

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 2, Orientation, So Many Bible, So Little Time, Part 2

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 2, Orientation, So Many Bibles, So Little Time, Part 2.

Welcome back to lecture two in our series on 1 Corinthians and on the biblical e-learning site.

My name is Gary Meadors. My introduction to myself, at least, is at the beginning of the first lecture. We stopped last time talking about So Many Bibles, So Little Time.

The purpose of this particular section has to do with dealing with the proliferation of English translations, what that means for interpreting the Bible, and even what it means for interacting with other Christians who use a different Bible than you do. I'm trying to bring some consciousness to you in relation to the different kinds of Bibles. The last time I illustrated a point, I mentioned Dukonchenko, who was the head of the Union of Russian Baptists.

I was in Kiev at the time. This has been decades ago. He's now deceased.

He and I sat in his office talking about a verse in the Bible. We had a translator, of course, and I read my Bible. When I read my Bible, he was reading his Russian Bible.

As a result, it didn't sound to him the same as what I was doing. So, he leaned over and said, what are you reading? Or at least through the translator, he did. I showed him that I was actually translating out of the Greek New Testament.

In that conversation, I mentioned and brought up several things about the Russian Bible, Luther, and the King James Bible. But I don't think I was as clear as I should have been about the relationship between those things. So, take the illustration about Duke and I talking about the meaning of the Bible and realizing that the translation makes a difference.

Because I deviated from what he was looking at in terms of the Bible he had. And he had both the German and the Russian actually there at the time. And why it didn't come out the same way was an interesting conversation to be had.

I wanted to clarify that because I wasn't really clear. That was an off-the-top-of-my-head illustration, which is probably a bad thing to do. And I wanted to be sure that if there was anyone in the Russian community that was listening, I wasn't trying to talk

about the history of the Russian Bible, which is quite different than the things I mentioned.

But about an incident that took place in Duke's office many years ago. Now, when we stopped, we were trying to point out the difference in the way translations are done. You see, formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence are two different philosophies of translation.

The philosophy of translation of the formal equivalence has to do with being as literal as possible, as free as necessary. And applying that principle through centuries, even of English Bibles, to be able to put the Bible into the language of the people, but not deviate so far from the original documents from which the Bible is being translated that the meaning is skewed in any way. In fact, the translation can be thick sometimes, and by that, we mean it may not be self-explanatory in formal equivalence.

There's one advantage if you use a King James Bible is it gives you a whole lot more to explain to people than if you use something like an NIV. Because the more formal a translation is, the more you have to help people understand what it means. And we'll talk about that a little more about the NIV in a moment.

So, we've got formal equivalence as literal as possible, as free as necessary. Get it into the language of people, but you're not accommodating them totally in the sense of trying to expand that translation to make sense to them. They're going to have to work that out on their own.

They're going to have to do some study to read their Bibles. And any of those Bibles are going to require that. The dynamic equivalence, or functional equivalence, is what is called in a lot of studies these days.

The two illustrations of this particularly are the NIV and then the New Living Translation we call the NLT. We've read the quotation from the introduction to the New Living Translation, which says that a dynamic equivalence translation requires that the text be interpreted accurately and then rendered into an understandable idiom. So that is a window into something very important.

The dynamic equivalent or functional equivalence translation process requires a lot from the translator. It's not just the translator's job to render as literal as possible and yet make it readable. It's the translator's job to try to help the reader understand the point of that text.

As a result of that philosophy of translation, I often refer to the NIV or the NLT as interpretive translations. And I'll illustrate what that means from the chart at the back of these notes in just a moment. An interpretive translation.

Now, that ought to send up some red flags. It's not that they're bad translations. It's that the translator is making more decisions about the meaning of the text as they render that text in a readable form than what formal equivalent translations do. Now, that has a great advantage at the end of the day, as I'll try to illustrate to you as we move along.

But you need to be aware of this. What is the translation theory that drives the Bible that you use? Do you use a formal equivalent translation or do you use a functional or dynamic equivalent translation? And what does that mean? Now let me just kind of pop something out here because it needs to be said. We'll get to it but I need to say it now.

The challenge is not to find the only Bible to read. The challenge is to use all of the Bibles you have but understand what kinds of Bibles they are. How do they do translation? What can I expect or what can I demand of them? And what do I have to be aware of as I read a verse in terms of whether the interpreter has slipped something in to try to help me, but maybe at the end of the day, we won't agree on it?

Now, I can illustrate this best from the chart in a moment but that's a big point isn't it? And if you're in the English-speaking world and dealing with this great array of English Bibles that exist these days, you've got to be aware of this. If you're a ministry professional and I use that word professional intentionally because I do think that ministry people should act and should be educated and should be up to a professional level to help people. Someone wrote a book that said brethren, we are not professionals.

I don't like that title. We are. We are supposed to know what we're talking about.

We're supposed to be able to illustrate our Bibles to people and help them understand them. Otherwise, you're going to have a problem on your hands. When someone comes into your office with a different Bible than yours and maybe even a really way out Bible, a paraphrased Bible of some kind, and they're basing their life on how that verse is rendered, and you're going to have to explain to them that's not really a good rendering.

That's the challenge of dealing with various translations. Now, so you've got functional, dynamic, formal. Keep those straight and know your list.

I've given you a list here, but of course, you'll have to get more, and you can get it from the literature that I'll cite for you later. There is another procedure for translation, and that procedure is called paraphrasing or amplifying. In fact, it gets worse than that.

There are Bibles on the market by media personalities, even pastoral media personalities, that are not translations. That person who sells books, because their name is known, gives you their reading of the English Bible they're reading. So, it's not a translation at all.

It can be very off the charts in terms of anything that you should be reading and should be guiding your life. It sells, yes, but it is not a good idea. Paraphrasing may have some usefulness, but I think you could live your life without it.

The Amplified Bible, which you don't see much anymore, what it did is it just amplified by using all kinds of synonyms in its translation of a verse, using lots of words to try to give the reader something to identify with. That's okay. But words have meaning in context and not every one of the words necessarily means the same thing in a given context.

So, personally, I say identify a couple of functional ones, and let me back that up by identifying a couple of formal translations. Maybe you would use the Revised Standard Version and another one, such as the ESV or the King James or something. Those are formal equivalency.

And then identify a couple of dynamic translations. I would suggest, to be safe, the NIV and the NLT or the New Living Translation. Now you see what you have a continuum of.

You have a continuum moving from as literal as possible up through interpretive translation. You can compare the verses on that continuum, which may be hard to read because they are as literal as possible. All of a sudden, I understand it, but what do you understand? I'll try to illustrate this to you in the chart. So, some recommendations.

This may be a little repetitive from what I just said, but I want to say it anyway. First of all, when you're choosing a Bible, one of the things that I haven't mentioned that I want to really emphasize is you should choose a Bible with a paragraph format. You should choose a Bible that puts poetry into poetic appearance, such as the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs, and other places in the Bible where there's poetry.

You want to use a Bible that applies that modern aspect; it's not so modern; it goes back to the 1800s, and a paragraph is important. I could also give another lecture on introductions. I can't put all of my choice things in here in 1 Corinthians, but one of the lectures I do when I teach hermeneutics or the interpretation of the Bible is I talk about paragraphs and using a big paragraph like the 1901 American Standard Version has the best paragraphs on the planet because that was produced during the time of the greatness of the King's English, as it were.

And they left the paragraphs intact. In other words, a paragraph is supposed to be a unit of thought. And they tried to keep the whole unit of thought.

Then you come down to the modern age, where you have an NIV that uses paragraphs. But according to their theory, people's attention spans are too short for long paragraphs, therefore we'll break them into small paragraphs. Now, what are you going to do? Where is the unit of thought? I would teach students how to take a 1901 ASV well-paragraphed Bible.

And this has to be in print. You can't use computerized versions because they mess this up. But an in-print American Standard 1901 translation with big paragraphs.

Then, you take an NIV that uses smaller paragraphs. And say the ASV has 10 verses, and the NIV has 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 10. Okay, what have you got? One big idea in the ASV is 10 verses.

Three breakouts of the big idea in the breakout paragraphs of the NIV. Now you're keeping the theme of the big paragraph, the one big one, but you're seeing three aspects to it. So, paragraph analysis is an extremely important thing when you're dealing with the Bible.

But that's all that I can say about it at this juncture. But have a paragraphed Bible. Have a Bible that renders its translation into the literary genre that it is.

If it's poetry, I want to see poetry. If it's narrative, I want to see the narrative. I want to see the paragraphs.

Alrighty? So, when you choose them, be sure you choose them that way. Please don't get hung up on a lot of the modern controversies about how much gender inclusiveness or non-inclusiveness is in the translations. The versions that I'm mentioning to you, the King James, the NRSV, the old one, and the RSV, weren't really gender sensitive.

The new RSV is too gender-sensitive, according to some scholars. So, I like to use the first edition of the NRSV, which hasn't been messed with quite as much. But then you go to the NIV and the NLT that's very gender sensitive.

99% to 99% of the time, this really doesn't matter. Like for example, if you take the illustration from the King James and you've got the parable in the upper room in the Olivet Discourse, there will be two men, the King James would say, who are doing something. And one will be taken, and one will be left.

Or there are two men in a bed, and one is taken, and one is left. You get a more modern version like the NIV, it will say two people instead of two men. Originally, the Greek probably meant people because it used the generic term for men, and men was the dominant language.

Everything was spoken about from a male perspective in terms of literary language. And so, it didn't necessarily mean just men. It meant two people.

For example, in Revelation, if any man knocks at the door, I will come in to him and have fellowship with him. Does that mean women can't knock? No, it means if any person. So, there are a lot of things about gender inclusivity that are very important in translation.

The functional translations and the dynamic equivalent translations will do a better job of taking care of that for you. So, you can see how many little rabbits we can chase as we talk about the nature of translation. But what's the big idea? It's this.

You need to know the difference between formal translation, as literal as possible, as free as necessary, and dynamic or functional translation, which is in some sense interpretive translation, be it ever so slight or sometimes rather major. All right. So watch your translations.

I'm not going to name names here, but there are even some formal translations today done by smaller groups, which do have some agenda. And you can find it if you know what it is and you look for it. All right.

So, choose Bibles that have a paragraph format, be careful of special interest issues, and don't be overwhelmed by people making claims about that. That's your own understanding.

Secondly, choose several Bibles for comparison. We don't live in an age where there is the Bible. You have these various English translations. Choose about four, as I've already mentioned, too formal, too functional, and work with them.

And I'll show you a way to do that in a little while. Choose several of them and be careful when studying Bibles. Please be careful with Study Bibles.

Study Bibles are intended to help you. They can provide a lot of help. But at the same time, they're going to render the text the way they want it.

They insert outlines into the text. I want a clean Bible and paragraphs. Leave it alone.

I will determine how to structure it and what to do with it. You can use a Study Bible like you use a commentary. Don't let it be your little G God.

But use it to try to see structure, to get ideas of issues that will be showing up in the notes, and so forth. But don't take it to the bank, and that is the only way you're going to look at it. Clean Bibles.

Study Bibles, and use them like commentaries. There's a study Bible for everything anymore. And I'm not going to bore you with all the various kinds that we see when we go into the typical Christian store. And I called it a Christian store rather than a Christian book store for a reason.

Fourth, avoid the expanded paraphrase kinds of Bibles. Be a solid Bible student, not a fattish Bible student.

Lastly, be a student of the Bible. The Bible is not just to be read; it's to be studied. In fact, if we were to sit down one to one and we were reading the Bible, and I ask you what that means, what kind of answer would you give me? You might give me one of those here's what it means to me, and I'll stop you right there and say I don't really care what it means to you. I care what it means so that I can know what it means or ought to mean to you and to me.

We've got to get to the Scriptures for Scripture, not for our own personal use of the Scriptures. And that slips in so quickly. Even disciplined interpreters and I'm a disciplined interpreter, but I'll put myself at the head of the list.

We read our own ideas into the text on many occasions. We try not to. We use a variety of sources to try to deal with that and discipline ourselves away from it, but it's too easy.

So be a reader of the Bible, but be careful. Gordon Fee once sang a song in a professional meeting I thought was cute. Wonderful things in the Bible. I see some put there by you that was out of tune. Sorry, but you got the point.

We have a way of reading our own stuff into Scripture. The only way not to do that is to be disciplined in the study of Scripture. Now, I recommend reading the history of the Bible here. I'll do this bibliography before I do the chart.

I am not going to walk through all this. I've kept it very limited so that you may be able to find something, but I'm not going to confuse you. I'm going to emphasize a couple of books. Bruce Metzger *The Bible in Translation Ancient and English Versions* That's a very dated book now, but that's a very good book, and it's not so old that it won't cover the array of the Bibles that are typically available to you.

Next is Strauss Mark Strauss *Distorting Scripture: The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender*. Mark has done a nice job. He helps in that transition between using the

word dynamic and using the word functional. So those are a couple of highlights in all of this, but you can find and choose to make learning about the English Bible a hobby for yourself. You know, no matter whether you're a student and working a 40-hour job or whether you're a ministry professional, you're a pastor, you're a missionary, and you have some time to study, what I would call a hobby study.

You've got your sermon study, you've got your Sunday school study, you've got your interest in a Bible book study, but do you have a hobby study? Make something historical a hobby study. Maybe you could be a student of the history of the Bible. Right here is a reading list that you can pursue and it'll make you very much that if you pursue everything I've got on this list.

There are lots of other hobbies, like history, being a student of Roman history, or being a student of the Greek world, but you've got to study the Roman world if you're going to study the New Testament. You've got to read little boxes and think in larger categories. Now, I understand English Bible versions and translation procedures.

We've talked about the theory philosophy of translation, the two big categories of formal and functional, formal and dynamic, but what does that look like when you flesh it out? Here is where I have given you some charts which will be talking to you on the blackboard. On page 5 is the first chart, and on page 6 is the second chart in the packet of notes on so many Bibles, so little time. Now, you'll notice that I've landscaped an 8.5 x 11 page so that I can get some versions on here.

This page is not big enough. A legal size wouldn't be big enough, but I want you to see the paradigm involved in doing this. You'll notice the chart illustrating the results of formal to dynamic.

For example, I'll just show you the chart. You'll notice that we start with formal on the left side. I'm left-oriented to functional or dynamic on the right side. That is very important.

Why is it important? Because you want to start from as free as possible, as literal as possible, as free as necessary, as literal as possible is on this side. On this side is interpretive translation. The farther I go across this chart the more I'm going to be involved with interpretive translation.

Let's see how that works. This first page is a little bit bland compared to the second page. Let's just walk through this.

John 3:16 There shouldn't be any issues about that passage. Isn't that one of the most familiar passages to Christians? It is to Christians. It isn't to the world.

The most familiar passage to most of the world is the Lord's Prayer or 1 Corinthians 13 not John 3:16. It is that classic King James liturgical language. He gave His only begotten Son. Let's love that language.

Then we read the Revised Standard Version, the NRSV. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. I was born in Indiana in the U.S. State of Indiana.

I went into the Navy in the 60s out of Norfolk, Virginia. I spent a lot of my time in the South. I like the South.

I like Southern culture and so forth. Let me just put it to you this way. When you read Only Begotten Son, then you read Only Son some yahoo is going to come along and say that the NRSV has changed the Bible by dropping the word begotten, and they're trying to undermine the Deity of Christ.

Well, if anyone ever does say that to you, just smile and walk on because they have immediately confessed that they don't have a clue about the Bible because monogenes is the Greek word behind only begotten. But what does that mean? Well, it has to do with the fact that word was used back in the narrative of the birth of Isaac. You know, he was pretty unique.

He was only begotten. It was used for the widow's son at Nain, who was resurrected. He was her only son.

Same word. Monogenes. It's not a word that's trying to tell you about Deity.

It's a word that's trying to tell you he is unique. It is not an ontological term. It's a functional term.

And so, he's the only son. I can say that with just as much emphasis as saying only begotten son. In fact, the word begotten in the history of theology can get you into trouble in terms of the issue of generation.

Look at the NIV in that same column. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. Now, look what they did.

They deviated from begotten, but instead of saying only, which was the simpler thing to do, they said one and only. Why? Probably because the NIV translators were in tune with the sensitivity of this passage that Jesus is unique. And the New Living Translation just says only son, sort of like the Revised Standard Version.

So, you see, you've got four Bibles here, and you've got three different readings. Only begotten son, only son, one and only son. All right, where's the Bible? It's in all of them.

It's translation. But one and only really brings the point across. The NIV did a good job here.

Now you'll notice, and I should mention this, in my chart, the printed Bible of the NIV column is the 1978 Bible. This was revised in 2011, and I have not added another column to the chart. And I really don't want to change my analysis from the 78, because the 1978 NIV gave me a lot to show you some interesting things.

And the most interesting was revised in 2011 because people said that was not good, and they changed it. The new NIV 2011 did a good job of taking out some things that were too interpretive or too individualistically interpretive. But here, it keeps it exactly the same.

One and only. One and only is exactly the same. And you can show that in the Bible by saying that Isaac was the one and only, and the widow of Nain's son was the one and only, and Jesus is the one and only.

That doesn't mean they're all the same. It just means they're all unique in their own way for some historical issue. Acts 26:28 is the next illustration in my notes.

Wow, I've heard sermons on this. In fact, I'm sure that at some point in my life, I'll use the Bible on this one. Here's the King James.

We have Paul, who is in conversation with a Roman official. Paul's been arrested. He's kind of in that point of time where he's being moved back to Rome.

And he stands before this official and he says, as he preaches to him, Agrippa, well, Paul had already said it, but Agrippa responded to Paul and said this. Here's what Agrippa says. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Now, you know, I'm a preacher as well as a teacher. I can really get preachy here. Almost.

I mean, bring in the emotion here. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And by the way, I phrase that, and with my vocal emphasis, I'm leading you to think that Agrippa's just about to fall on the floor and grovel at the feet of Paul.

That he's that impressed. Okay. Let's look at the NRSV translation.

Agrippa said to Paul, Are you so quick to persuade me to become a Christian? Wow. That's got a different feel. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

I'm going to fall at your feet. Do you think that with this brief sermon, you can make me become a Christian? Do you see the difference between those two? I'm trying, and I'm probably overemphasizing a little bit. I'm trying to be disrespectful to any translation.

I'm just trying to show you that you better be smarter than one Bible. You had better be thinking about an array of translations that can help you get to what's going on. Now, interestingly, let's look at the other two, and then I'll make a comment.

Then Agrippa said to Paul in the NIV, the third column, Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian? Hear the sarcasm? That's the sarcasm that's in the NRSV. It's not the generic translation. You see, the King James is as literal as possible.

It gives you no hint about how you ought to take that. The NRSV, which is still a formal equivalency, gave you a hint. The NIV gave you a strong hint.

And I'll talk just a little bit about that in a second. But you can see and feel the difference. So, if someone comes to you and uses Acts 26:28 out of the King James and asks you the question, Preacher, I just can't believe that Agrippa, maybe they'll put it to you this way, surely, Pastor, Agrippa became a Christian.

Look what he says here. Now, what are you going to do? Number one, a pastor does everything he can never to take away the Bible that a person has in their hands. You don't want to disrespect and diss the KJV at that point.

You want to explain it. And I would suggest if you're a pastor, that you start teaching people the nature of translation so that it won't be quite as hard to explain when it happens. Get ahead of it.

Don't let it get ahead of you. And so consequently here, as the pastor, you'd be between a rock and a hard place if you haven't educated that individual about the nature of translation. You're going to have to do it now.

But it's going to be a little more intimidating, and you may not have the space to do it adequately. You may have a real problem with this individual. They may either get mad at you, or they may get discouraged.

What are they to do? Well, we've got to explain these things. Look at the New Living Translation. Do you think you can make me a Christian so quickly? So, you've got three testimonies out of four that this passage is more in the domain of sarcasm than it is in the domain of being persuaded.

And that would be a safe call for you if you happen to be in a setting where you do preach from the King James Version. And maybe you're even in a setting where people are very adamant about that. You can tell them you're not going to just throw up these other translations, probably because you might get in trouble.

But what you've got to do is say what Paul meant here is that Agrippa was saying to him I'm really impressed with you, Paul, but I'm not about to buy it. And, of course, all your commentaries are going to back that up. Now, why did the NRSV, which is a formal equivalent as literal as possible and as free as necessary why did it use what sounds like an NIV, which would be functional? Well, the answer is twofold.

Number one, there is a formal aspect of Greek grammar that allows this. It has to do with the nature of persuasion and the nature of speech. And so, we're in a rhetorical setting here where the translator has the freedom because this is still literal to bring out what Agrippa was really saying from the total context.

And so, there's a linguistic acceptability to this even though it looks like it's dynamic, or I could say it this way, even a formal equivalent translation will have to be functional on occasion. Otherwise, it will be miscommunicated to the reader. So, they did dabble in some functional or dynamic equivalents in the NRSV at that point.

You can see that it's a good call from the comparison of these translations. Just these four. Let's look at another one.

Look at Galatians 5:4. Now, I remember reading this passage as a new Christian and getting pretty confused. Christ in the King James Version has become of no effect to you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law you are fallen from grace.

Now, look at that again. You who are justified by the law. Wait a minute.

I'm a new Christian, and I've been told I'm justified by grace. How can the Bible say, how can Paul say you're justified by the law? Well, it does say you're fallen from grace if you're justified that way, but I'm not a really great reader, and I can't read between the lines because I'm not trained to do that, and it just seems to me that I'm confused when I read that, and I remember as a new Christian that I was. I was trying to figure out how can he say both things? Now, watch what the RSV does again.

The NRSV is doing it again, and this one is even more directly related to a language issue that I'll mention as we talk about it. Look how it translates Galatians 5:4. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ, and you have fallen away from grace. Notice the words that are added.

I put them in bold. Wow. I would not have misunderstood that.

These people were trying to be justified by the law, but it wasn't going to work. And Paul told them that. You see, in this case, the King James Version followed its principle of translation as literally as possible, and it's so literal it takes a scholar to unpack it.

The NIV comes along, and the NRSV adds a few little words to help you realize that this was something that they wanted to do to the people to whom Paul was speaking. They wanted that, but it's not possible. In Greek grammar, there's a category called conative or tendential.

In this particular passage and if you've had Greek you can enjoy this. If not, just smile. Smile real big.

For I you want something. In the grammatical sense, there's a possibility of putting it into this category, which means it's attempted. It's desired, but it's not possible. The next illustration is going to be of the same nature and you'll see it.

So, there's a grammatical justification for a scholar who's translating and rendering a passage to use this kind of language and they're being literal. They're being grammatically literal within the bounds of what it means to render language. You see, translation is at some time at certain points interpretive.

It has to be. And even the NRSV shows us this here. They're being as literal as possible, but they're using the conventions of translation and grammar to do that, and sometimes it looks functional, and if you want to call it that, that's fine, but the fact is that it's okay.

That's what's really important. You are trying to be justified by the law, the NIV says. You are trying to be.

They're trying, but they can't do it. And notice they added away from that that you're falling away from grace away from grace as a principle. The NLT For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law of Christ, you have fallen away from God's grace.

It expands it a little more, but it brings the same point out. So, what do we have here in Galatians 5.4? Once again, out of the confusion of reading the King James on this, we have three testimonies in translation that help us to understand that in the context of Paul and the people to whom he was speaking, he's actually telling them, you wish you could do this, but you can't. You can't. That's not the way it works.

The translators helped you at that point, and it will help you see that, yet you have control on the left side. Often the RSV is a part of that control, but here in these last two illustrations, actually three, it went into some justified, as literal as possible, but

functional to do that. Look at Philippians 3:6. Philippians 3:6, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

This is Paul's personal testimony in the book of Philippians concerning his days as a Jewish person before he came to know Christ. All right, now notice what the RSV does, the NRSV, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Now they changed it slightly, but not very much.

They said righteousness under the law. King James said righteousness, which is in the law, is blameless. Under the law is a little bit of a nuance that could help a reader, but it's still not out of the woods if you please.

Now, look what the NIV does. This is the 1978 NIV. As for zeal, persecuting the church, and legalistic righteousness, it is faultless.

The first time I read that I just about launched myself to the moon. I could not believe that translation, and it was a number of years of using the NIV. I just didn't work at Philippians much, and I came to that passage in the NIV, and I said, my lands, where did they come up with legalistic righteousness? That's not what Paul said.

Paul never said that about the law. Paul respected the law for what it was and what it was intended to do. He wasn't dissing the law ever.

Neither did Jesus. That's not a good translation. That dynamic equivalence went way out of bounds.

Guess what? That was the 1978 NIV, and of course, it lasted a long time, and anyone who read that got that impression, which was a bad impression. In the 2011 NIV, they changed it. Here's how they rendered it.

As for righteousness based on the law, they did something very similar to the NRSV. Righteousness under the law, they said righteousness based on the law, blameless. Paul wasn't pursuing legalistic righteousness.

That's not what it was about. That's not what the law was about, and so here was a very, very bad rendition by the NIV. Let's look and see what the NLT did.

And zealous. Yes, in fact, I harshly persecuted the church, and I obeyed the Jewish law so carefully that I was never accused of any fault. Well, that's really not too bad, even though I regret that they took away a key theological term like righteousness, but it does get across to the reader something about Paul observing the law and keeping the law, which was a good thing to do.

The law wasn't a bad thing. The law was the illustration of sanctification. If you've got an ox that goads, get rid of it.

If you've got a dog that bites, get rid of it. And so consequently, the NLT is not as far out, but you can see it, and you've got to be very specific with language, as you can notice here when you're comparing these versions, but language is interpretation. So, there's those columns.

Now, let's look at the next page, page six. Let me give you some more illustrations. Matthew 19.9. I put this passage in here on purpose because I will teach you later a section out of 1 Corinthians 7 that relates to the question of divorce and remarriage in the Bible.

Well, if it weren't for the Matthean passage in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, where we have the so-called exception clauses, there wouldn't even be a controversy or discussion because there wouldn't be any place in the Bible where divorce could be even slightly viewed as acceptable, except for fornication. It's called the exception clause for that. The NRSV said except for unchastity.

Now, why did they say unchastity instead of fornication? Well, the answer is fornication is the broadest term for sexual immorality, and unchastity in our culture is the broadest term, and so they kept an equivalent idea, but they did change the terms. It means the same thing if you get right down to it. Look what the NIV did.

They said except for marital unfaithfulness. Now that's interpretive. Now you'll have to wait till 1 Corinthians 7 for me to explain this to you, but I'm telling you they have chosen one of about seven interpretations of this very difficult text, and they have skewed the reader in the direction that this text is only addressing sexual immorality within a marriage, marital unfaithfulness, when that may not be what it was about at all.

We'll talk about this later, but guess what? The 2011 NIV changed it. Instead of saying except for marital unfaithfulness, they took it back to sexual immorality. They took it back to as literal as possible, as free as necessary.

They got rid of a judgment that was made by the first translation, except for marital unfaithfulness, and put in a more generic statement that is now open to interpretation, which it should be because this is a highly disputed text in the divorce and remarriage passages in the Bible. Now, the NLT hasn't changed. I tell you this: a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery unless his wife has been unfaithful.

Well, see, that's another whole can of worms that I'm not going to go into, but what's the point? What's my point? My point is to be aware. Use these major

versions to help you get in touch with things. Now, you may have to kiss a lot of frogs to get a princess out of this.

I have selected some stark passages to illustrate this to you, and you could read for weeks and maybe not find anything quite as interesting, but if you don't keep your eyes open, you'll miss it when it happens. Be a student of the Bible. Look at 1st Corinthians 5:5. For the destruction of the flesh in the King James Version.

For the destruction of the flesh in the New Revised Standard Version. But notice what the NIV does so that the sinful nature may be destroyed.

Now, wait a minute. We were talking flesh, which is this, or are we talking about something that's internal? Is flesh a metaphor for the sin nature? Well, the fact is the flesh is a metaphor for the sin nature. So, it's illegitimate to say that the flesh is the sinful nature, but let's ask about this.

What about the interpretation of 1st Corinthians 5 and this person who's committed this sin?

What about the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5 and this person who's committed this sin? Is the verse saying that God's going to affect them physically or earthly, or is it saying that God's going to do something to them internally? Those are the two major interpretations of that passage. The NIV chose one. Guess what? The 2011 NIV changed that the sinful nature may be destroyed back to the destruction of the flesh.

Why? Because the destruction of the flesh is the most bland translation. It is the most literal as possible. It's not making a judgment about what flesh means in this particular context.

That's as literal as possible. You can see that the 2011 NIV has moved back to letting the reader chase things rather than giving the reader your view if your view happens to be a contested thing at some large level, which it is in this particular passage. I don't know if they've ever corrected the NLT.

They go with sinful nature as well. It wouldn't surprise me if they weren't looking at the NIV when they did that. That's functionality, isn't it? Translators need help.

They're doing things like you do sometimes. All right, here's one. Oh, here's one of my favorites.

1 Corinthians 7:1. I'll talk about these in Corinthians later. In the King James Version, in 1 Corinthians 7.1, it says it's good for a man not to touch a woman. That's a can of worms, isn't it? Does that mean don't touch? In America, we had what was known as the Bible College Movement.

And they had the six-inch rule. You couldn't get within six inches of a girl or you might have sinful thoughts. That was kind of stupid.

You have sinful thoughts anyway. Why not approach it from another angle? But it was kind of an externalistic and legalistic approach to things. But nonetheless, what does it mean it's good for a man not to touch a woman? Guess what? They do a Revised Standard Version that keeps that translation.

It is well for a man not to touch a woman. Why do they do that? Well, I think the answer is that this phrase happens to be a proverbial type phrase that needs to be explained in a scholarly manner. And as a result of that, they're going to leave it as literal as possible rather than make a judgment about it.

The original NIV of 58, I think, said it this way. It is good for a man not to marry. The first time I saw that, I said, what in the world? That's the very opposite of this whole passage.

Paul says the bed is undefiled in this passage. He says sex has priority over prayer in this passage. Now, I'll explain some of that later, and I'll just tease you with it for the moment.

So that the sinful nature may, excuse me, it's good for a man not to marry. That's a bad translation. In fact, Gordon Fee wrote a major article that I'll give you in the notes later against that translation.

And it took him until 2011 to get the thing changed. That was bad. It points that whole passage off in the wrong direction. And then the NLT comes along and says, yes, it's good for a man to live a celibate life.

Hogwash. God created men and women to be together. Male and female, he made them, according to Genesis, to procreate and enjoy each other.

Paul wouldn't say such a thing. You got to watch these translations, don't you? You got to watch them. You need control, formal equivalence, even if you've got to get back all the way to something like a KJV.

Even though that can be tenuous, you might choose another one. But if you do, I'd still keep it in the mix, because even though it had too few manuscripts to make any judgments out of the Greek text that it used, there's a lot of this that needs to be controlled there. And I think that's what the NRSV has already shown you, that it can deviate a bit.

But at the same time, it kept this the same way because it's very important to do so. You have to study this particular phrase. You can't take it at face value, which is true for a lot of statements in Scripture.

It is not self-evident. The Bible has to be studied, not just read. Reading will make you a good person.

It will get you in touch with the moral fiber of Scripture, but it will not necessarily explain to you the individual passages of the Bible. Well, 1 Thessalonians 1:3. I'm right on the verge of being out of time, so very quickly here. I like this one.

Work of faith, labor of love, patience of hope. That's got a nice cadence to it, doesn't it? In fact, it's so nice the NRSV kept it. Work of faith, the labor of love, and they use the word steadfastness to bring out that patience means patient perseverance and steadfastness of hope.

Then, you read the NIV. Your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope. Welcome to the NIV concordance.

They just added a whole ton of words to the Bible. Is that bad? No. They're trying to get the idea across, and you do not know unless you've been a Greek student and worked on this passage that they have translated all of these as subjective genitives.

I'm not going to explain that. There is just too much stuff to go into right here, but the fact is that when you have a subjective genitive relationship with nouns of action, the item in the genitive produces the action. That's why they use the word produced as the lead word, produced by faith. Then, they use synonyms.

Labor prompted, prompted is produced by love, and endurance inspired by. I wish they had to use that word, but they did. That's a production word.

They use three synonyms to bring out a grammatical point in that translation. I don't know that it needed to be expanded at this point in the text. A commentary would do that for you if you had a good one.

The fact is that there's nothing wrong with that translation. I like it. It's a good one.

There are a couple of other views on this one, but they don't really make any major theological difference, like legalistic righteousness or some of those other texts. Notice what the NLT did. It actually used a different Greek category.

It used an adjectival category: faithful work, loving deeds, and then the last one, good night, your continual anticipation of the return of our Lord. Well, I wouldn't argue a whole lot that hope is eschatological. I would argue that it would be in most

cases, but they've kind of jumped the gun there quite a bit and given you that really expanded dynamic equivalent version.

As I close, I just want to point out to you that even the King James Bible is, at times, dynamic. Look at 1 Timothy 3:11. This is the passage on the qualifications to be a pastor and elder, qualifications to be deacon. And then there's a very controversial part of this passage as to whether these are the wives of the deacons, because it gives a whole list about the wives, or whether they're women deacons.

And I'm not going to solve that for you here, but that's something you need to be aware of, that it is a legitimate question in translation. If you actually diagram the Greek in this passage, you're going to have to go with women deacons, but diagrams are not always the end of interpretation. Because you've got the same, I'll call them direct objects of the verb in terms of this passage.

Even so must their wives, but wait a minute, the word in Greek for a woman is *gune*. There is no word in the New Testament for a wife other than *gune*. It's context that tells you the difference between whether it's a woman or a wife.

So, if you've got a context about social mores between husbands and wives, it's not between husbands and women. In fact, the same problem happens with the word for husband on there. Is it a man or a husband? Context determines the meaning of a term.

Sometimes, the term covers more than one kind of context. In this context, the question is, are these women or are they wives? Wives is an interpretation. Women is as literal as possible.

So here the King James actually interpreted it as wives and jumped away from as literal as possible and made a theological judgment, which made them the wives of the deacons. Maybe they were avoiding a problem and they didn't want women deacons. I don't know.

Maybe there was a theological drive going on, but whatever the case is, it's an interpretation. It's not as literal as possible. Look what the NRSV did.

They used the word women. Women is the most generic term for this *gune* category. Wives would be more interpretive.

Women is less interpretive, but it does sort of lead the passage in another direction, doesn't it? But it is more as literal as possible. Look what the NIV of 58 did. Wives are to be women worthy of respect.

They made an interpretation. Guess what? In 2011, they changed it back to women, which is less interpretive and leaves it up to the reader to argue whether it is women or is it, wives. The NLT went with the interpreting wives. So, in that particular passage of 1 Timothy 3:11, there's a lot of gender baggage going on in that text, and it shows up in translations, even old ones.

So, listen, friends, I'll call you a class. I'm used to that when people are sitting in front of me. Know your Bible.

We're not playing games as ministry professionals. We have the responsibility of the people whom we teach, the congregations whom we lead, and the friends with whom we have conversations to take the Bible seriously. There are some challenges in relation to our work and study in the Bible, and dealing with the question of translations is just one of them.

If you work in a language other than English, you can probably find your continuum of three or four Bibles. I'm sure it's there. That's just modern culture.

Spanish probably has an array of Bibles. German may have an array of Bibles. So, in every culture, there tends to be that proliferation of the Bible in the language of the people.

Find them and understand what they are and how they operate. Oftentimes, because of the influence of America on the Christian world, you will see correlations between what we've been talking about and what happens in another Christian culture. The Bible is worthy of study. Give it your all.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 2, Orientation, So Many Bibles, So Little Time, Part 2.