



SERIES: Philippians (May / June) “Finding Joy in the Journey”

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Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8

TITLE: A Confusing Passage

You cannot give what you do not have. That’s what I told my friend recently, as he was trying to give and serve with all he had, but I could see he was empty. Being empty is usually a problem. When the car runs out of gas, it’s stuck. When you’re competing in sports, but the water bottle is empty, you’re in trouble. No matter how hard you shake the bottle, if it’s empty, it’s done. When you pull all-nighters for school, night after night, guess what? You’re going to stall out; you’re empty.

But like I said, emptiness is usually a problem. But there is one emptying that was essential for our souls. What do I mean by that? Listen to Paul’s words in Philippians 2:

“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave

And was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” (Phil. 2:5-8, NLT)

Paul has just taught on the unity of mind and purpose being founded on selflessness and humility. So Paul goes from practical to the perfect illustration in Jesus Christ. Paul says if you want unity in selflessness, then you need to have the same attitude as Christ.

Well, what does that look like? Paul rightly declares, Jesus was God. He is God. Always has been and always will be. And then Paul says something unusual. “He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.” What does that mean? Well, Jesus was and is fully God. He is equal, because He is One in essence.

I get it. The Trinity is a mystery, but a divine reality. God has always existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And by becoming man, Jesus did not forfeit any of His deity. He was and remained fully God. And his Godhood cannot be lost. That’s why He didn’t need to cling to it.

So what did Jesus do? Well, this version says that He gave up his divine privileges. You probably know it to say “emptied Himself.” This is one of the talked-about passages in the Bible. What does it mean for Jesus to empty Himself? Well, it’s not correct to think He gave up being God, or gave up or forfeited His divine attributes.

Instead, He gave up, or emptied Himself of some divine rights. He suppressed them. He never removed them, but much like I can hit a baseball with all my strength, I can forfeit that ability, and just give it a tap. I am fully capable, but for the right reason, I don't execute that ability.

This emptying Himself was to become a slave - an obedient slave who would obey the Father, even to the point of death on the cross. He becomes a man; emptied Himself; was obedient all the way to death, so you and I might have life. Amazing.

So here's my challenge for you today. Be thankful to God. Tell God how much you love Him. Tell Jesus how much you appreciate His sacrifice on the cross. Praise Him for being fully God, and now fully man, so He could be our Savior and our King.