



## The Way Up Is Down

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . Who, being in the form of God, . . . humbled himself. . . Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him . . .”*  
(Philippians 2:5-9, KJV).

**G**od wants all His children to succeed at being who He has called them to be and at doing what He has called them to do. So we have lots of help in Scripture. There are other criteria for success beside exaltation. However, exaltation is part of God’s good plan and will for His people. We see this clearly when Moses told God’s people Israel, “And the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath; if you hearken to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, to observe and to do them” (Deuteronomy 28:13, *NKJV*). In this verse we notice both God’s intent and His criteria for fulfillment of His plan. Throughout Scripture we observe Israel failing often to observe and do God’s commandments; at those times they were brought very low.

The Scripture passage for today is from Philippians. In this passage we see how Jesus lived out exactly what He taught so often: the way up is down. This principle is in stark contrast to how the world would approach promotion. It is, however, exactly the approach God would have us take. God’s people are to follow spiritual principles rather than the world’s. We are to live our lives differently from the way the world lives, that is, trusting God as our source for everything and living our lives according to His plan for us—not ours.

**T**oday we will look at how we may find God’s plan for our lives in exaltation. The passage for today brings us the example of Jesus. There are many other success stories in Scripture.

Most of them demonstrate both how to fail and how to succeed. They were imperfect people like us and their stories are very helpful. Jesus, however, never failed. His example is best of all.

I must point out first that Jesus’ life looks like a dismal failure to many. He had no personal wealth, was crucified and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He was hated and rejected by many of those He came to save. In the natural, nothing about His life would make one want to be like Him. For many of us and for many of God’s children throughout the centuries, this is how life has seemed. God, however, does not judge by outward appearances. He looks on the heart, and He calls success by His standards and not the world’s. Sometimes exaltation comes after this earthly life passes. It did for Jesus.

**H**ave you noticed how God’s ways are often very different from our ways? We are prone naturally, it seems, to follow the world’s ways of doing things. God tells us clearly, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8, *KJV*). God does, however, want us to know His thoughts and ways and to follow them. So He teaches us in His Word and by His Spirit. He teaches us the way to success that will last for eternity because it is His way. If we follow it, God will call us successful even if we or no one else would.

In today’s passage from Philippians, we are first told that Jesus had right thinking about Himself and how He would accomplish the mission of His life. We are instructed, as Paul

wrote to the Philippians, to think like Jesus—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” You might want to read the entire passage, as I have included only parts of the verses. The mind of Christ is demonstrated here to be one of humility. He “humbled himself.”

**J**esus, who was God from eternity past, knew He must humble Himself in order to complete God’s will for His life on earth. He came from the throne of heaven to the manger in a stable. He came as a servant. Jesus told His disciples: “. . . whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20: 26-28, *KJV*).

Because Jesus humbled Himself to a greater measure than any other person has or ever could, God exalted Him to a greater measure than any other person. Paul told the Philippians, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9, *KJV*).

**T**hroughout Scripture we find the principle of humbling ourselves. Peter wrote, “Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6, *NKJV*). God has timing and purpose for everything He does or allows. Sometimes promotion does not come when or to whom we think it should. We must trust God to handle these matters in His timing and purpose for our lives.

In the 1 Peter passage we see a second principle regarding success: exaltation is from the Lord. Samuel wrote that the Lord “humbles and he exalts” (1 Samuel 2:7, *NIV*). Also in Psalm 75:6-7, we read: “For promotion comes neither

from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he brings one down, and exalts another” (*NIV*).

**S**ometimes it may appear a person pulled some strings or used friendship to gain a promotion. Scripture has quite a bit to say about those who exalt themselves. God’s children are cautioned against this. Jesus said, “For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11, *NKJV*). We still must not be quick to judge. We must trust God to deal with these incidents however He sees fit. There were times in Scripture when God exalted an unrighteous person to leadership and used that person for His purposes. King Nebuchadnezzar is an example, and so is Queen Esther’s husband, King Ahasuerus. There are also lots of examples of God bringing unrighteous leaders down.

A very subtle method of self-exaltation can creep into our lives. In our ordinary, everyday conversation, we might be surprised if we counted how many times we say “I” or boast about this accomplishment, that adventure or some conversation in which we gained the upper hand. There are so many ways we can exalt ourselves. I believe most of the time we are not at all aware that we do it.

**Y**our life, your success, your exaltation—or the apparent lack thereof—matters to God. Following Christ’s example and the teaching of Scripture will insure God takes note and works in your behalf, whether He promotes you in this life or schedules your exaltation later. God sees us already as “kings and priests unto God” (Revelation 1:6, *KJV*). And it is His perspective that matters most. **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY

Teaching Letter 18

“The Way Up is Down”

Sonjia Hunt Ministries

[www.sonjahuntministries.com](http://www.sonjahuntministries.com)

PO Box 21 Cleveland, TN 37364-0021