

Philippians 2:11 - Jesus Christ is Lord

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 0 0] Well, tonight I'd like us to turn back to Philippians chapter 2 and we can read again from verse 9. It says, Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And in particular I want us to focus on the words there in verse 11. Jesus Christ is Lord. In these four words Paul is making a very simple statement and it's a statement that's been echoed by Christians over the 2,000 years that the Church of Jesus Christ has existed. That's been the foundational testimony of the church Jesus Christ is Lord and as is often the case like we were saying this morning sometimes it's the simplest statements in the Bible that are the most amazing and that is certainly true here because again we have a simple statement but an amazing statement and in these four words Paul is telling us something that has huge theological implications and he's also telling us something that has huge practical implications for us all as well. It's absolutely vital that we know theologically that Jesus is Lord but it's also crucial that we live with Jesus

Christ as Lord. And so we'll look at these two things together for a wee while tonight the theological implications the practical implications.

So first of all in terms of theological truth we are all probably very familiar with the fact that the term Lord is used in connection with Jesus. We often use it as a means of identifying Jesus we will speak about the Lord. We'll talk about the Lord's supper we mean Jesus's supper. We talk about the Lord's prayer we mean Jesus's prayer and people might ask the question do you know the Lord and their meaning do you know Jesus and so we often use the words Jesus and Lord almost interchangeably don't we? And there's nothing wrong with that that's good and it's appropriate in fact it's biblical and in that sense the word Lord can function a bit like a name it's identifying who Jesus is. But we have to be a wee bit cautious here because when we use the word Lord simply as an alternative for the name Jesus we are simply referring to who Jesus is but we have to be careful here because we must never forget that the word Lord is much more than just a name. In other words it is not simply telling us who Jesus is it is telling us what Jesus is. And that phrase Jesus Christ is Lord is telling us that there is a certain status and a certain position that belongs only to

Jesus. Theologically he is something in relation to us and he is something in relation to the whole universe what is he? He is Lord. I sort of put it in maybe everyday terms. Elizabeth Windsor is Queen. Theresa May is Prime Minister.

Nicola Sturgeon is First Minister. Donald Trump is President. Jesus Christ is Lord.

[4 : 08] But what exactly does that mean when we say that? Well that phrase Jesus is Lord is pointing us to the concept of the Lordship of Christ and that Lordship of Jesus Christ involves a certain status. At a very basic level it means that he is Lord. He is the master. He is the owner. He is the ruler. He is the one who is sovereign. He is the one who has absolute authority. What does Jesus in relation to the whole world? He is the world's Lord. He's the one who rules. And then in these verses Paul gives us some more details of some key truths that that apply in relation to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. At a basic level Lord means master, ruler, owner, king. But there's more to it and Paul tells us three key things in these verses that we can highlight. First of all Paul tells us in verse 9 that as Lord Jesus has been highly exalted. And the Greek word is actually the we've got highly exalted. Two words in Greek it's only one word and it's speaking about the fact that Jesus has been raised and he has been placed by God in the highest and loftiest position. We get almost literally translated as being hyper exalted, super exalted. It conveys the idea of supreme majesty, of being the highest rank, of being in the most important position of power and authority. And it's reminding us that the

Lordship of Jesus is on a different level to anything else. He is the master of all other masters. He is the ruler of all other rulers. Or as the Bible says he is the king of kings. He is the Lord of lords. He has a Lordship that is highly, highly exalted. And every time we use that word Lord in relation to Jesus we are being reminded of the fact that he occupies a place of the highest exaltation. And that is very, very important because it's answering the question, where is Jesus right now? Someone came to you and said, where's Jesus right now? The answer is he is highly exalted. He is in a position that cannot be any higher. And that of course is why Jesus is not here on earth. It was not simply that Jesus was raised to perpetual life. We would think just, wouldn't that be amazing if when Jesus was raised 2,000 years ago he became alive again and he just lived on earth for 2,000 years alive perpetually every day. People would be flocking to see that and we would think well that would be amazing but the truth is far, far greater than that. Jesus is not just raised to perpetual life. He is raised to hyper exaltation. He is in the highest position above heaven and earth. And so we think of Jesus up there but we have been reminded by Paul in the verses that we read prior to this that in order to get there Jesus had to take an astonishing journey. And that's why I said these verses are among the most rich and and and big I suppose in the New Testament because they describe to us that journey that Jesus took. We can just look at them briefly. It talks about where Jesus started. He started equal with God. He was in the form of God but he did not cling on to that. He did not count equality with God. A thing to be grasped. Something to be held on to. Something to be depended on. No, he was willing to empty himself and he went down taking the form of a servant becoming like you becoming like me. He humbled himself. He was born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself and he became obedient even to the point of death. And the most brutal, horrifying death of all. Death on a cross. In other words those verses are saying that Jesus's journey was a downward journey. He left heaven. He became human that's what we call the incarnation. From that point he served and that service didn't take him upwards it took him further down and the culminating point of that was death. Jesus went down, down, down. We call that his humiliation. It was all a downward journey. But God did not leave him there and in the resurrection and ascension Jesus is taken up, up, up, up and up and he is exalted to the highest place of all and that's where he now is. And this is important and it's fascinating because we are so used to hearing the phrase

Jesus is alive aren't we? And we use that phrase. It's a great phrase. People will say Jesus is alive and of course that is true and and and and we love that phrase but never ever forget that Jesus is far, far more than just alive. He is hyper exalted, highly exalted, utterly exalted. He is at the right hand of the Father, Lord over all. And the other thing we have to make sure we never forget is that the reason Jesus is exalted like that, the reason that big arrow is there taking Jesus up is because he did something so amazing for us.

Always remember there is a foundational biblical principle that the one who humbles himself and becomes a servant is the one who is exalted and the most perfect example of that is Jesus Christ. Jesus is exalted because of everything that he did for you. The second thing that Paul tells us is that now Jesus is supreme. He has been bestowed upon him has been disposed the name that is above every name. Now when you read a phrase like that you immediately ask the question what's that name? What name is Paul talking about? And it's easy to think well surely it's Jesus but I don't think that's what's been referred to for various reasons. Firstly because Jesus was a common name it was simply the Greek equivalent of Joshua. Joshua is still a common name today. And secondly because

Jesus got that name at his incarnation when he was in Mary's womb he was given that name. And furthermore to the Jew when you heard a phrase the name above every name it could only possibly mean one thing. It is referring to the covenant name of God revealed in the Old Testament. Exodus 6 sees an example. I appear to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob as God Almighty but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. Now we mentioned this in the morning we'll mention it again when you see the Lord in block capitals that is God's personal name Yahweh or Jehovah as it was maybe more traditionally known. This is God's sacred personal name and the name was viewed with such reverence by the Jews that they wouldn't even say it. And that's partly why we're not entirely sure how to pronounce it. And the reason we have the Lord written in our English translations instead of Yahweh although some translations use that but in the

[12 : 54] ESV and NIV and most others it has the Lord. It's because that was what the Greek translation of the Old Testament did. The Septuagint that was written I think around 200 300 BC translation of the Old Testament and they translated that name of God by the words the Lord. That personal name of God was translated as the Lord. But every time you see Lord in block capital letters you should be thinking Yahweh God's personal name. Therefore when Paul is saying that God has bestowed upon Jesus the name that is above every name he is saying that that sacred name that belongs to God alone and to no one else that name that for generations we Jews have been too scared to even utter with our lips that name is bestowed upon the exalted Jesus Christ. Therefore the Lordship of Jesus is not simply telling us that God that Jesus is God's highest ranking servant it is telling us that Jesus is God himself. Jesus is Yahweh he is the Lord. And of course that should make perfect sense because the doctrine of the Trinity tells us that Jesus is God in absolute equality all the splendor glory and preeminence that belongs to God belongs to Jesus. He is God the Son. He is the

Lord. And so yes when we say Lord Jesus we're saying that Jesus is master ruler and king absolutely but we are saying more than that. We are saying that he is none other than the covenant God himself. He is the one whose name is above every name. And of course that makes Jesus utterly supreme. He is above every other name. None can compare with him none can threaten him none can match the supremacy which belongs to Jesus alone. And it also tells us that Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. In other words if you want to know what God is like you look at Jesus and here you see something astounding that the God whose name is above every name the God whose name is so sacred people dare not even utter it that God is the one who comforts the brokenhearted the one who heals the sick the one who welcomes the outcasts the one who encourages the weary and the one who says to everyone come to me. When you look at Jesus you see such perfect tenderness towards a broken world and that's telling us that is what God is like. And for that reason even if you and I have made a mess of our lives and even if things have gone badly wrong in our experience we all start off life thinking that everything will go well and then we soon discover the older we get that things don't always go well. Things don't always turn out the way we want them to be. We are being reminded that if you are trusting in Jesus you have a friend at the very top. You have a friend exalted over the whole universe and that's an amazing privilege an amazing comfort. So Paul tells us Jesus is highly exalted he tells us that his name is above every name and the logical consequence of that is that as Lord as the one who has this lordship Jesus reigns over all that's the next thing that Paul tells us in verse 10 Jesus reigns over all and there's lots that we could see here I simply want to highlight that Paul is reminding us that this is a fact. Indeed everything that Paul has told us is a fact it's a fact that Jesus has been highly exalted it's a fact that his name is above every name it's a fact that he is Lord and some people recognize that fact already and I hope that that every single person here is included in that number we acknowledge yes Jesus is Lord but we know that there are but I was gonna say thousands millions of people know who don't recognize that fact but the fact that people do not recognize it does not for one minute undermine the fact of Jesus's lordship and this should really stop us and make us think because you think of all the ways that Jesus's name is is mocked and blasphemed today you think of the fact that that you're gonna hear that tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day you hear

Jesus's name mocked honestly that should make us shudder because Paul is reminding us that whether it is today tomorrow or on the day of judgment every knee will bow every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and as Paul says in Romans 319 that will be a day when every mouth is stopped and the whole world will be held accountable to God so the Lordship of Jesus Christ is highlighting some great theological truths Jesus is exalted risen victorious Savior Jesus is the Lord God himself that name above every name and Jesus reigns over all total supremacy absolute authority and universal sovereignty and of course this explains so much of what we do as Christians this is why we worship Jesus because he is exalted over all this is why we worship him the only the only one the only being who should ever be worshiped as God and Jesus can only be worshiped because he is God this is why we worship him this is why we hope in

Jesus this is why Jesus is such good news because he reigns and he has the victory and this is why if you are a Christian you are safe so safe in Jesus because nothing can threaten him nothing is out with his control that's why he can say nobody can snatch you out of my hand because I'm at the top everything is under me and so I'm holding you you are eternally safe this is why we have security as Christians and this is why we preach Jesus because he alone is Lord we preach an exclusive message people don't like exclusiveness today but we we are an exclusive people in the sense that we preach Jesus as the only

Savior the only Lord he alone is the one who reigns this is why we preach him and this is why we are accountable to him Jesus reigns as Lord forever and the only question is whether we realize that or not Jesus is Lord that's some of the theological truth that Paul highlights to us and the fact that Jesus is Lord is a glorious theological truth but alongside the theology of Christ's Lordship there are also immensely important practical implications for us the fact that Jesus is Lord is one of the most important truths for practical Christianity and at the heart of that the heart of the practical side of this is one word one word I'd love to ask can you guess what it is well you don't need to tell me you don't need to answer but I want you to see if you can guess what it is but I'll give you a clue it is in verse 12 so you look at verse 12 and see what is the one word at the heart of a response to Christ's Lordship the answer is obedience therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed if Jesus is Lord then we should obey him of course that makes perfect sense doesn't it if Jesus is highly exalted if Jesus is the name above every name if Jesus is reigning over all creation is and if he is the one to whom we must give an account then it's not simply systematic theology that tells us it is basic common sense that tells us we must must must live the way he wants us to live and yet the astounding thing is is that there seems to be so many people that say that Jesus is their Lord and yet often it can have little effect on the way they live their life I think I probably have to hold my hands up and say I was probably like that in some ways I probably still am like that but as when I first came to faith I would have said yeah Jesus is Lord but I don't think I gave nearly enough consideration as to the effect that should have had on my life and and that's a pattern we see in so many places but yet it's so simple isn't it it's so logical if Jesus is Lord and we have got to obey him and of course the opposite is true isn't it if we don't listen to Jesus if we don't obey him then we have to ask the question is he really our Lord and that's why although obedience has no part in becoming a Christian and that's a really important point we become Christians by faith in Jesus Christ we are saved by faith alone obedience works of the law they are not part of what makes us Christians

[24 : 55] obedience is not part of becoming a Christian but it is at the very heart of being a Christian that is why Jesus said why do you call me Lord Lord and not do what I tell you so we've got to obey and we want to obey we love Jesus we want to obey him we want to serve him and we think to ourselves well how how can we obey Jesus better well the brilliant thing of it this chapter is that Paul highlights five things that should characterize our obedience and we can look at these together briefly because he gives us some fantastic advice and this advice is found from verse 12 to verse 16 and we'll just go through these verses fairly briefly together like I said he says five things first thing he says our obedience involves reverence therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling in that phrase Paul gives the really interesting command he says work out your salvation and in doing so he's highlighting the fact that our salvation should have an effect on our daily lives when we are saved it is not a one-off isolated event in our experience we can't say I prayed a prayer all those years ago it hasn't changed much now but I prayed a prayer back then and that means I'm saved that's not how salvation works

Paul is reminding us that there is a working out in our daily lives there's an out working in our daily conduct of the fact that we are Christians and that out working of our salvation should be characterized by fear and trembling and what does that say well it's not saying that we are to be nervous wrecks but rather it's highlighting the fact that reverence should be at the heart of living under Christ's Lordship and again it all makes perfect sense if Jesus is Lord if he's exalted to the highest position if his name is above every name and if every one of us is going to give an account to him then there should never be a moment in our lives when we do not view Jesus with utter reverence and respect now that doesn't mean that Jesus isn't your friend as we sang in Psalm 25 we are God's friends if we are Christians and the heart of the gospel is the fact that you can now view Jesus as your brother if you're a

Christian you can talk to him as your friend but just like in our own families if you love your brother and if someone is your true friend then you will always show reverent care and concern for how your friend feels always remember that when Jesus becomes your friend he's still your Lord and while he gently holds our hand we are still bowing before him in worship in wonder and in adoration and I want to say to you never ever ever be afraid to show that you respect the Lord never be afraid to show that so I said you're going to be encountering people this week who will mock God and you are not there to scold them remember God is their judge God is their judge only they would see it but anyway God is their judge so we're not there to scold them but we are not there to endorse what they're doing we're not there to join in never be afraid to say look I cannot speak in that way about the Lord I can't speak about God in that way if Jesus is Lord then we should revere and respect him if people are having a conversation that's just you know you can just say look I don't want to be part of this I don't want to be part of it never be afraid to show that you respect the Lord so our obedience involves reverence that's the first thing Paul tells us second thing Paul tells us is that our obedience involves service verse 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure here Paul is facing a really interesting point he's pointing at the fact that obeying God doesn't just mean never disobeying him sometimes we think that this well obeying God just means we never break any of his commandments we never do any of the things he tells us not to do but obedience is more than that obeying is not just never disobeying obey obedience means actively serving God to will and to work for his good pleasure and Paul is highlighting the fact that if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian God is at work in you and he is at work through you we are serving him every day as I keep saying whatever you're doing tomorrow morning you're doing that for God no matter how insignificant it may be God has placed you there to do what you are doing you're doing it in his service and he is working through us and in particular he works through our obedience to him and this is reminding us that when we pray thy will be done as we pray in the

Lord's prayer and I hope we pray every day we are not so much praying that the order of the events of that day would fall in accordance with God's wishes that's going to happen anyway but God is in control so when you say thy will be done when I don't think we're really talking so much about everything just occurring and falling into place in a sequence of events according to God's plan so that happens anyway when you pray thy will be done you are primarily praying that you would be obedient to God because God's will for us is that we would obey his law living for him becoming more and more like Jesus and God himself by his spirit dwells in you and he is at work in you to give you that desire to will to make you want it and to work and that's really important when we face temptation because every one of us face tempta we will all face temptation to sin but when we face temptation we can pray that God would give us that will to work for his good pleasure we all find sin appealing we all find sin appealing but we can pray to God look Lord please take away that desire please soften that desire please help me overcome that desire whatever it is if it's greed when you want more than you have and more than you need or whether it's jealousy when you resent what other people have or what other people have achieved or if it's lust when you are attracted to people in a way that you should not be or whether it is anger where you can't control your emotions and you take your frustration and your insecurity out on others whatever it is when sin crutches at your door pray that God would suppress those desires and that by his spirit working in you you would have that will in order to work for his good pleasure in other words that your desire and your actions would be pleasing to him our obedience involves service Jesus is Lord so we want to obey him and serve him in our lives thirdly Paul tells us that our obedience involves enthusiasm he says do all things without grumbling or disputing and that's a really interesting verse because it's highlighting the fact that it's not just our actions that fall under the Lordship of Christ but also our attitude whenever we do anything whenever we do anything it should be without grumbling notice Paul writes all things you don't have to be a New

Testament scholar to know that all things means all things and in two words just two words Paul strips away any excuse whatsoever for grumbling and complaining or being negative as Christians and the key point is that if Jesus is our Lord then we should be enthusiastic because we have every reason to be Jesus is exalted because he came alongside us he went to the death of the cross for us he died he took our sins and he has done everything everything everything that you and I need to be saved and he has committed himself to you not for a day or a week or a month or a year or a lifetime but for eternity and boy that is every reason we need to be enthusiastic and so alongside our fear and trembling yes we have that reverence but alongside that fear and trembling before the Lord of glory we are also bursting bursting with enthusiasm in the joy of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ that's why as

[35 : 11] Christians we should come to church enthusiastically we sing enthusiastically we pray enthusiastically we listen to the Bible enthusiastically and then we go home and we carry on being enthusiastic enthusiastic husbands enthusiastic wives enthusiastic parents enthusiastic children even enthusiastic at work or at school or wherever you are going to be tomorrow morning Jesus is Lord I saw there's nothing nothing to grumble or dispute about and we want to serve him and obey him with enthusiasm so we serve him with reverence our obedience involves reverence it involves service obedience involves enthusiasm fourthly obedience involves standing out from the crowd sort of verse 15 tells us that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world here Paul is highlighting the fact that if we live with Jesus as Lord then we are going to stand out from the crowd and that is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple remember what Jesus said in the Simon and the Mount he said don't be like them don't be like the rest of the world be different and as Christians we have got to be ready to be different but when we are different as Christians we are different in a wonderful way not in a restricting or constraining or life-spoiling way but different in a brilliant way we've got to stand out from the crowd so tomorrow and this week if the people around you are gossiping we are going to be different because Jesus is Lord if the people around you are moaning and criticizing we are going to be different because Jesus is Lord if people around us drink too much or indulge too much or go down paths that we know are wrong we are going to be different because Jesus is Lord if people around us are casual in their relationships if they are careless with the truth if they are selfish in their ways we are going to be different because Jesus is

Lord and in this verse Paul is pointing us to a really important question he is raising the question do we live in a crooked and twisted generation he's saying to these Philippians you're going to stand out as children of God in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation we have to ask is that still true today do we live in a crooked and twisted generation well do we our TV programs today crooked and twisted not all of them are but are some of them are Saturday nights in Stornoway crooked and twisted is your daily newspaper crooked and twisted and if you think about it what is it that you need to do in order to blend in with a crooked and twisted generation you have to be crooked and twisted yourself if you want to blend in you've just got to be like them but if you want to stand out then you need to be the opposite of crooked and twisted upright honest pure consistent holy godly bearing the fruit of the spirit love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control these are the things that should make us stand out obedience involves standing out from the crowd that doesn't mean that you have no contact with the crowd and I will always say that and there's two two mistakes that we can make as Christians on the one hand we can say well I'm not gonna have any contact with the world around me that's unbiblical absolutely unbiblical to think like that the Bible says go in the world Jesus says I don't pray that you would take them out of the world but that you'd keep them from the evil one so we must not make the mistake of having no contact with the world whatsoever but so often we solve one problem by going to the opposite extreme and we go into the world and we are just like them living as a Christian means be in the world but be different stand out as a follower of the Lord Jesus and the fruit of the spirit and the Sermon on the Mount will tell you how to do that and that's what we want to study and learn together obedience involves standing out from the crowd and fifthly obedience involves holding fast to God's word first part of six verse 16 Paul says holding fast to the word of life and that's the key to all obedience the key to all obedience is holding on to God's word holding on to the Bible and again it's so logical if Jesus is Lord we need to listen to what he says if we want to hear what Jesus says we need to hold fast to the Bible because that is where Jesus speaks to us that's why we need to read the Bible we need to think about it we need to talk about it we need to pray about it we need to discuss it we need to learn it we need to even memorize it so that we hold on to it with all our might and I hope that over the coming months and years we will do that more and more talk about the Bible more that it will be on our lips that we would ask questions that we would learn that we would grow and that that people would look at us and say well there's people

who are holding fast to the word of life we need to hold on to God's word at all times and in these five things Paul is warning us against some of the most dangerous pitfalls in the Christian life pitfalls that are so easy for us to fall into the urge for reverence what he says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling that is warning us against the pitfall of being a casual Christian the encouragement to serve is warning us against the pitfall of being an idle Christian the need for enthusiasm is warning us against the pitfall of being a complaining Christian the need to stand out from the crowd is warning us against the pitfall of being a compromising Christian and the call to hold on to God's word is warning us against being a drifting Christian and if we can keep focus on the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord then we will avoid all of these things so Paul gives us great theological truth and really really important practical instruction and then he finishes at the end of verse 16 and as he finishes he raises an incredibly solemn question he says so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain and in these words Paul is raising the question he's basically saying I've worked among you Philippians I've seen you profess your faith I've seen you do you know establish yourselves as a church but I'm just asking myself this was it all in vain that goes back to what we were saying that if Jesus is Lord it should have a real a very real practical daily effect on our lives Paul's basically saying to the Philippians if the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not shaping your life then I am worried that my work among you was in vain and 2,000 years later he is probing us with the same question because so many of us have said Jesus is Lord but Paul is just nudging us and tapping us on the shoulder and he's saying was that in vain and I hope that every single one of us is saying no way was that in vain Jesus is Lord Jesus is my Lord and I am going to live this week and every moment of my life for him let's pray together

Lord our God we thank you that Jesus is Lord we say that with fear and trembling knowing that he reigns and he is the one to whom we must give a gift but we also say that with utter thankfulness and with joy in our hearts because Jesus is our Lord and as our Lord if he is our Lord it means that we are his and we thank you for that so much and we pray oh God that the Lordship of Jesus Christ would not just be a small truth that we are aware of in our lives but we pray that the Lordship of Jesus Christ would be everything that every day of God we would live for you help us to stand out from the crowd in the right way in the biblical way not in an arrogant way not in a judgmental way not in a selfish way but in a biblical Christ-like way help us Lord to serve you with obedience help us to have that sense of reverence that we need help us to be bursting with enthusiasm and never to be complaining because we have absolutely no right to and help us oh God to just hold hold hold fast to your word help us to hold fast to your word and we pray oh God that every moment of our lives would be lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and we pray that in his name and that it would be for his glory. Amen.