



### *Pastor's Update*

**“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being found in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7).**

One of the most profound statements about the Person and work of Jesus Christ is found in Philippians 2:5-11). In this passage, the apostle describes the journey of the Son of God from His exalted status in glory to His humiliation in death, followed by His exaltation to glory.

In its first four-hundred years, the church sought to understand what it means for Jesus to be both divine and human. Some denied his full humanity; others denied His full deity. For example, Docetism taught the manhood of Christ was apparent but not real. It claimed that, as in some Greek myths, a divine being was dressed up as a man in order to communicate revelation, but was not really involved in the human state and withdrew before the passion. On the other hand, there were others within the church that denied the deity of Christ. The most famous in this category are the Arians. They asserted that Jesus did not exist before His birth. Their denial of the deity of Christ is summarized in the statement accredited to their founder, Arius: “There was when he was not.”

Those who deny Christ's deity usually refer to Philippians 2:7 where Paul states that Christ “emptied Himself.” Their reasoning is that since Christ “emptied Himself” of His divine attributes, He could not be God. But this could not be the case since there are many passages in the Bible which support the truth that Christ is divine (Jn. 1:1-14; 10:30; 14:11).

What then is the meaning of the phrase “emptied Himself.” The tricky little word “emptied”, is a translation of the Greek verb “kenoō” which means “to empty, make empty or to make of no effect.” From this Greek term, the “kenosis” theory or “self-emptying” of Christ was developed. The word does not mean that Christ emptied Himself of some or all of His divine attributes, similar to when someone pours out water from a bucket. Rather, it means that Christ emptied Himself of the display of His deity. The point, then, is that Christ does not selfishly exploit His divine form but lays it aside to take the form of a servant. This does not imply that Christ refrained from doing divine things. What it means is that He never acted outside the Father's will. He did not do anything to display His own glory but willingly subjected Himself entirely to the will of His Father. Remarkably, it is in glorifying the Father that the Son Himself is glorified (Jn. 17:1)!

When we study Scriptures, especially lofty Christological passages such as our present text (see also Jn. 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-13), we should remember that the sacred authors were not simply imparting dry theology. Instead they were setting forth the glory of Christ to impart biblical instruction and encouragement to believers. Thus, in Philippians 2:1-11, Paul is presenting Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of the type of humility which ought to exist in the body of Christ. Just as Christ did not abuse His privileges to promote His personal agenda, so believers must “not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philp. 2:4). That is why the Holy Spirit through the pen of the apostle inscribed this majestic passage in the letter to the Philippians. Therefore, whether or not we grasp the mystery of the divinity and humanity united in Jesus Christ, we should not miss the ultimate point of the text: we ought to become servants like Jesus Christ Himself. And this we are able to do as we read in the very same chapter, “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work His good pleasure” (Philip. 2:13).

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis