
Which is it ?

the AV "made Himself of no reputation"
or the RV/ASV "emptied himself"

This beautiful passage (Philippians 2:1-11), portrays the depth of love the Lord Jesus exercised on our behalf as the example for us but the impact of it's meaning can be marred by unwise translation, and the work of translation can be fraught with difficulty as can be seen in the different ways one Greek word is translated in verse 7.

In the King James version (AV) we read that he "*made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant*". Whereas the Revised and the American Standard versions read "*emptied himself taking the form of a servant*". Even the first copies of the New King James Version broke away from the AV rendering and had "*emptied Himself*" but later editions reverted to the AV wording, "*made himself of no reputation*". The question arises, is this a problem and if so, which translation is correct?

The revisers were right to correct "*and took*" to "*taking*"* but it does not seem logical to say that he emptied himself by "*taking*". We

empty ourselves by removing out - not by taking in. Since "*taking*" is correct it puts a question mark against the translation "*emptied himself*".

{*Greek. λαβων - *labwn*, aorist participle.

Pronounce the *w* as the Welsh *w*}

Alternatively, if those revisers are telling us that he emptied himself then took on the form of a servant, we will want to know of what he emptied himself. This has given rise to much speculation. For example - did he empty himself of deity? This of course would contradict such statements as "*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead* bodily.*" Colossians 2:9. So again there is a problem.

{* Greek Θεοτης - *theotaytos* - deity }

However if it is correct in saying that the Lord Jesus made himself of no reputation by taking on the form of a servant then there is no theological problem and it leads smoothly to the next thought, "*being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself*" v.8.

So which is correct? Is it "*made Himself of no reputation*" or "*emptied himself*" ?

The phrase "*made Himself of no reputation*" is from the Greek word "*kenow*" (κενωω) which lexicons do define as "to empty". But it is not that simple because the AV always

translates "*kenow*" figuratively. Here are all the occurrences of "*kenow*" and their AV renderings:-

Romans 4.14 "*is made void*",

1.Cor. 1.17 "*should be made of none effect*",

1.Cor. 9.15 "*should make ... void*",

2.Cor. 9.3 "*should be in vain*"

and the case in point:-

Phil. 2.7 "*made ... of no reputation*".

From the contexts of these passages it is evident that in the New Testament, the verb "*kenow*" is always used idiomatically of things being rendered ineffective or insignificant and not literally of objects being made empty.

Also in Jeremiah 14:2 (AV "*languish*") and 15:9 (AV "*languisheth*") the Septuagint translators of the Greek Old Testament used "*kenow*" to translate the Hebrew word "AMAL", which means "*to be weak*".

It is then evident that, despite the etymological meaning "*to empty*" given in Lexicons. "*kenow*" in the scriptures was understood to refer to something being insignificant or ineffective. That would mean; Philippians 1:7 is saying that the Lord Jesus made himself insignificant by taking on the form of a servant* and verse 5 tells us we should have the same mind in us. That

means there is no room for self-importance in the Christian.

{* Greek: δουλος - "doulos", a slave}

Our Lord did not cling on to the prestige of his status - he took on the totally non-prestigious status of a slave. We should have the same attitude, the same disposition.

Thank you Lord Jesus
for this beautiful lesson

Philippians 2:1-11 (a direct translation)

{The bold text is from the Greek word "know"}

So, if there is, in Christ, any companionship, if any of love's soothing, if any of the Spirit's sharing together, if any compassion and empathy, complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being soulmates with one purpose, doing nothing in rivalry nor from empty self importance; but in humility each esteeming the other better than themselves.

None of you must be concerned about your own things, but each one of you should instead be concerned about the things of others, because you should allow the same attitude to be in you, which is in Christ Jesus:

Who, existing in the rank of God, was not

insistent on holding in his grasp being altogether equal with God

(Verse 7) **but relegated himself**, taking on himself the rank of a slave, becoming ¹ like humans.

Moreover, finding himself ² in form as a human, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Moreover, for this very reason, God has highly exalted him, and granted him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should emphatically acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹ Greek γινομαι - ginomai - indicating a change of condition / a change of state. In this case a change from the state of being equal with God to the state of being like human beings.

² "himself" is added being understood from the later phrase "humbled *himself*".

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Self-Importance

"Made himself of no reputation"

[Philippians 2:1-7]