

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Christmas Story from Paul's Perspective Philippians 2:5-11 Part 6**

Hopefully you remember the theme of Gordon's message. It was a message on hope. He entitled it "Hope for a Happy New Year." Hope is what keeps people in this world going when they find themselves in difficult circumstances ..... If they are in a difficult job situation as long as they have the hope their situation might improve they will be able to endure. If they do not have hope then it will be very difficult for them to continue to give the good effort that they should. They will become a mediocre, halfhearted employee or they will simply quit. Hope is a very important thing.

Typically we all have hopes for various aspects of our lives, but as the disciples of Christ there is a hope that should transcend all other hopes. And what is that hope? It is "The Blessed Hope" mentioned in **Titus 2:13**. And what is that blessed hope? It is the hope of eternal life. It is the hope of one day being ushered into the very presence of Christ in Glory to enjoy fellowship with Him forever.

Will all true disciples of Christ realize this hope? And the answer is, of course. Will all those who think they are true disciples of Christ realize this hope? And the answer is, of course not. True disciples are those who endure to the end and it is only those who endure to the end that will in fact enjoy the blessed hope. What does **Matthew 10:22** tell us? "**Those who endure to the end will be saved.**" Once a true disciple puts his hand to the plow he will not turn back. He will not stop seeking to live His or her life pleasing to the Lord. They will continue to seek, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus until the day they enter into glory.

Will it be easy for the true disciples of Christ to endure? Will it be easy for them to walk in the footsteps of Jesus? Will it be easy for them to have a humble attitude as they continually seek to live out the life of a servant? And the answer would have to be, No!! It will not be easy.

If there is any doubt that the disciples of Christ might in fact face difficulties all we have to do is to look at the early phase of the Christmas story from Paul's perspective. All we have to do is consider the humiliation of Christ. All we have to do is to read **Philippians 2:5-8** ..... "**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 bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) and being found in appearance as a man humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.**" Christ's descent from heaven to earth and his experience while here on earth was difficult. And as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus we can also expect that our lives will be difficult but we should also in the midst of these difficulties have the hope that things will ultimately get much better.

If there is any doubt concerning this expectation of things getting better all we have to do is to look at the latter phase of the Christmas story from Paul's perspective. All we have to do is to look at the ascent of Christ from the poverty of the cross to His exalted position in heaven. All we have to do is to consider the exaltation of Christ.

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Let us read **Philippians 2:9-11** “**Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**” Yes, Christ’s earthly life was difficult as He, in obedience to the Father, sought to serve us, but those difficulties have ended. Christ has now been highly exalted.

The reason why Jesus was able to endure the descent of **Philippians 2:5-8** was because He was able to keep the ascent of **Philippians 2:9-11** before Him. **Hebrews 12:2** sums it up quiet nicely when it says that Jesus “**for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame.**”

The same thing will be true for us as well. There will be a time of difficulty while walking in the footsteps of Jesus but after our earthly struggle is over as the disciples of Christ, we will enter glory. It is this hope of glory that we must ever keep before us, our blessed hope if we are going to endure to the end. If we are going to continue to strive to live our lives pleasing to the Lord we must not lose this focus. Are you doing that this weekend? Are you presently for the joy set before you seeking to live your life pleasing to Him?

You might say I am trying but it is extremely difficult. Why is it so difficult for us to keep the blessed hope before us as we seek to walk in the footsteps of Jesus?

We are weak. We are so frail. We are easily distracted. We are crushable. We are at times easy prey for the temptations of life. In light of all of this how can we keep our focus on the things above? How can we keep our eyes focused on the blessed hope when we have just lost our job? How can we keep our eyes on the blessed hope when we have a rebellious child? How can we keep our eyes on the blessed hope when we are in a difficult marriage? How can we keep our eyes on the blessed hope when we have just come under some kind of personal attack? How can we keep our eye on the blessed hope when we are so alone? How can we keep our eyes on Jesus when everything we seem to try ends in failure? And if we can’t keep on our eyes on the blessed hope, the hope of eternal life how will we ever endure? How will we ever make it to the finish line and win the prize that is set before us?

It is by understanding what is involved in the exaltation of Christ. This brings us back to where we left off two weeks ago. This brings us back to **Philippians 2:9-11**. We are breaking these verses into four different areas of truth. The first area of truth that we are addressing is the steps involved in Christ’s exaltation. Let us look at the beginning of **Philippians 2:9**. After describing the humiliation of Christ in **Philippians 2:5-8** Paul then says at the beginning of **V. 9** “**Therefore also God highly exalted Him.....**” This might seem to the casual reader as a single step but it isn’t. It actually involved four steps.

The first step in Christ’s exaltation was His resurrection (Acts 1:3). In order for Christ to be highly exalted He first of all had to come alive and exit the tomb. And certainly Christ did this. **Acts 1:3** tells us that Christ after His resurrection presented Himself alive for forty days by many convincing proofs.

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The second step in Christ's exaltation was His ascension (Acts 1:9-11). It was not enough for Christ simply to be resurrected He also had to ascend back to the Father. This had great significance for the disciples because of Christ's promise to them in **John 16:7** that once He ascended to the Father He would send them the Holy Spirit to be their Helper. This is why Jesus needed to ascend to the Father visibly in front of the disciples which was recorded for us in **Acts 1:9-11**.

The third step in Christ's exaltation was His unveiling when He once again was crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9). The next time the people of this world see Jesus they will not mistake Him for being merely a man. This is where we left off. But there is another step involved in Christ's exaltation that we have not discussed. And it is this fourth step that has a direct bearing on our ability as Christ's true disciples enduring to the end and ultimately realizing our blessed hope.

I hope that what I will be sharing with you this morning will be an encouragement to your Christian walk and lead you to give even further adoration to Christ.

What is the fourth and final step of Christ's exaltation? The fourth step involved in Christ's exaltation is Christ's high priestly ministry of intercession. Let us first of all establish the fact that Christ is presently our great high priest. What does **Hebrews 4:14** say? **"Since .... we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."** The writer of Hebrews is basing his exhortation to his readers to hold fast on what? Based on the fact that Christ is our Great High Priest.

Has Christ always been a great high priest? And the answer is, No! Listen to **Hebrews 2:17**, **"Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God ....."** Before Christ's humiliation He was not able to function as our great high priest. But because of His humiliation, because of His incarnation this ministry was now open to Him and it is a ministry that He is now enjoying.

Christ left heaven as a king and descended to this earth. But He returned to heaven not only as a King but also as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 2:17). When Paul says, **"Therefore, also God highly exalted Him"** we need to think of that exaltation in terms greater than that He simply returned to the same place that He enjoyed prior to His humiliation. The truth is that He is now, in His exaltation, enjoying more than what He had enjoyed prior to His humiliation.

This is amazing. Not only does it add to the magnificence of His exaltation but it also is very reassuring for us. Why? Because as our great high priest we can be assured, if we are a true disciple of Christ, that we will not for long periods of time lose our focus. The blessed hope will invariably be a driving force in our lives so that we will in fact endure, so that we will in fact seek to live a life pleasing to Him until that day when we see Him ace to face. How do we know this? Because Jesus is our great high priest.

What were the primary duties of the high priest? The first duty of the high priest was to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1).

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We see this in stated clearly in **Hebrews 5:1-4** “**For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.**” When did Christ fulfill this high priestly duty? He fulfilled it on the cross? Listen to **Hebrews 10:1-10**, “**For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.**” (2) **Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?** (3) **But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.** (4) **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** (5) **Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice an offering Thou hast not desired, But a body Thou hast prepared for Me;** (6) **In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast thou taken pleasure in them (which are offered according to the Law),** (9) **then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Thy will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second.** (10) **By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**” If we have exercised faith in Christ according to **Ephesians 2:8-9** transferring our trust from yourself to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, embracing Him as our savior and Lord then we are saved. We are sanctified (made holy) through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. All that needs to be done has been done. And who are we to thank for this? Our great and merciful high priest who offered up His own body on the cross of Calvary to atone for our sins forever.

Because Christ as our great high priest offered up His body for sin we now can come boldly into His presence at any time. I am sure you are familiar with **Hebrews 4:15-16** “**Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.** (15) **For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.** (16) **Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.**” Are you going through difficult times this weekend and are finding it difficult to continue to trust the Lord and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus what should you do? Come boldly into God’s presence and receive and mercy and find grace to help in the time of your need. Why is it that you can come so boldly? Because you have been sanctified (made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

You are acceptable and always will be acceptable. Unfortunately although this is true there will be times when we will choose not to come to Him for the help that we need. And as a result of this we will find ourselves in a spiritual wasteland. What can the Great High Priest who offered up His body for our sins do for us when we are like this?

This leads us to the second duty of the high priest. The second duty of the high priest was to offer up incense on the golden altar (Exodus 30:7-8). We know that the high priest would go in once a year to the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement to offer sacrifices for sin. But what did he do the rest of the year? He was burning incense on the golden altar which was located just outside of the Holy of Holies. Let me read for you **Exodus 30:7-8** “**And Aaron (referring to the high priest) shall burn fragrant incense on it (the golden altar) ; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps.** (8) **And when Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense.**”

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**There shall be perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.”** When we think of the Jewish high priest typically we think of the sacrifices that he offered on the day of atonement but the vast bulk of his responsibility had to do with burning incense on the golden altar. What is the significance of this? Incense was a picture of prayer( Revelation 8:3-4). We see this clearly in Revelation 8:3-4. When the Jewish high priest was burning incense it would appear that he was presenting to us a picture. A picture of what? A picture of the intercessory ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. Just as the high priest in the Old Testament was responsible for providing perpetual incense before the Lord our Great High Priest is responsible providing perpetual intercession for us (Hebrews 7:23-25).

Let us read **Hebrews 7:23-25. "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, (24) but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. (25) Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."**

What is He praying? I believe that Our Great High Priest in essence is praying, in light of the joy set before us, that we will endure to the end. I believe that He is praying that in light of all that we have in front of us that we will live our lives pleasing to Him. Will His prayer for those who have in truth chosen to follow Him be answered? The answer would have to be, yes. This is why I know that once a true disciple puts his hand to the plow he will not turn back. He will not stop seeking to live his or her life pleasing to the Lord. He will continue to seek, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus until the day that he or she enters into glory.

### CONCLUSION

We will be celebrating the death of our Christ High priest this weekend. We will do this by remembering the body that was broken and the blood that was set in order to sanctify us to make us holy once for all. We are celebrating that work of Christ on our behalf that now makes it possible for us even now to come boldly to His throne of grace and receive grace and mercy to help in the time of our need whatever that need might be.

What is the proper way to take part in this remembrance. It is by committing ourselves to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to endure.

If you are here this weekend and you know that your life is not right, that you are not ..... What is Jesus now doing on your behalf? ..... If you cannot turn in light of Christ's death. And if you do not turn in light of Christ's intercession I would encourage you to test your faith to see whether or not you are a Christian at all.