

Philippians 2:5-11

The Enabling Power of Christ's Exaltation

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him...v. 9

Right actions and right words and right motives all spring from right thinking. And right thinking comes through having the mind of Christ. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus* – v. 5. This exhortation calls on us to think the way Christ thought and to have the attitude that Christ himself possessed. It further calls on us to serve the way Christ served and to adopt the same outlook on life and on death that Christ himself demonstrated. We need the mind of Christ when it comes to viewing the things of this world. We need the mind of Christ to govern how we live and how we serve God and how we're to serve others while we live in this world.

We know all too well that this world is filled with strife and the pursuit of vainglory. And we see this on every level. What are we seeing in the news these days about the Middle East? We're seeing strife and we're seeing peoples and nations that don't have a thought for the well being of others but are only focused on themselves. And what exists on an international level throughout the world is also found on a local level – indeed it's found on a personal and individual level. So James writes in Jas 4:1 *From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? [come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members?* Doesn't that text provide the perfect explanation for why there's war in the world?

And sadly we have to acknowledge that what's found in the world is too often found in the church. It was true in Christ's day – it was true in Paul's day – it was true in the early church and we know that it's true in our day. There are factions between churches and between denominations and between high profile preachers and evangelists. There are rivalries which lead to strife and self promotion. In the words of James 3:10 we do well to say *My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*

And if these things ought not so to be then we need a power greater than our own to overcome the sinful propensities of the flesh. Indeed we need the mind of Christ to empower us.

I pointed out in our last study that vv. 6-11 are not given to us simply to help us form our creed. They do help us with that. We may draw from these verses the proof texts we need for such doctrines as the deity of Christ and the incarnation of Christ and perfect obedience of Christ and the atoning death of Christ as well as his exaltation and glorious triumph in the end.

But Paul sets before us these sublime truths with a very practical aim in view. He wants the Philippians to have the mind of Christ. If the Christian's life will be governed by the mind of Christ then that Christian will think right with regard to himself and he'll think right regarding others. He won't simply look to the things that concern himself but he'll also look on the things of others. He'll do this because of his esteem for others and because

his motives will be pure – untainted by strife or the pursuit of vainglory. Oh how we need the mind of Christ then. And you may recall that I said last week that a good way to approach vv. 6-11 is to ask yourself what each statement about Christ contributes to having the mind of Christ.

He thought it not robbery to be equal with God – that statement has relevance for you having the mind of Christ. *He made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant* – that statement has bearing on you having the mind of Christ. And you do well to make your way through each of these statements and contemplate the practical value of each phrase by thinking in terms of how each statement contributes to your having the mind of Christ.

We focused last week on the statements that describe Christ’s humiliation for us – vv. 6-8. I’m sure you’ve noticed how vv. 6-11 divide up into two sections – vv. 6-8 call our attention to the humiliation of Christ; vv. 9-11 call our attention to the exaltation of Christ. We didn’t really think last week on vv. 9-11 so I want to focus on them this morning and just as we saw how the mind of Christ empowers us to think right about ourselves and to humbly serve others, I want to focus this morning on the impact that the exaltation of Christ should have on our thinking and actions.

We’ll also see in the course of our study that there’s a close connection between the humiliation of Christ and the exaltation of Christ. They both work together and we must think of their connection to each other in order to have the mind of Christ. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*. Let’s think, then, this morning on the mind of Christ as it relates to his exaltation:

How does the Exaltation of Christ Effect our Thinking?

Consider with me first that:

I. The Mind of Christ Encourages Us to Look Ahead

We know from the accounts of the gospels that during his earthly ministry Christ was very much focused on his primary mission which was to atone for the sins of those that would believe in him. He referred to his passion at one point as a baptism. And so we read in Lk. 12:50 his words: *But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*

How I am straitened – or as some other versions render it *how great is my distress until it is accomplished*. There’s another verse in Luke’s gospel that shows Christ’s focus and his resolution. It’s found in Lk. 9:51 *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

So we know how focused Christ was on accomplishing his mission of dying for our sins. This was the focal point of his condescension. This was the reason he left heaven’s glory and came into this world as a man. This was why he took upon him the form of a servant

and rendered perfect obedience to his Father – obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. What I want to draw your attention to this morning, however, is that while Christ's focus was on the cross, his outlook took him beyond the cross. His outlook enabled him to see what would be accomplished by his atoning death. And I think it would be proper and Scriptural to say that he drew motivation by looking ahead.

So in Heb 12:2 we're exhorted to *Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith*; And then there follows in that same verse this important statement about what motivated Christ to see his work through when we read of Christ that *he for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Despising the shame this verse reads. And there was great shame in this cruel form of death. But when we read that Christ despised this shame we should understand it to mean that he counted it a thing of little consequence in comparison to the glory that would follow. Christ was motivated, on other words, by future glory.

It is true, as our text in Philippians tells us, that he would make himself of no reputation. But it's also true that as a result his reputation would be magnified. His fame would spread and his fame in the end will be great. So Christ looked ahead. He wasn't exclusively focused on the cross but he drew strength, you could say, by looking ahead to glory.

And if you and I would let his mind be in us, then we must do the same. We must look ahead. We must strive to grasp the glory of Christ that is yet to come. Admittedly we find ourselves challenged when it comes to looking ahead to future glory. We're so tied to the present moment and we're so held by what we see in the world that we hardly know how to think in terms of future glory.

We can't even describe it except in negative categories to say what it will not be. We know that in the present state of things there is much sin and great sin. And so we describe future glory by saying there won't be sin there. We know all about murder and theft and immorality and infidelity. In glory we'll be free from these things. And we know all about profanity and blasphemy so we say to ourselves that in heaven there will be no such speech.

Even in the book of Revelation where we find some positive descriptions of glory we also note the negative descriptions of future glory. So we read of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:27 *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* We also read negative categories earlier in the chapter when we read in v. 4 that *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.* These negative descriptions, while they may be viewed as incomplete, certainly do set our hearts longing for the former things passing away.

We are not, of course, restricted to negative categories when it comes to thinking of heaven we only find negative categories necessary because of the great contrast that exists

between the present state of things and the glory that will follow. I think, however, that the truth of 1Cor. 13:12 certainly holds with regard to future glory *For now we see through a glass, darkly.*

But through that glass that is made dark by the realm of our experience in this present evil world we do read of a fountain of the water of life and a city of pure gold where even the streets are of pure gold and transparent glass. And we do read of how there is no need for the sun or the moon for the glory of God lights the city. And we read of a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal and the tree of life which bears all manner of fruits and provides for the healing of the nations.

And though we see these things through a glass darkly we must, nevertheless, see them by faith and think of that future glory in terms of what it is not and what it will be. If we would gain the mind of Christ we must look ahead to these things. And we should anticipate that time that is so well described in our shorter catechism as a time when we will be openly acknowledged and acquitted and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God forever.

Before we leave this point, let me draw your attention to one very positive statement with regard to future glory that is found in our text in Philippians 2. This is one of my favorite positive statements regarding future glory. However hard you find it to envision the glory of heaven here is one statement about it that thrills my soul. It's given to us in Phil. 2:10,11 and speaks with reference to Christ's exaltation: *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.*

Don't you find the prospects of that verse to be thrilling to your soul? Jesus Christ will receive his due. Those that despised him will bow to him; Those that rejected him will confess that he is Lord; those that scoffed at him and heaped reproach on his word and on his people will bow before him and acknowledge his Lordship. Kings and cruel dictators and ungodly politicians who thought they were accountable to no one will be among those that bow the knee. Abortionists and judges that sanctioned their murder will confess Christ to be Lord to the glory of God the Father. Popes who thought they had the authority to be vicars of Christ and apostates who thought they knew better than Christ and scientists and pseudo intellectuals who scoffed at Christ will all give glory to God through their confession of Christ in the end.

I have to be careful to be humble when I read this verse. I have to remember that I, too, was a scoffer and a blasphemer and an immoral sinner when I read these verses. There is no difference between us and those that will bow the knee on that day but the grace of God. And it's not so much that we glory or boast in the condemnation of anyone so much as it is that we glory in the vindication of Christ's name.

So if you would gain the mind of Christ – if you would let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus then you must be governed by the same outlook that provided motivation to Christ. You must look ahead and keep in mind the words of the hymn: *This*

world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. The mind of Christ encourages us to look ahead. But would you consider with me next in close connection to this point that:

II. The Mind of Christ Empowers Us to Persevere

I said in my introduction that there's a connection between the two sections of Phil. 2:6-11. There's a connection between the humility of Christ and the exaltation of Christ. The humility of Christ or more specifically the atoning death of Christ gives us assurance that the glory of Christ is certain.

How do we know that these visions of glory are real? How do we know that these visions are not just figments of our imaginations that serve as crutches to help us cope with the difficulties of this world? We know that they're real because we know that Christ is real and that Christ is true. We know that future glory is real because we know that Christ died to secure it and that he rose from the dead.

And so we draw from the mind of Christ by looking back at what he accomplished in his atoning death and by looking ahead to the blessings he secured by his shed blood. And in looking back we draw assurance for what lies ahead. And this encourages us to persevere in our faith.

Christ certainly persevered during the time of his earthly ministry. And he persevered when there was much that could have discouraged him. He came unto his own but his own received him not – still Christ went forward with his mission. The devil came to tempt him by providing an easier path to gaining the world – Christ would resist the devil and continue on his mission.

The scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees would join forces in order to find cause to accuse him – still Christ would patiently endure in the obedience he would render to his Father. Even his own disciples would prove to be sore trials to Christ as they would be so slow to catch on to his teachings and so prone to their own pride but Christ would not be halted by the dullness of the very ones he came to save.

And before he was done in this world he would be subjected to arrest and a mock trial. He would see his disciples abandon him in the wake of the one disciple that would betray him. And he would then endure shame and scoffing rude as he would be spat upon and buffeted and whipped and then crucified.

What impressive endurance and what steadfast love and loyalty to his Father as well as love for sinners who didn't know what they were doing. And when you think of the endurance of Christ you should think not only in terms of the pain he endured while hanging suspended between heaven and earth but you should also think in terms of his persevering activity that took place all the while he was nailed to a cross.

I've referred to this activity often during our times around the Lord's table. I draw from one of my favorite theologians and preachers, Hugh Martin, who explains in his book on the atonement of Christ that while the categories of the active and passive obedience of Christ might be helpful in helping us distinguish between Christ's active obedience and his

passive sufferings, we should never make the mistake of thinking that Christ was only passive while he hung on Calvary's cross. He was in fact active. He was both the priest and the offering. He never ceased being our great high priest in order to become our sacrifice. No – he was the priest and the sacrifice at the same time. And so all the while he was suspended between heaven and earth he was engaged in the priestly activity of intercession. You could say, I think, that his constant plea was for his Father to forgive his people for their sins.

So we find his intercessory work persevering even when the forces of heaven, and earth, and hell would move against him – heaven's justice being joined with hell's cruelest injustice to crush him but such was his strength of resolve to persevere in his atonement and intercession that he would outlast all the forces combined against him until he could proclaim that it was enough – *if is finished* – satisfaction had been made – Christ endured to see the matter through to its completion.

But now come back to the words of our text in Phil. 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*. What kind of a mind are we talking about? We're talking about a mind that was resolved to see the issue of salvation through to the end. We're talking about strong determination to be faithful to his Father.

I know that we don't hold to what is sometimes referred to as the "moral example" view of the atonement. We see much more in the atonement than a moral example. We see propitiation made and redemption accomplished. But on the other hand we do also see a very impressive example and pressing ahead through impossible circumstances to see the issue of salvation through.

I've shown you the connection between Christ's atonement and his intercession. He pleaded for us in prayer while he laid the groundwork for his prayers to be answered. And he would not cease – though the physical pain and the emotional pain and the incomprehensible pain of being forsaken by his Father were strong upon him, yet he would see the issue to completion.

And as we already considered in the first point of the message, he would draw motivation from what the future would bring upon his completion of his work. Do you see, then, how by having the same mind as Christ you too will draw from the same motivating factors so that you too will persevere through your trials, severe though they be.

The glory of heaven is very impressive motivation and it should lead to very impressive endurance in your faith. It certainly led to impressive endurance in our Savior's faith, so to speak.

So the exaltation of Christ encourages us to look ahead and it empowers us to persevere in our faith. Let me take a moment to mention in closing that:

III. The Mind of Christ Emboldens Us to Confess His Name

We have considered already that future day in which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. If you have

made such a confession already then you have made it to the saving of your soul. Now is the accepted time – now is the day of salvation – now is the time when such a confession can save your soul. On the day envisioned by our text such a confession will not be made to the saving of souls but it will be made, nevertheless.

The thing I want you to consider now, however, in closing is that it is our privilege and duty to confess his name before others. What is your hope on that final day? What is it that you would desire above all things when that fearful time comes for you to stand before Christ? Would it not be that Christ will confess you before his Father? Would it not be that Christ will own you and recognize you as one that he has purchased with his blood? Would it not be that Christ will not be ashamed of you but rather will confess your name with joy?

If you would have that be the mind of Christ on that day then you must have the same mind toward Christ in your day. Mt 10:32 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.* There's a sense here, I suppose, from a human perspective, in which you and I have the ability to determine the mind of Christ. I say from a human perspective, not from an ultimate perspective.

How challenging, then, should we find the words of Mr 8:38 *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

I find it somewhat amazing how often Paul refers to this matter of being ashamed. Ro 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* 2Ti 1:8 *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.*

As I said a moment ago it is a duty and a privilege to confess his name among men. And if you have his mind in you then looking ahead to future glory and beholding all that Christ endured with that view of glory in his mind you will not be ashamed to own him before others. Why would we ever be ashamed to confess his name when the day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess his name?

You have made such a confession to the saving of your soul. It should be your aim, therefore, to use all your powers of persuasion to lead others to confess his name to the saving of their souls. What do we gain, then, when we have the mind of Christ? We gain a right estimate of ourselves; we gain a mind that is devoted to serving others; we gain the view of heaven's glory that we need to persevere through any and every trial we face and we gain the privilege of confessing the name of Christ.

May the Lord grant us, then, that this mind will indeed be in us, this mind which was also in Christ Jesus.