



Many translations of [Philippians 2:6](#) give the impression that Jesus Christ is equal with his Father, Almighty God. For example:

(ESV) “*who, though he was in the form of God, did not count **equality with God**, a thing to be grasped, / **Or** a thing to be held on to for advantage*” but emptied himself,

(NIV) “*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider **equality with God** something to be used to his own advantage;*” rather, he made himself nothing,

(NLV) *“Jesus has always been as God is. But He **did not hold to His rights** as God.”* He put aside everything that belonged to Him,

(NLT) *“Though he was God, he **did not think of equality with God** as something to cling to.”* Instead, he gave up his divine privilege,

(NRSV) *“who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard **equality with God** as something to be exploited,”* but emptied himself,

(GW) *“Although he was in the form of God and **equal with God**, he did not take advantage of this equality.”* Instead, he emptied himself,

(CEV) *“Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain **equal with God**. Instead he gave up everything,*

(CEB) *“Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider being **equal with God** something to exploit.”* But he emptied himself,

Now, let's look at some accurate translations of [Philippians 2:6](#):

“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.” (Philippians 2:5-6 NASB).

**“Who, although he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance”—Philippians 2:6,7
NAB**

“Did not reach out for equality with God, in contrast with the first Adam in Gn 3:5-6”—NAB note

Other accurate translations of [Philippians 2:6](#) are:

“He was in the form of God, yet he laid no claim to equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the form of a slave. Bearing the human likeness”—[Philippians 2:6,7](#) REB

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”—ESV

“Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped”—NJB

“Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”—BSB; BLB

“who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped”—LSB

“who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God”—ERV

“In God’s own form existed he, and shared with God equality, deemed nothing needed grasping.”—LSV

“Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”—MSB

“who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped”—NET

“who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped”—NHB

“who, existing in the form of God, didn’t consider equality with God a thing to be grasped”—WEB

“who, being in the form of God, thought [it] not something to be seized to be equal to God”—LSV

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be seized”—CPDV

Being, “in the *form* of God”, means that Jesus is not God! Someone who already has something does not have to ‘grasp’ for it. Jesus would not even think about trying to be equal to God. Christians are to have the same attitude of humility. Obviously, Jesus is separate from, and inferior to, God.

Let’s now consider [Philippians 2:6](#) from the standpoint of the Greek text:

εν	μορφη	θεου	υπαρχων	ουχ	αρπαγμα	ηγησατο	το	ειναι	ισα	θεω
in	form	of deity	being	not	a plunder	did he regard	the	to be	equal to	deity

The Greek word *harpagmos* is a noun form of the verb *harpazō*, to snatch up, to seize up. The word is used to refer to a plunder, a booty, prize. It is something which one snatches up or seizes upon to take for himself as one does a plunder or booty. The verb “regard” is a negative. In verse 6, Paul is not telling us what Jesus did; he is telling us what Jesus did not do. Paul never tells us what Jesus regarded/considered; he tells us what Jesus did not consider/regard. Jesus did not regard/consider/deem/esteem a plunder. What is the plunder in question? The plunder is to be equal to God. He did not regard a plunder to be equal to God.

This was something Jesus did not do and Paul is about to tell us what Jesus DID DO in contrast to what he DID NOT DO.

Note: This is important to clearly understand since many layperson Trinitarians imagine that Jesus was up in heaven deliberating (considering) between what he should do or not do and they suppose he DID consider doing what Paul mentions in verse 6 but didn't do it. However, nothing like this is even mentioned here. The text does not suggest Jesus was thinking about two different choices as if he DID consider doing something which he ultimately didn't do. However, we are told just the opposite; we are told what he did not consider doing. In other words, in verse 6 Paul is telling us that **Jesus never entertained** – he did not consider/regard). Put another way, unlike the deliberating Jesus of Trinitarian imagination, we are not being told what Jesus was thinking about (considering); we are being told what he did not think about.

The verbal expression containing the infinitive *einai* is marked by the Greek article *to* (“the”). Basically, this means that the verbal expression following the article is to be treated like a noun, the “something.” The “something” in question is a certain equality – to be equal to God, the state or condition of being equal with God.

This equality with God is anaphoric and refers back to the “form of God.”

The Expositor's Greek Testament says: “We cannot find any passage where [*har·pa'zo*] or any of its derivatives [including *har·pag·mon'*] has the sense of ‘holding in possession,’ ‘retaining’. It seems invariably to mean ‘seize,’ ‘snatch violently’. Thus it is not permissible to glide from the true sense ‘grasp at’ into one which is totally different, ‘hold fast.’”—(Grand Rapids, Mich.; 1967), edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, Vol. III, pp. 436, 437.

Now let's consider the Greek text of [Philippians 2:7](#):

αλλα	εαυτον	εκενωσεν	μορφην	δουλου	λαβων	εν	ομοιωματι	ανθρωπων	γενομενος
rather	himself	he emptied	form	of a slave	taking	in	likeness	of humans	becoming

Verse 6 tells us what Jesus did not do in contrast to verse 7 where we are told what Jesus did do. This contrast between what he didn't do, and what he did do, is marked by the word "rather." We are being told what Jesus rather did instead of considering a plunder to be equal to God. Jesus did not regard a *harpagmos* to be equal to God. He did something else. He emptied himself. The verb here may also be translated as "he made himself nothing" or "he nullified/voided himself." In other words, Jesus denied himself just as he taught his disciples to do. The Philippians are to do the same.

This self emptying is further qualified by the words, "taking the form of a servant." Rather than regarding a prize/plunder to be equal to God, Jesus did something else. He chose to assume the position of a servant and serve God. A plunder involves taking something for one's self. To be in the form of God means to be noble and rule but to be in the form of a servant means to be humble and serve rather than rule. Serving involves giving not taking as one takes a plunder for himself.

Such a translation also agrees with Jesus Christ himself, who said: "The Father is greater than I."—[John 14:28](#).

Without equality, the Trinity doctrine collapses.