

ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 8,
2017

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



“My Bible Doesn’t Say That”

How the Bible Came to Us (11)

By Kyle Pope

When I first began preaching I was teaching a Bible class on the book of Romans. As we came to chapter eight someone in the class read the first few verses. After he finished, another student raised his hand and said of the first verse, “My Bible doesn’t say that.” Most all translations begin the verse: **“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”**—but some translations end the verse with these words. Others continue, **“...who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit”** (NKJV). Why would there be such a dramatic difference in wording? What accounts for this difference and how can the student of Scripture evaluate which reading should be preferred?

Differences in Translation

Although one may believe that the Bible is God’s word preserved in its entirety through the ages there are at least three reasons versions differ:

1. The Approach to Translation. Imagine you were translating a letter for someone who spoke another language and you came to phrases such as “fits like a glove,” “it’s a piece of cake,” or “let the cat out of the bag.” You would have to decide whether to bring

these expressions into the other language word-for-word or translate the sense of each phrase. If you kept it exactly as it is you create what translators call a *formal equivalence* translation. If instead you translated, “It’s a piece of cake” to “It’s very easy,” you help the reader understand the basic idea, but you aren’t doing a literal translation. This is what is called a *dynamic equivalence* translation. Let’s say you changed it even more to read, “It wasn’t any trouble at all.” In this case you have moved even further away from the actual words while still translating the basic idea. This approach is called a *paraphrase*. There

are challenges in each of these approaches. A translation that’s too literal might leave someone looking for cats, gloves, and cake, but a translation that paraphrases too much won’t let the reader see the words the author actually used. Different translations handle these challenges in different ways. Whenever a translator moves beyond exact wording, great caution must be exercised to avoid bias, and error.

2. Changes in Language. All languages change over time. Take for example the word *silly*. In its earliest form it referred to something blessed or worthy, but as time moved on it described things weak and vulnerable. Now we use it almost exclusively of things that are foolish. Some translations differ because of these kinds of changes. Newer translations may replace older expressions with modern wording so the older expression won’t be misunderstood.

3. The Textual Basis. So let’s think once again about how to translate a letter. It’s one thing if you had only one copy, but what if you had three—a hand-written version, a typed version, and a photocopy? Let’s say that in the hand-written version some words were crossed out and other words were written above the line. Which words do you use to make your translation? Scholars call the process of determining the original text of a manuscript through the study of available copies *textual criticism*. That doesn’t mean someone is “criticizing” the content of the text. It

is the attempt to critically determine the best reading from the evidence. Some scholars argue that readings found in the oldest surviving texts should have priority. Others argue that readings represented in the most copies should be used. The choice a translator makes regarding what copies (or group of copies) to look to determines the *textual basis* that underlies a translation. This is one of the most significant causes of differences in translation. The final phases of our study we will consider factors that influence the textual basis used to translate Scripture.



New Testament Textual Evidence

The Holy Spirit has not preserved the original manuscripts of any biblical texts, but that should not lead us to doubt the accuracy and preservation of the biblical text. There are more than 5800 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. When we add in early translations the number grows to more than 20,000. Compared to the manuscript evidence for other ancient literature this is amazing! Many ancient texts have survived in only a handful of manuscripts. The works of Plato, for example are preserved in only seven manuscripts. Only ten manuscripts of the works of Julius Caesar survive. Homer's *Illiad* is one of the most highly attested, with 643 copies, but for all of these ancient texts the gap between the date of the earliest manuscript and the date it was originally written range from 500 to 1400 years. There are fragments of New Testament manuscripts that date to the second and late first centuries. No other ancient manuscript is attested by this kind of manuscript evidence.

Among these 5800 manuscripts there are many differences, but only a small percentage affect the meaning of the text. Most are spelling differences. Ancient people seldom followed standardized forms of spelling to the degree that we do. This is much like what can still be seen when comparing British vs. American spelling of English words. We understand that *colour* and *color*, or *doughnut* and *donut* are different ways of spelling the same words. Another difference involves multiple ways to say the same thing. In English word order is limited. Let's say we wanted to write, "Joseph loved Mary." We could put it, "Mary, Joseph loved," but there are few (if any) other ways to express this same idea. Greek scholar Daniel B. Wallace has demonstrated dozens of ways Greek could express exactly the same concept with slight variations in

wording. Nothing changes in the meaning, but the form is different.

In some instances words or phrases may be omitted or substituted. Some of this is likely due to the ancient process of copying texts that involved the reading of a text out loud while scribes dictated what they heard. A busy scribe might substitute a similar word unintentionally. An example of this may be seen in Matthew 15:6. Most texts speak of the "**commandment of God**" but some put it the "**word of God.**" The meaning is essentially the same but a variant exists nonetheless. In only a very few instances are there differences that affect meaning. In the example from Romans 8:1 mentioned in the beginning a few manuscripts omit the last part of the verse while the majority of manuscripts include it.

Textus Receptus Editions of the Greek New Testament

Translators can't consult 5800 manuscripts, so how do



nus' work came to be known as the "Text received by all" or *Textus Receptus*. Editions that came out after this were also called the *Textus Receptus*, including those of Elziver (1624) and Scrivener (1894). For nearly 400 years editions of the *Textus Receptus* served as the textual basis for all translations of the New Testament into English from the Greek.

they proceed? They must use editions men have compiled based upon their study of manuscript copies of the Scriptures. We noted in our last study the work of Desiderius Erasmus. In 1516 he published the first critical edition of the Greek New Testament. His work was followed by Robert Stephanus (the Latinized name of Robert Estienne). In 1550, Stephanus published a revision of Erasmus' text making use of more manuscripts. Stepha-

The term *Textus Receptus* (or "Received Text") should not be misunderstood to mean that it was considered to be the form of the text *received* from God. Instead, this term was applied to the edition that gained general acceptance and reception among believers. It reflected the standard text used throughout the Greek-speaking world for centuries, known as the Byzantine text-type. It is clear that Erasmus and Stephanus only had limited access to Greek manuscripts, but the texts they published represent what is found in the majority of the manuscripts that have survived. In the nineteenth century an important discovery was made that led many scholars to reject the priority of the *Textus Receptus* and the Byzantine text-type. In our next study we will explore this and other discoveries to consider its impact on the Bibles we now read.



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● **Let us know if you have any questions.**