was as sinless and holy while on earth as a man as He had been when He was only God and in Heaven. He stripped Himself of the outward expression of His Deity, of the outward manifestation of His Heavenly glory. Be very careful here. Jesus stripped Himself only of the *expression* of His Deity; He did not give up the *possession* of His Deity. He was always fully God, even when His Godhood was veiled in human flesh. He stripped Himself of the independent use of His Divine rights and powers. He laid aside the glory, privileges and majesty that had always been His.

Notice the emphasis in all of these phrases on the *voluntary nature* of Christ's actions. He was coerced only by His love for us. "*He made Himself* of no reputation." "*He took upon Him* the form of a servant." "*He humbled Himself.*" "*He stripped Himself.*" "*He became* obedient unto death."

There is an incredible illustration of all of the movements of this text in the great foot-washing episode in John thirteen. In that story, Jesus did seven things, and those seven things reveal "Jesus From Eternity to Eternity." Each of them has an exact counterpart in our text. Read John 13: 1-13, and note the seven actions of Jesus: (1) He stood up; (2) He put something off; (3) He put something on; (4) He poured something out; (5) He washed His followers with that which He poured out — and "wiped them with the towel," suggesting a finished work; (6) He returned to His original position and reassumed His original garments; and (7) He sat down again. Can anyone miss that sequence? This is the eternal history of Jesus. One awful but glorious day in Heaven, *He stood up — and prepared to go to Bethlehem and Calvary...*

Many people will remember the English Duke of Windsor as the man who was at one time the King of England, but who abdicated his throne and stripped himself of the royal vesture of his rightful office in order to marry Wallace Simpson, the woman he loved. Even so, Jesus abandoned the eternal throne of Heaven that was His by right, in order to fully identify Himself with you and me, whom He loved. For a moment, return to the human illustration I have just shared, and put yourself "into the shoes" of the lady in the story. When Mrs. Simpson was on the point of marrying the King of England, the newspapers at home and abroad had some very unkind things to say about her. They told the world how she had already wrecked two marriages. They indicated that she would marry the King whether she loved him or not, for his position and his wealth. All in all, they made her out a rather cheap woman. We will probably never know just what her reactions were to all this. But if she was a sensitive woman, she must have agonized over the reactions. But even if she felt unspeakably unworthy, she could have said something like this: "The King of the greatest empire on earth has loved me enough to uncrown himself for me." Christian, *the King of Heaven has loved you enough to uncrown Himself for you.* What should your response be, personally and practically?

But there is still more that must be said before we leave this movement. Not only

did He leave the throne and lay aside His glory; it wasn't even known by most people where He walked that He had ever *occupied a throne* or had *possessed any glory*. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but *the world knew Him not*" (John 1:10). He Himself once said, "There is one among you whom ye know not." He not only was God *incarnate*; He was also God *incognito*.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., used to walk around Rockefeller Center when the skyscraper was in the process of construction. He would stand on the sidewalk and watch the advancing construction for a few minutes every day. One day, a watchman accosted him. "Move along, buddy," he growled. "You can't stand loafing here." He quietly withdrew, unrecognized. Jesus often told people whom He helped to "tell no one." Most people would have accelerated their publicity machine into high gear, but Jesus was content to be an unknown.

Suppose that a general of the United States Army walked into the soldiers' common barracks. The moment he enters, the men snap to attention and salute, because they recognize the uniform and the insignia of his rank. They continue at attention until he says, "At ease." If he sits down to talk with them, their restraint is obvious. He is a general, they are enlisted men, and they are conscious of the difference in rank and position. However, if he should enter the barracks without the emblems of his rank and *incognito*, there would be quite a different atmosphere. The men would take him to be one of themselves, would talk more freely with him, and might be flippantly familiar with him. Even so, when Jesus "made Himself of no reputation," *He merely took off His insignia. His rank had not changed, though the outward signs of it were somewhat hidden.* The people who were near Him received Him as a man. Furthermore, He put Himself at the mercy of friends and enemies alike.

I spent five years of my life in Fort Worth, Texas, where I attended seminary. The name of Dutch Meyer was a familiar name in the Fort Worth area. Dutch Meyer was the longtime, legendary, revered former Texas Christian University football coach. The Daniel-Meyer Coliseum on the TCU campus was named for him. One day some years ago an older gentleman dressed in old, rumpled clothes came into the coliseum offices with an armload of newspapers. He placed the papers on the floor, said, "Here are some newspapers," and started toward the door. The secretary stopped him. When she questioned him he said that he had read in the newspaper that they were collecting used newspapers and that he had brought some in. The secretary told him to remove the papers; he couldn't leave them there. But this idea did not appeal to the old gentleman. When the young TCU athletic director came out to see the cause of the disturbance, he, too, suggested that the man remove the papers. When he refused, they asked him to leave the office. He refused to do that, too. Then the athletic director went to the phone and called campus security requesting that this man be removed from the office. When the veteran campus security officer arrived and was told the situation, he said to the younger office staff, "I beg you to reconsider your request. This man is Dutch Meyer. You're about to have him thrown out of his own building!" "Jesus was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own (world), and His own (people) received Him not." A blind and arrogant world *threw the Son of*



*God out of His own building*, and He hardly defended or explained Himself! He was far greater than a five-star general in Heaven, but He came to earth without His insignia showing. The Greatest Somebody in the universe became the least nobody in the universe — voluntarily.

Movement Number Three: *He who was Master of all became the slave of all*. "He took upon Him the form of a servant" (verse 7). "I am among you as he who serves," Jesus said. He who was eternally and rightfully accustomed to *giving orders* voluntarily placed himself in the subordinate position of *taking orders*. The word "form" in verse seven is the same word that is used in verse six. The same Jesus that was in His very nature and essence, *God*, took on the nature and essence of a slave. He submitted Himself to authentic servanthood, always considering others before Himself (verse 4). In fact, He declared that this was one of the primary reasons for His coming: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Remember that a slave has no rights of his own, no will of his own, no property of his own, and no schedule of his own. During his teenage years, He served as an apprentice carpenter to his foster father, Joseph. He is now making yokes for cattle, but before He came, *He was making worlds*. It is simply part of the "incarnational package" that the Lord of the universe became a lowly servant among men.

Movement Number Four: ***He who was Life DIED!*** The text says that Jesus "emptied Himself," and this speaks of His incarnation. Then it says that He "humbled Himself," and this speaks of His crucifixion. So His voluntary condescension was in two successive stages: first, *to* the earth, and then *on* the earth. The first stage was a humiliation *to* humanity, and the second was a humiliation *in* humanity. He "became obedient unto death — even the death of the Cross!" "He went even to the extent of dying, and the death that He died was the death of a common criminal" (Phillips) "He carried His obedience to the extreme death, even the death of the cross" (Amplified). Note carefully the giant word, "obedience," and remember that Jesus' obedience to His Father was total and perfect. "I do always those things that please Him," He declared. "One man's disobedience" had to be undone "by the obedience of One" (Romans 5:19). Adam's *obedience* would have been unto *life*, but instead, he *disobeyed* — *unto death*. So Jesus, the last Adam, must now obey unto *death*, *that His obedience unto death might bring life unto us, the disobedient ones*. ***What a Gospel!***

During some turbulent days in ancient Rome, a slave heard that his master's name was on the death list. He quickly put on his master's cloak and quietly awaited the arrival of the political killers. When they found the slave dressed in his master's clothing, they killed him, supposing him to be the master. In the same manner, the Master of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, took on Himself the cloak of our humanity — and died. The death He endured was the death we deserved.

The kind of death Jesus died — the death of the cross — was the very symbol of disgrace, agony, and shame. And the reality was far, far worse than the mere symbol! When Paul said, "*even* the death of the cross," you can feel Paul recoiling from this terrible thought. You see, the mere death of Christ was not enough. If His death was all

that was called for, then He could have been killed by Herod while yet in His infancy and the world would have been saved. The death of Jesus acquires its redemptive quality from two things: (1) The life of perfect obedience which lay behind it, and (2) The kind of death it was -- "even the death *of the cross*." It is amazing that Jesus *could* die. It is more amazing that He *would* die. It is more amazing yet that He *should* die. It is still more amazing that He *did* die. But the most amazing thing of all is that He died "*even the death of the cross!*" As if crucifixion were not terrible enough in itself, to compound both the horror and the amazement, the law of Moses attached a curse to anyone who suffered this mode of death (Deuteronomy 21:23). But again, wonder of wonders, our loving Father turned this around to make a *Gospel* out of it. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Everything the world and the devil means to be evil to us, God turns it into good! Hallelujah! And Paul uses all of this to appeal for our humility and unity!

"When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss, *And pour contempt on all my pride.*"

Gladys Aylward, the missionary to China, about whose life the Hollywood film, "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness," was made, said in an address to Christian college students, "Are you thinking of going to the mission field for thrilling and romantic experiences? If so, don't come! They aren't there. Instead, it is following Jesus, step by step, from the graveyard of selfish ambitions into the life of God." But this is not only the standard for a missionary. It is the daily standard for every Christian. The Christian life is *following Jesus, step by step, from the graveyard of selfish ambitions into the life of God.*

## II. HIS HEAVENLY EXALTATION

The second large movement in the text concerns the heavenly exaltation of Christ *after* His human emptying and humiliation. This passage is equally as great in pointing out the exaltation of Jesus as it is in pointing out the humiliation of Jesus. Note the dimensions of His exaltation.

First, it is a *deserved* exaltation. This is indicated by the word, "wherefore." The exaltation of Christ follows reasonably and inevitably on the heels of His humiliation. The masculine pronoun "him" is used twice in verse nine, and the human name, "Jesus" is used in verse ten. So the person who is exalted in verses nine through eleven is the same person who "emptied Himself" and "humbled Himself" in the preceding verses. In the Greek text, the word "Himself" in all these phrases comes before the verb, emphasizing that the self-emptying was of Christ's own free will. It was a totally voluntary act. At the beginning of the redeeming process *He stripped Himself* in Heaven of the insignia of royalty, glory, majesty, and honor, and came into humanity by a miraculous supernatural act. At the end of the redeeming process *He humbled Himself* and *gave Himself up* to die.

Give much thought to these next sentences. It was not because of His essential glory as the Eternal Christ that He was recrowned with supernal glory. No! The

exaltation declared in Philippians 2:9-11 is given in exact proportion to His voluntary humiliation. How deep was His humiliation? You may answer that question by measuring the height of His exaltation. How high is His exaltation? You may answer that question by placing a measuring line alongside His humiliation as presented in Philippians 2:6-8. His ascent to the throne of glory was only His descent *reversed*. His "up-rising" in verses nine through eleven is an outcome of His "down-stooping" and "down-stepping" in verses six through eight. Considering His Divine Personhood, any exaltation that followed these acts of self-giving was certainly a deserved exaltation. The exaltation corresponds to the humiliation. The exaltation was not arbitrary, but reasonable. The outcome did not depend on the thoughtless whim of a Divine dictator, but on the reasonable heart of a Heavenly Father. The reasons for His exaltation may be seen by studying the Epistles of the New Testament. For example, in Hebrews, it is His Personal *superiority* that merits His exaltation. In Colossians, it is His Personal *supremacy* in creation (both the old material creation, and the new spiritual creation, the Church) that merits His exaltation. In our text in Philippians, it is His Personal *sufficiency* in self-emptying and redemption that merits His exaltation. So His exaltation is fully deserved.

Second, His exaltation was a *Divine* exaltation. "Wherefore *God* hath also highly exalted Him." Do you see the contrast: Jesus humbled *Himself*, but *God* exalted Him. This is a law in the realm of grace: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Note that the initiative in this exaltation belongs solely and exclusively to God. It is a rule that *God initiates only what He appreciates*. God acts within the limits of His own approval. God sets the standard for His own actions. No other cause except the pleasure of God would ever draw the approval of God. God exalted Jesus because it was perfectly suitable to His nature to do so.

Third, it was a *defined* exaltation. We are left in no doubt about the degree or kind of this exaltation. "God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." The verb, "highly exalted," is used only in this one instance, and is here applied only to Jesus. It literally means that "God has *super*-exalted Him," or that God has elevated Him in a transcendently glorious manner. The word that is used indicates double-barreled exaltation. It would help us to appreciate this statement if we brought in a great supportive passage from Paul's exalted letter to the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:19-23, where Paul speaks of "the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*" Furthermore, God has "given Him a name which is above every name." Remember that this bestowal follows His self-emptying. In His humiliation, He was given the name "Jesus," so it is likely that the name given Him in His exaltation is the name, "Lord."

Fourth, it is a *demanding* exaltation. "At the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." One day there is going to take place a universal acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over all creation and over every created intelligence. There will be no exemption, no exception, and no exclusion. That day will be marked by a conscious reversal of man's previous judgment about Jesus. When he was on earth, man said, "He is worthy of death, even the death of the Cross." But now, *God* speaks, and tells us the total, unconditional, undeniable and undebatable truth about Jesus. How shocking that day will be to human beings who tragically over-estimated their ability to evaluate such a Person as Jesus!

One of Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales tells of an emperor who wanted to see how his people behaved in his absence. So he dressed as a beggar and visited the city. The people promptly threw him out! A few days later, when he came in triumph in his golden carriage, everybody bowed low as it passed. However, when they looked into the carriage to see the emperor, they were astonished to see *the face of the very beggar they had treated so badly. While they thought he was a beggar, and treated him as such, he was actually **the Emperor of the Realm!***

Two thousand years ago, the Emperor of the Realm disrobed Himself in His throne room of His royal robes and dressed Himself in the lowly garb of our frail and poor humanity. He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. Man's rejection of Him was shocking, and it has continued for two thousand years. He has been "despised and rejected of men" for a long, long time now. They have glibly and impudently rejected Him without investigation or consideration, without intelligence or integrity, declaring Him to be a "mere man," or merely a "good man," one who has no claim on their lives or their allegiance. But like the citizens in the fairy story, *they will see and acknowledge that the "beggar" is in fact **the Emperor of the Realm.*** They will recognize and declare with tongue and knee that the man of Galilee is the King of Kings and Lords of Lords.

This acknowledgment of Jesus will involve universal *worship*. "Every knee will bow" before Christ. *Every* knee — the proud Pharisee's knee, the arrogant rebel's knee, the atheist's knee, the cynic's knee, the stubborn and unbent knee, *my knee and yours* — shall bow before Christ. And it will involve universal *witness*. "And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Every* tongue — the idler's tongue, the pagan's tongue, the heathen's tongue, the unbeliever's tongue, the gossiping tongue, the boasting tongue, the cursing tongue, the criticizing tongue, the blaspheming tongue, etc. — these will suddenly be transformed into *confessing* tongues! The sinner's tongue that always *disagreed* with God when the subject was Jesus, will now *totally agree* with God's full assessment of His Son. And the saint's tongue, which has already humbly agreed with God about Jesus in order to be saved (Romans 10:9-10), will now *happily agree with God about Jesus* in this great universal acknowledgment of His Lordship.

Let these words come home to your heart, dear Christian. Let them bring both conviction and invitation to you. How bent is your knee to Christ — on His terms —

today? How loose is your tongue in confessing Him among men? Is the bending of your knee merely a polite and convenient courtesy? Is the use of your tongue for Him a mere stammer instead of a clear and uncompromising statement? Before you answer too quickly, be sure that you *reexamine His terms* as they are stated in Philippians 2:3-4.

### III. HIS HOLY EXAMPLE

Before we leave this glorious text, let's remind ourselves of the *setting*, or the *context*, of this passage. We must remember the background of these great words. The passage is used to encourage us to follow the holy example of Jesus in emptying Himself. Read verses three and four again. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Verses three and four provide the subject, and verses five through eleven should give us our *education*. What is the highest ideal of human character? Is it (as the world thinks) human power, clout, and macho muscle? Is it intellectual prowess, such as that of the scientist or philosopher? Is it wealth and riches? "I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood" (Psalm 73:17). The answer is to be found in the heart of God. It is reflected in His Word in such passages as our text.

Here is Heaven's supreme conception of character. This is what eternity enthrones. The nature that stoops, cares, loves, forgives, and saves *others*; this is the ideal type. In order to see this, we must attend the School of Calvary and see Jesus modeling the ultimate lesson. Our education as Christians begins and ends at Calvary. What do we learn at the cross? At the cross, we receive the explanation for Jesus' self-emptying. You see, it is tragically easy to think that humility is the end in itself. We think, "If I can just achieve and maintain humility, I would reach the ultimate goal of being a Christian." But read the text carefully. "Jesus humbled Himself." For what purpose? To become obedient. To what end? "Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And for what purpose did He die that death? *To save others!* The object of all of His redeeming activity was *others*. The ideal Christian character is reached when a Christian lives for *others* and their highest welfare — on Christ's terms.

Then, we find the Supreme *Example* of this ultimate lesson in the Person and history of Jesus. These verses comprise a fabulous Christology, but they are presented to give an example of how important it is to live and die for others. While everybody else is living for "vainglory" (verse 3), Jesus laid aside *true* glory, the glory He had had with the Father "before the world was." *To save others!* If we have our wits about us at all, we will see that we are only truly Christian when we humble ourselves and pour out our lives to save and build others — like Jesus did. But now another problem arises. How can we be expected to imitate *His act* of self-renunciation and ministry to others. Who are *we*? What glory do we have to lay aside? None at all, nothing but empty vain-glory, only a thing of sin and shame. Yet, *each of us may "have the same mind;" each of us may let the mind of Christ be in us, that mind which led Him to leave "His own things" for the sake of "the things of others."*

Take a final look at Jesus. While He was revealing the ultimate extreme of self-giving, His enemies unwittingly gave Him the greatest compliment ever paid Him. They said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Mark 15:31; Matthew 27:42). They were better theologians than they knew. Their words reveal the master principle of human redemption and the master lesson of Christian discipleship. If I am to be used of God, I cannot save myself. "He who would save His life shall lose it, but whoso would lose His life for My sake and the Gospel's, shall save it." If Christ had saved Himself from the Cross, He could not have saved us from sin. To save us, Himself He could not save.

"He saved others." He didn't save money, He didn't save His own skin, He saved *others*. This is a message that should produce *delight* in the hearts of *sinners*. All sinners need to be saved, and if Jesus saved others, then why shouldn't He save me? This is a message that should stimulate *dedication* in the hearts of *saints*. I should be doing the same thing that Jesus did, giving my life for the sake of others. But tragically, this is a message that will produce final *despair* in the hearts of *some*. He save others, but He didn't save me! If His enemies had only realized it, even as they were sarcastically admitting that He had saved others, His very dying at that moment was to save *them!* But those hard-hearted men, by their own use of that word, "*others*," placed themselves outside the reach of His saving grace. When they said, "He saved *others*," they were necessarily saying, "He has not saved us." By that word, "*others*," they excluded themselves. And it is still true that the only ones who are excluded from His salvation are the ones who are self-excluded. The only ones who *cannot* be saved are those who *will* not be saved.

**"Others, Lord, yes, others, Let this my motto be,  
And as I live for others, Let me live for Thee."**

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