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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Infinite Downward Journey of Humility

Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction: The Long Descent

Ezekiel's Vision of Christ

Ezekiel: on the plain by the Kebar River in Babylon

windstorm an immense cloud flashing lightning brilliant light. four living creatures. ...

chrysolite wheels intersecting wheels...their rims were high and awesome,

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome.

Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. 27 I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown

all the way down to the humiliation of the cross:

- Betrayed by one of his closest followers; deserted by all His disciples
- Arrested, bound and tried like a common criminal
- Mocked, spat upon, scourged, rejected by His own people, and condemned to die
- Paraded through the streets of Jerusalem carrying His own cross
- Crucified with long spikes driven into His hands and feet
- Surrounded by His ravenous enemies who were filled with hatred, mockery, and blood lust

- Suffering intensely the wrath of God, the due penalty for sins
- There on Golgotha, the Hill of Skulls, the infinite downward journey was completed

From that humiliation, God the Father exalted Jesus Christ to the highest place and ordained that all humanity should bend their knees before Him

Ezekiel & Isaiah's Vision of Satan

1. Satan's astonishing beauty

Ezekiel 28:13-14 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ... You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

2. Satan's selfish vainglory and pride

Ezekiel 28:15, 17 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. ... Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.

3. Satan's ambitious ascent

Isaiah 14:13-14 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

4. Satan's fall

Ezekiel 28: So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. ... I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

What a contrast: Christ's downward journey of humility for the love of God, of God's glory and of His people

Satan's upward journey of pride for love of himself, of his own glory, and hatred for God's people

Sadly, humanity joined in Satan's arrogant UPWARD MOBILITY... seeking always to go up, up, up... selfishly up; for love of vainglory UP, to be worshiped and adored UP UP UP

America is the land of UPWARD MOBILITY... of the Horatio Alger story, of "rags to riches", of pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps

Sadly the church so often follows the same approach: considering one's own glory and plans and ambitions and agendas as far more valuable than anyone else's... of not caring who gets trampled along the way

This text today calls us to follow Christ's downward journey of humble servanthood... not Satan's upward journey of arrogant empire-building

I. Christian Unity: The Gospel Adorned

A. Perfect Unity the Goal of the Gospel

1. The Perfect Unity of the Trinity
2. The Destruction of Unity: Sin
3. Christ's Redeeming Work: Bringing All Things Together in Perfection

B. Perfect Unity the Greatest Evidence of the Gospel

C. Philippian Disunity

II. Paul's Appeal (vs. 1-4)

2:1-4 make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The Nature of the Appeal: Total Selfless Unity of the Mind

vs. 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus

III. The Humiliation of Christ (5-8)

A. The Mind of Christ

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus

Or, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."

1. Focus: Christ's way of thinking... His attitude!!
2. Christ's outward example flowed from His inner mentality
3. Our imitation is both commanded, granted and ultimately guaranteed
 - a. we are commanded here to be like Christ... to imitate His attitude

- b. BUT His mind is already granted to us as a gift

1 Corinthians 2:16 ... we have the mind of Christ

- c. ultimately in heaven, we shall be perfectly one in mind and thought with every other Christian

So, Paul is just commanding us to live up to the pattern NOW which we will have in heaven LATER

But even better, Paul is going to unfold the mind of Christ for us... the incredible humility which saves our souls

B. The Exaltation of Christ's Deity: Starting Point for the Longest Journey in History

vs. 6-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

1. The Deity of Christ is the theological starting point for the gospel
 - a. greatly denied by the unbelieving world
 - b. clearly taught here
 - c. if Christ is NOT God in the flesh, we have no gospel and no hope
 - d. Paul makes Christ's deity absolutely clear in two amazing ways
 - i) clear open statement in verse 6

vs. 6 Who, being in very nature God

Literally: existing in the *morphe*, the form of God: Greek word means outward appearance totally corresponding to internal reality

So as we saw in Ezekiel's amazing vision, Christ was exalted in heaven, worshiped as God in reality, bright shining with glory which He shared with God the Father

The angels served Him, all veiling their faces from the radiance of His glory

- ii) second proof of Christ's deity comes in the second half of this section

In verses 9-11, Paul is following a well-known passage in Isaiah on the exclusive glory of Yahweh, the God of Israel; in Isaiah 40-49, Isaiah the prophet is making it clear to Israel that the idols they've been worshiping are all false, they don't exist. So again and again, He proclaims "I am the Lord and there is no one else like me... there is no other God"

It would have been blasphemy for a Jew to ascribe this passage to anyone but God Himself

YET Paul ascribes it to Christ!!

Isaiah 43:10-12 Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. 12 I have revealed and saved and proclaimed-- I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God.

Isaiah 44:8 You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one."

Isaiah 45:5-6 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.

God's message: God is so exalted and unique and high and lifted up that there is no one else like Him at all.

In the midst of this extended section, God speaks through Isaiah about the salvation of the whole world:

Isaiah 45:22-23 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

Any Jew in Paul's day would have known that this passage refers to the only true God, the only God there is in the universe. Before this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord, Yahweh, who appeared to Moses in the flames of the burning bush... before this God and this God alone, every knee would bow; by this God, and this God alone, every tongue would swear

AND YET, Paul ascribes this passage to Jesus of Nazareth:

vs. 9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So, Paul is clearly portraying the DEITY of Christ, with His full glory in heaven

2. Incarnation: The central mystery of Christianity:

- a. Christ was the God-Man
- b. Christ: 100% God & 100% Man
- c. a great stumbling block to human reason
- d. if you don't believe it, you are not a Christian, and are still in your sins

The STARTING POINT of the longest and greatest journey in the history of the universe

- Heaven is a place of perfect order, everything focused on the glory of God

- Heaven is a place where there is no death, mourning, crying, or pain
- Heaven is a place where Christ was held in absolute awe and reverence
- Heaven is a place where everyone knew exactly who Christ was and what worship He constantly deserves
- Heaven is a place where all of Christ's will was perfectly carried out, without the slightest hesitation

BUT... Christ gave it all up to come to earth

- Earth is a place of death, of mourning, of crying, of pain
- Earth is a place of great injustice, misery, wickedness and violence
- Earth is place where God is not known, not loved, not feared, not trusted, not obeyed
- Earth is a place of ugliness, disorder, and hatred... all caused by sin's disease
- Earth is a place in which Christ would be disbelieved, rejected, spurned, mocked, flogged, crucified

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

C. The Downward Journey of Humility: IN SIX STEPS

Sinful Satan, selfishly aspiring deity and absolute rule, said "I will go up, up, up..."

Sinful man, selfishly aspiring to make a name for themselves, building the Tower of Babel, said "I will go up, up, up..."

Jesus Christ, in humility desiring to bring sinners up to heaven, said "I will go down, down, down..."

Six discernible steps

1. Step One: Did not consider equality with God something to be seized
 - a. difficult phrase... Greek word usually means "robbery" or "plunder"... something you seize like a hawk descending on a rabbit for dinner, like a marauding army grabbing all the plunder

- b. idea #1: Jesus did not consider equality with God something He NEEDED to grasp... He was already equal with God; it was entirely APPROPRIATE for Him to be equal to God, for He was God's equal
- c. idea #2: Christ did not think He needed to HOLD ONTO the outward trappings of God's glory... all the glory, the honor, the worship, the respect
- d. idea #3: Christ did not consider Himself in competition with God the Father so that He would seize a place of honor that God did not grant Him
- e. idea #4: Christ did not consider being equal with God something that consisted in plundering and pillaging those under Him... as most kings do:

Matthew 20:25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."

Luke 20:47 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

Illus. Medieval lords and kings regularly took all of the serf's harvest and gave them barely enough to live on... but there was nothing they could do, because the Lords and Kings had all the power

This is the way the world looks at power and authority

BUT NOT CHRIST... equality with God was not a matter of pillaging the people over whom He was king... quite the opposite!!

2. Step Two: Made Himself nothing (lit. "emptied Himself")

- a. earthly pride consists in making MUCH of yourself

Illus. Kings always have a huge entourage, with royal robes and insignia... with advisors around praising you and telling you how wonderful you are

Epitome was Louis the Fourteenth of France, called "The Sun King" because his own glory was like the sun, radiating light to everything in France... he surrounded himself with a sea of flatterers who raised empty praise to a fine art... when he asked one of his ministers what time it was, the minister answered, "Whatever time your Majesty desires."

- b. Christ went exactly the opposite way... He made Himself nothing; literally emptied Himself
- c. WARNING: MUCH THEOLOGY goes astray because of this word "emptied"

Some theologians talk about Christ's "emptying" as though in some way He stopped being God while He was on earth

They point to His limitations as a man: some things He didn't know, He was not everywhere at once

So they say Christ emptied Himself of His deity

THAT IS FALSE... God is eternally Triune... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

If Christ stopped being God at any point, the universe would fly apart

- d. this has to do with the appearance of glory and the outward worship

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

When Christ came to earth, He came with incredible humility... stripped of all outward trappings of His glory

Isaiah 53:2-3 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

3. Step Three: Took the very nature of a servant

- a. lit, He became as much servant as He was God
- b. He was the very picture of a servant... the true servant of the Lord, prophesied by Isaiah

Isaiah 52:13-14 See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

- c. a servant lives to do the will of His master... so Christ lived to do the will of His Father

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Hebrews 10:7 Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'

4. Step Four: Being made in human likeness

- a. what a great humiliation for God to become man
- b. ancient enemy of the gospel (Celsus) talked about this
- c. to go from absolute happiness to absolute misery on earth

The immortal God kicking and crying as a helpless baby... the ultimate picture of humiliation; totally God yet totally helpless as to His human needs

He looked very ordinary... He had a face and hands and a beard and a mouth and feet; nothing unusual

Even more striking, He chose to come to earth as an infant, born of a Jewish virgin

Christ was born a Jew, in a poor, insignificant village in a conquered country

All of this came from the attitude of mind: He made Himself NOTHING

5. Step Five: As a Man, He Humbled Himself (obeying as a servant)

- a. once He was found as a man, even then He only ever went downward... ever lower
- b. He lived to serve other people everyday
- c. He saw what their needs were and met them

6. Step Six: Even to the ultimate humiliation of death on a cross

Josephus, the Jewish historian, called the practice of crucifixion "the most wretched of deaths."

Romans only used it for the lowest of slaves... no Roman citizen could ever be crucified

It was the absolute bottom of humiliation and torture...

But Christ went still lower... for two others suffered physical crucifixion that day; but Christ suffered under the wrath of God for sinners from every tribe, language, people and nation

IV. The Exaltation of Christ (vs. 9-11)

Vs. 9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

A. God's Principle of Exaltation

Strong Connection: THEREFORE GOD...!!!

Basic principle of exaltation by God Almighty:

Matthew 23:12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

The lower you humble yourself, the more you will be exalted:

Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first

must be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The night before Jesus was crucified, His disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest...

Jesus took off His outer garments, poured out water into a basin and washed their dirty feet, thus settling forever the debate about who was the greatest... Jesus Christ and Him alone

No one has **EVER** humbled Himself as much as Christ... and **THEREFORE**, God exalted Him

NOTE: Strong Contrast:

1. Downward journey of humiliation: long, difficult and painful
2. Upward journey of exaltation: instantaneous and absolute

B. The Highest Place

The Philippians were jousting for position...the position of honor and prestige and power;

Paul's point is that that position belongs to Christ Jesus!!!

1. The "Highest Place" = circles of ever-ascending power
2. At the top of it all is Christ Himself

Ephesians 1:20-22 [God raised Christ from the dead and] seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church

C. The Greatest Name

A "name" is a reputation... it represents the person, his attributes, his achievements

1. Human history filled with the striving after adulation, the "making of a name for yourself"

Genesis 11:4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

To "make a name for yourself" is to dabble in idolatry, in self-worship

Example: Josef Stalin of the USSR used posters linking himself with the achievements of Russia. City named after him: Stalingrad. There were also poems, plays, books and magazines all devoted to Stalin. There were statues of Stalin everywhere.

In Communist China, 2.2 billion little badges were manufactured with Chairman Mao's portrait

So also in America today, many entertainers, athletes, politicians, and CEO's clamor to have their names and faces out in front of the populace... making a name for themselves

2. God gives out names, and makes them great

The Bible is filled with all kinds of names... Chronicles contains long genealogies with names of the famous and the obscure

God is able to make a great name for someone

a. Abraham

Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

b. David

2 Samuel 7:9 Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.

History has been filled with great names:

3. BUT in all history, no name is as great as that of Jesus Christ

- a. Christ's name alone has been proclaimed to the ends of the earth
- b. Christ's reputation alone is perfect, as is His character... His deeds are unmatched
- c. Christ alone had the right to open the scroll in the right hand of God Almighty
- d. Christ's name is the only one by which people can be saved

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

No other name will gain you ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN:

MIT Killian Court: names of greatest men and women of science carved into the walls... Galileo, Newton, DaVinci, Curie, Mendel, etc.

As great as those names were, NOT ONE OF THEM WILL GET YOU INTO HEAVEN!!!

D. The Universal Confession

Vs 10-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Perfect fulfillment: Judgment Day

1. For believers, this is the greatest joy in our future... the moment at which we are able to see Him in His perfect glory and kneel before the King we have loved and served

In life we gladly knelt before Him in faith, though we never saw Him... we knelt before Him in submission of our lives when we were saved; we knelt before Him every day in prayer; we knelt before Him in confession of our sins; we knelt before Him in true spiritual worship

Now in death and on Judgment Day we will be delighted to kneel before Him face to face and worship Him forever

2. **BUT** for Christ's enemies, it will be the moment they have dreaded... the moment at which Christ's power and wrath is revealed in all its terrifying glory; what can they do but fall before Him in sheer terror

The night that Christ was arrested, the devil Himself inhabited Judas as he led a band of six hundred soldiers to capture the Son of God

Jesus simply spoke His name, saying **"I AM"** and all His enemies, including Satan himself, fell on their faces before Christ

That is a small glimpse of this future moment... the moment on Judgment Day, when God will make all of Christ's enemies—both demons and unbelieving people—a footstool under His feet

Psalm 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

3. The Confession of the Universe: Jesus Christ is LORD
 - a. the deity of Christ the united confession of the universe

"Every tongue will confess..."

- b. the devil will swear it, as will all his evil minions
- c. all Muslims will confess it... leaving behind forever their blasphemous motto "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet"
- d. Buddhists will confess, as will all Jews, and all Hindus
- e. Jehovah's witnesses at last will see, too late, however... that Christ is truly God Almighty
- f. rationalists, atheists, agnostics, materialists, and just plain unbelievers will all confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord!!!

4. BUT that confession will not save them from His wrath... it is by faith in Christ alone that we are justified, and the day of faith will be past by then

F. To the Glory of God the Father

1. No Jealousy in the Godhead
2. Christ lived constantly for the glory of the Father while on earth
3. God the Father now lives constantly for the glory of His Son all over the earth
4. Any glory coming to the Son is really truly glory for the Father
5. If you are a Christian, your eternal reward is to get to gaze on Christ in His perfect glory

John 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

And that glory IS the Father's glory... they are one and the same

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory

V. Applications

A. Stand in Awe of Christ's Humility

B. Develop Christ's Mindset

1. Search your own heart:

do I live for my own glory? am I seeking great things for myself? do I live every moment to satisfy my own desires and purposes...OR...

am I living for the glory of Christ and for the good of His people

2. Repent from Selfishness and Pride
3. Study Again the Example of Christ
4. Understand the Road to True Greatness... Down Before Up

C. Bend the Knee NOW... Confess that Christ is Your Savior