

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION QUESTION

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART FIVE OF TEN

KJV AND NIV: TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETATION?



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TRUSTING GOD'S WORD THROUGH CAREFUL EXAMINATION

KJV and NIV Translation or Interpretation

Sermon Transcript

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

If you are visiting with us today, we are especially glad you are here.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

We are in Part Five of a ten-part series called "The Bible Translation Question."

In Part One, we asked whether the King James Version contains translation errors.

In Part Two, we asked whether the KJV we read today is the same as the KJV printed in 1611.

In Part Three, we examined why some verses or phrases found in the KJV are absent, bracketed or footnoted in modern translations.

In Part Four, we compared the KJV and NKJV.

Today we turn to one of the most influential modern English Bibles.

The New International Version.

Our question is:

KJV and NIV.

Translation or interpretation?

Before we begin, let us pray.

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You for speaking through prophets and apostles.

Thank You for preserving their testimony so that people in our time can hear the truth about You.

Give us wisdom today.

Keep us from fear.

Keep us from pride.

Keep us from repeating accusations we have never examined.

Help us love truth more than we love winning an argument.

Help us receive what is good and identify what needs correction.

Most of all, help us hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our Scripture reading is Romans chapter 6, verses 1 and 2.

I am reading from the King James Version.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Before we open this question, let me say a brief word about giving.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Guests are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to support your home church.

For those who call this church home and are led to give, a giving box is available in the back.

God loves a cheerful giver.

We want giving to arise from grace and gratitude, not embarrassment or pressure.

If this is your first visit, our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

After the study, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is free.

The conversations come with free refills.

And that brings us naturally to the way we should approach today's question.

We should not approach a Bible translation through pressure, fear or slogans.

We should open our Bibles and examine the evidence together.

Many of us have heard someone say that the KJV translates while the NIV interprets.

It sounds like a clean division.

Translation on one side.

Interpretation on the other.

One gives us the words.

The other gives us somebody's opinion about the words.

But our opening passage presents a problem for that simple division.

Paul asks whether grace gives us permission to continue in sin.

The KJV answers with two powerful words.

"God forbid."

The NIV 2011 says:

"By no means!"

Now here is the question.

Which one is literal?

The Greek expression is *mē genoito*.

It means something like, "May it never be."

The Greek expression does not contain the Greek word for God.

That does not mean the KJV translators corrupted the verse.

It means they understood the force of Paul's words and chose a strong English expression to communicate that force.

They did not merely transfer two Greek words into two English words.

They interpreted the expression and translated its meaning.

The NIV translators did the same thing when they wrote, “By no means!”

The translations sound different.

Both are trying to communicate Paul’s emphatic rejection.

So is “God forbid” a translation or an interpretation?

It is both.

It is a translation because it communicates Paul’s meaning in English.

It is interpretive because the translators selected an English expression that does not reproduce the Greek form mechanically.

That discovery gives us the controlling principle for this study.

The question is not whether a translation interprets.

Every translation interprets.

The question is whether it interprets faithfully.

Does the interpretation fit the words?

Does it fit the grammar?

Does it fit the context?

What does the translation clarify?

What detail might it conceal?

Those are questions we can investigate.

Before we compare passages, we need to understand what the NIV is.

The New International Version was not created by taking an English Bible and simplifying its sentences.

It was intended to be a fresh translation from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into contemporary English.

The project gained momentum during the 1960s.

The NIV New Testament appeared in 1973.

The complete Bible appeared in 1978.

A revised edition appeared in 1984.

That is the NIV many Christians memorized and heard in churches during the late twentieth century.

The present edition appeared in 2011.

More than one hundred scholars participated in the original translation and review process.

The continuing governing body is called the Committee on Bible Translation.

It normally consists of fifteen scholars.

Proposed revisions are researched, discussed and voted upon.

Official committee materials say that a change requires at least a 70 percent vote.

That process does not make the committee infallible.

Fifteen scholars can still make a judgment with which other scholars disagree.

But it does establish what kind of work the NIV is.

It is a genuine committee translation from the original languages.

It is not a paraphrase written by one person.

It should not be placed in the same category as The Living Bible or The Message.

The NIV 2011 is approximately 95 percent the same as the NIV 1984.

The changes are important enough that we must identify the edition we are quoting.

They are not so extensive that the NIV 2011 should be treated as an entirely different Bible.

The committee identifies three broad reasons for revision.

English changes.

Scholarship advances.

And a previous rendering may be judged unclear or inaccurate.

Gender-related language also appears in the history of the revisions.

That deserves a careful study of its own.

It will receive that study in RTS-108.

We will not allow it to take over this question today.

The NIV is therefore a translation.

The next question is what kind of translation it intends to be.

People often describe Bible translations with two expressions.

Formal equivalence.

And functional equivalence.

Formal equivalence tries to preserve the form of the original language as closely as sound English permits.

It often preserves repeated words.

It preserves metaphors.

It preserves grammatical relationships.

Sometimes it preserves difficulty or ambiguity because the original wording is difficult or ambiguous.

Functional equivalence gives greater attention to communicating the intended meaning naturally in English.

It may replace an idiom with an English expression.

It may restructure a sentence.

It may state a relationship that the original audience would have understood without having it stated.

The KJV normally stands closer to the formal side than the NIV.

The NIV normally moves farther toward natural contemporary meaning.

But these are not two sealed boxes.

No translation is completely formal.

No responsible translation is completely free from the wording of the original.

“Word-for-word” can be a useful description if we remember that one Hebrew or Greek word does not always correspond to one English word.

“Thought-for-thought” can be a useful description if we remember that translators discover the thought through the words and grammar.

A mechanically literal translation can be inaccurate when it preserves an idiom that communicates something different in English.

A meaning-based translation can be inaccurate when the translator becomes too confident about what the passage means.

So we will use five questions as we examine these passages.

What does the KJV preserve?

What does the NIV clarify?

What does the NIV’s clarity cost?

Is the NIV’s interpretation supported by the context?

Would another translation or a footnote help us see something important?

Let us begin where the NIV helps.

Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 24.

David is hiding from Saul in a cave.

Saul enters the cave without realizing that David and his men are farther inside.

The KJV says in verse 3 that Saul “went in to cover his feet.”

If we take those English words at face value today, we might think Saul was arranging a garment.

We might think he was lying down to rest.

The Hebrew expression is a bodily euphemism.

The NIV 2011 says that Saul “went in to relieve himself.”

The KJV preserves the original image.

The NIV communicates the intended event.

Something is lost when the euphemism disappears.

But something important is gained.

The modern reader immediately understands why Saul entered the cave alone and placed himself in a vulnerable position.

Here the less literal wording may give the more accurate understanding.

Now turn to Philippians chapter 2.

Verse 6 speaks about Jesus Christ.

The KJV says:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”

The NIV 1984 said that Christ “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”

The NIV 2011 says that He “did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.”

Why did the wording change?

The Greek word *harpagmos* is difficult.

The word “robbery” can sound to a modern reader as though equality with God were something Jesus might steal.

That is not what the passage teaches.

The NIV 1984 expressed the idea of grasping.

The NIV 2011 expresses the idea that Christ did not exploit His equality with God for His own advantage.

The context then describes Him taking the form of a servant and humbling Himself unto death.

The NIV 2011 makes that movement very clear.

Does it weaken the deity of Christ?

No.

In the same sentence, the NIV describes Christ as being “in very nature God.”

That is an unusually direct affirmation of His deity.

The NIV’s rendering is strongly Christological.

At the same time, “something to be used to his own advantage” is a fuller explanation of *harpagmos* than the single Greek word provides by itself.

The translation makes an interpretive judgment.

That judgment should be tested by the word, the grammar and the context.

In this case, the context gives the judgment substantial support.

Now look at Philippians 4:13.

The KJV says:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The NIV 1984 said:

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

The NIV 2011 says:

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

That small change matters.

“All this” points backward.

Paul has learned how to live in need and how to live in abundance.

He has learned how to be hungry and how to be full.

He is not promising that Christians can accomplish anything they imagine.

He is testifying that Christ gives him strength to remain faithful in every circumstance God permits.

The Greek form can be translated “all things.”

The NIV 2011 makes the contextual reference explicit.

That helps protect the verse from a very common misuse.

It is a helpful interpretation.

It is still an interpretation.

These passages show the real strength of functional equivalence.

It can explain an unfamiliar idiom.

It can prevent a word from being misunderstood because English usage has changed.

It can make the paragraph’s argument visible to a reader who might isolate one verse.

But the freedom to clarify meaning creates another danger.

The translator may decide more than the inspired wording requires.

Turn to Psalm 51:5.

The KJV says:

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

The NIV 2011 says:

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

The NIV makes David’s personal sinfulness from conception unmistakable.

That interpretation agrees with the broader Biblical doctrine of fallen human nature.

We are not born morally untouched and then become sinners only after our first conscious transgression.

Yet the Hebrew wording is more compact.

It says that David was brought forth “in iniquity” and conceived “in sin.”

The NIV moves from those prepositional expressions to a direct statement about David.

The doctrine may be correct.

The NIV may be explaining what the verse means.

But the NIV states the interpretation more directly than the Hebrew form.

That distinction matters.

We should not establish the whole doctrine of human nature on one translation's wording of one verse.

We should establish it from the whole counsel of Scripture.

Now turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

The KJV says:

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

The NIV 2011 says:

“that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable.”

The Greek speaks of possessing or controlling one's vessel.

What is the vessel?

Many interpreters understand it as the body.

Others understand it as one's wife.

Some connect the expression with acquiring a wife or living properly with one's wife.

The NIV chooses “body” in the main text.

That interpretation makes good sense in a paragraph about sexual holiness.

It also removes the metaphor and places one disputed interpretation directly into the verse.

The NIV footnote acknowledges alternatives involving a wife.

This is why footnotes matter.

A footnote may tell us that the main text is not the only interpretation serious scholars have considered.

The KJV preserves “vessel.”

That keeps the metaphor visible.

But a modern reader may not understand either of the principal interpretations.

The KJV preserves something the NIV loses.

The NIV explains something the KJV leaves less clear.

Neither observation requires us to accuse anyone of dishonesty.

It requires us to study.

Matthew 11:1 gives us a brief example of an explanatory addition.

The KJV says Jesus departed “to teach and to preach in their cities.”

The NIV 2011 says He went “to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.”

The words “of Galilee” are not explicitly present in the Greek phrase.

They are inferred from the narrative setting.

The inference may be correct.

But the NIV has turned background information into the wording of the verse.

At the same time, the possessive “their” has disappeared.

Nothing here destroys a doctrine.

It simply shows how a translation can explain more than the source text states explicitly.

At this point someone may say:

Those are interesting details, but the real problem is that the NIV removes doctrine.

That is a serious accusation.

Serious accusations require careful categories.

First, is the difference caused by the underlying text?

Second, is it caused by the translation method?

Third, is it a disputed grammatical interpretation?

Fourth, are we comparing NIV 1984 with NIV 2011?

Fifth, is the allegation itself accurate?

And sixth, do we possess any direct evidence about the translators' motives?

Many popular lists point to Colossians 1:14, Romans 1:16, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 5:7 or Acts 8:37.

Those examples arise principally from differences in the Greek text or decisions about textual variants.

We examined that category in RTS-102.

We will not repeat the entire omitted-verses study today.

A manuscript difference is not automatically a functional-equivalence decision.

If we fail to separate those categories, we may accuse a translation method of producing a difference it did not produce.

Now let us test a doctrinal allegation directly.

Some critics say the NIV removes the blood of Christ.

Turn to Romans 3:25.

The KJV says:

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

The NIV 2011 says:

“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood, to be received by faith.”

The NIV has not removed the blood.

It explicitly speaks about “the shedding of his blood.”

What has changed is the word “propitiation.”

The NIV uses the phrase “sacrifice of atonement.”

That phrase is easier for many readers to understand.

But “propitiation” carries a theological precision worth teaching.

It can emphasize the satisfaction or turning away of wrath.

The Greek term also has a possible connection with the mercy seat, the place of atonement.

The NIV includes that possibility in a footnote.

So what is our judgment?

The NIV does not remove Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

It does not remove His blood.

It translates a difficult term descriptively.

That description is useful.

It does not exhaust everything the term may communicate.

For detailed study, “propitiation” deserves to remain in our theological vocabulary.

Now consider Galatians 2:16.

The KJV says that a person is justified “by the faith of Jesus Christ.”

The NIV 2011 says “by faith in Jesus Christ.”

The Greek phrase is *pistis Christou*.

It may be understood as our faith in Christ.

It may be understood as the faithfulness of Christ.

The NIV chooses “faith in Jesus Christ” in the main text.

Its footnote acknowledges “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.”

The KJV preserves an English “of” construction that looks more like the Greek relationship.

But the English word “of” does not settle how the Greek genitive functions.

The NIV does not attack justification by faith.

It states the traditional interpretation directly.

The existence of another serious interpretation gives us a reason to compare translations and read footnotes.

It does not give us a reason to accuse the translators of changing the Gospel.

We should also apply a whole-translation test.

Does the NIV teach the deity of Christ?

Yes.

Does it teach His incarnation?

Yes.

Does it teach His virgin conception?

Yes.

Does it teach His atoning death and shed blood?

Yes.

Does it teach His bodily resurrection?

Yes.

Does it teach salvation by grace through faith?

Yes.

That does not prove every individual NIV rendering is the best possible rendering.

It does disprove the broad claim that the NIV has systematically removed Christian doctrine.

A local weakness is not proof of a global conspiracy.

Disagreement with a translator’s judgment is not evidence of a corrupt motive.

We should tell the truth even when the truth is less dramatic than the accusation.

So what should we do with the NIV?

At Reason Together Church, the KJV remains our normal Scripture text.

It gives our congregation a stable voice for public reading, teaching and memorization.

Its formal character often preserves words, metaphors and grammatical relationships that are valuable for careful study.

That does not require us to pretend the KJV never interprets.

It does not require us to reject every place where another translation communicates the meaning more clearly.

The NIV can be valuable for public explanation and comparison.

It may help a new reader understand an unfamiliar idiom.

It may help a listener follow a long sentence.

It may reveal how responsible scholars understand a difficult phrase.

It can also hide a metaphor.

It can make an uncertain interpretation sound certain.

It can replace a precise theological term with a broader explanation.

That is why we should know what task we are performing.

For congregational reading, consistency matters.

For memorization, stability matters.

For evangelism, immediate understanding matters.

For detailed study, comparison matters.

When two translations differ significantly, do not take a majority vote.

Three English translations do not outvote two English translations.

The difference is a signal to investigate.

Read the paragraph.

Identify the edition.

Read the footnote.

Ask whether the underlying manuscripts differ.

Ask whether an idiom has been translated by its meaning.

Ask whether the translator has selected one of several interpretations.

Consult Hebrew or Greek when the question actually requires it.

Here is the practical rule I want us to remember.

Use one translation for consistency.

Use more than one for comparison.

Consult the original languages when the question truly requires them.

Now return with me to Romans 6.

Is the NIV a translation or an interpretation?

It is a translation.

And like every translation, it interprets.

Sometimes it explains an idiom we might otherwise miss.

Sometimes it makes the context clearer.

Sometimes it decides more than the inspired wording requires.

That is why we read carefully.

That is why we compare.

That is why we read the footnotes.

That is why we keep our confidence in the Word God inspired rather than in slogans about translations.

The Bible was not given merely to settle arguments about English wording.

Paul told Timothy that the holy Scriptures were able to make him “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

That is the message every faithful translation must carry.

We have sinned against a holy God.

We cannot translate our way out of our guilt.

We cannot study our way into righteousness.

Jesus Christ is God the Son who came in the flesh.

He lived without sin.

He died for our sins.

His blood was shed for our redemption.

He was buried.

He rose bodily from the dead.

Salvation is the gift of God.

It is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

If you have never trusted Him as Savior, you can call upon Him today.

The exact English words of a prayer do not save us.

Christ saves.

But prayer can express the faith of a heart turning to Him.

You may pray:

Father, I know that I have sinned.

I know that I cannot save myself.

I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins.

I believe that He was buried and rose again.

I place my trust in Jesus Christ alone.

Forgive me and give me eternal life.

Help me follow You from this day forward.

I ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, please speak with me before you leave.

We would be honored to open the Bible with you and help you understand what it means to follow Christ.

And for those who already know Him, let us apply this study honestly.

Do not repeat a claim about a Bible translation merely because it sounds alarming.

Check the verse.

Check the edition.

Check the footnote.

Distinguish a manuscript question from a translation question.

Do not confuse familiar English wording with inspired original wording.

Do not treat readability as proof of accuracy.

Do not treat difficulty as proof of faithfulness.

Receive clarity with gratitude.

Examine interpretation with care.

Correct error with charity.

Most of all, read the Bible.

It is possible to spend so much time arguing about translations that we neglect the message every translation is trying to place before us.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Aloha Nui Loa.

KJV and NIV Translation or Interpretation

Detailed Commentary

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Commentary Purpose

This commentary follows the sermon in order and explains the Biblical, linguistic and pastoral reasoning behind its major statements. It is designed to support teaching and later review. It does not reproduce the entire research vault. Historical documentation and reserve comparisons remain in the separate vault.

The sermon's central judgment is deliberately balanced. The NIV is a genuine translation from the original languages. Its greater willingness to communicate contextual meaning often improves immediate comprehension. The same willingness can also cause the main text to state one interpretation where the Hebrew or Greek preserves a metaphor, compact expression or ambiguity.

1 Series Introduction

The introduction identifies RTS-104 as Part Five so listeners understand that several related questions have already been separated.

RTS-100 established that faithfulness to the KJV does not require the claim that its translators were inspired or incapable of ordinary translation judgments. RTS-101 distinguished a translation from its editions and printings. RTS-102 addressed textual variants and the underlying manuscripts. RTS-103 compared the KJV with the NKJV.

That sequence is important because criticisms of the NIV often combine all four issues. A difference may arise from the source text, an English translation decision, a later revision or ordinary printing and edition history. The sermon should not allow those categories to collapse.

The introduction is intentionally short. Listeners need continuity but should not feel that they must rehear four sermons before reaching the present question.

2 Opening Prayer and Congregational Elements

The prayer asks for wisdom, humility and charity because translation controversies easily become tests of loyalty. The request to love truth more than winning an argument establishes the spiritual posture for the investigation.

The giving note, guest card and café invitation follow Reason Together Church practice. The segue from unpressured giving to unpressured investigation prevents these elements from feeling detached from the sermon. "We should open our Bibles and examine the evidence together" returns naturally to the church's identity.

3 Romans 6:1-2 and the False Division

The context

Romans 5 concludes that where sin abounded, grace abounded more. Romans 6:1 anticipates a distorted inference: if grace answers sin, perhaps continued sin magnifies grace. Paul rejects the conclusion emphatically.

The KJV reads, “God forbid.” NIV 2011 reads, “By no means!” The Greek is *mē genoito*.

The Greek expression

The construction uses the negative *mē* with an optative form of *ginomai*. It is an emphatic rejection that can be represented as “may it never be,” “certainly not” or “absolutely not.” The expression occurs repeatedly in Paul.

The noun *theos*, God, is absent. The KJV phrase is therefore not a formally matching representation of the Greek components. It is an idiomatic English equivalent chosen for force.

This does not constitute an error. In historical English, “God forbid” could function as a strong rejection without claiming that the Greek explicitly mentioned God. The translation represents pragmatic force rather than lexical form.

Why this is the controlling example

Beginning with an NIV example might allow listeners to preserve the assumption that only modern translations interpret. Beginning with the KJV creates an even standard.

The sermon does not use the example to diminish the KJV. It uses the KJV translators’ successful interpretive rendering to demonstrate that interpretation can serve faithful translation.

The statement “It is both” supplies the answer that governs the sermon. Translation and interpretation are not mutually exclusive activities. Translation requires interpretation before an English expression can be selected.

4 What the NIV Is

Original-language translation

The NIV was produced as a fresh translation from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. This distinguishes it from a paraphrase that primarily rewords an existing English version. More than one hundred scholars participated at different stages of the original project.

The sermon does not ask the congregation to accept a translation because many scholars produced it. Committee size is not a proof of correctness. It is evidence about process and genre. The NIV meets the normal historical and procedural description of a translation.

Committee on Bible Translation

The continuing CBT normally consists of fifteen scholars. Its published process includes research, discussion and a requirement of at least 70 percent approval for a textual change.

The statement that publishers do not simply alter verses for marketing reasons should remain carefully worded. Publishers obviously make commercial decisions about editions and presentation. The CBT’s documented structure assigns translation decisions to the committee. No direct evidence was found that a marketing department dictates individual doctrinal renderings.

Infallibility and accountability

The sentence “That process does not make the committee infallible” is essential. Without it, listeners may hear an appeal to scholarly authority. The sermon recognizes the value of expertise while retaining the right to test conclusions.

5 NIV 1984 and NIV 2011

The NIV label can conceal edition differences. A quotation learned from an older Bible may not match a current online NIV.

Official CBT material states that roughly 95 percent of the 2011 wording remained the same as 1984. This number communicates continuity but should not be used rhetorically to minimize meaningful changes.

The sermon identifies English change, scholarship and clarity as revision motives. These are stated categories rather than a claim that every revision improved the text.

The gender-language issue is confined to one acknowledgment. This protects the assigned scope and prepares listeners for RTS-108.

6 Formal and Functional Equivalence

Formal equivalence

Formal equivalence aims to retain source form where sound English permits. It can preserve repeated vocabulary, figures of speech, ambiguity and grammatical relationships. Those features are especially useful in detailed study.

Formal equivalence is not mechanical replacement. Greek articles, Hebrew idioms, verbal aspect and word order cannot always be duplicated in English. A formally oriented translator still determines meaning.

Functional equivalence

Functional equivalence asks how the intended sense can be communicated naturally to the receptor audience. It can replace an idiom, identify a referent or restructure a sentence.

The method’s central challenge is epistemological. The translator must decide what the source expression means. When the evidence permits several readings, fluent English may conceal the existence of the decision.

A spectrum

The sermon uses “priority” and “spectrum” because KJV and NIV both employ formal and functional choices. The NIV remains constrained by the original wording and is not equivalent to a free paraphrase. The KJV sometimes translates an expression by function.

The five working questions create a repeatable evaluation method:

1. Preservation identifies formal information retained by the KJV.
2. Clarification identifies the NIV's communicative gain.
3. Cost identifies lost metaphor, ambiguity or terminology.
4. Support tests the interpretation against evidence.
5. Comparison asks what resources restore the fuller picture.

7 First Samuel 24:3

Narrative setting

Saul enters a cave near the sheepfolds while David and his men remain hidden farther inside. Saul's privacy and vulnerability create the opportunity for David to cut the skirt of his robe.

The euphemism

The Hebrew expression translated "cover his feet" functions as a euphemism. The exact image may involve clothing falling around the feet during elimination. A reader unfamiliar with the expression may miss the action.

NIV 2011 "relieve himself" replaces the ancient euphemism with a contemporary English euphemism. It therefore remains idiomatic rather than medically explicit.

Translation judgment

The KJV preserves the image and permits later study. The NIV gives immediate narrative comprehension. The NIV is less literal in form but may be more accurate in the understanding it produces for an uninformed reader.

The sermon acknowledges that something is lost. This prevents "clearer" from being treated as an absolute category. Clarity about the event increases while access to the original figure decreases.

8 Philippians 2:6

Christological context

Philippians 2:5-11 calls believers to the mind displayed in Christ. The passage moves from His divine status through voluntary humiliation to exaltation.

The KJV speaks of Christ existing "in the form of God" and not considering equality with God "robbery." NIV 2011 says "in very nature God" and that He did not consider equality with God something to use for His own advantage.

Harpagmos

The noun *harpagmos* is rare. Discussions involve something seized, something regarded as a prize or something exploited. The exact lexical and idiomatic force has produced several translation traditions.

NIV 1984 “something to be grasped” could be heard as refusing to seize equality or refusing to cling to it. NIV 2011 “used to his own advantage” clarifies the committee’s view that Christ possessed equality but did not exploit it selfishly.

Doctrinal evaluation

The NIV rendering does not deny Christ’s deity. “In very nature God” and “equality with God” make its Christological affirmation direct.

A fair criticism concerns explicitness rather than orthodoxy. The 2011 phrase unfolds an interpretation in seven English words. It guides the reader toward the ethical contrast between self-interest and self-emptying.

The sermon should avoid claiming that the NIV has finally solved *harpagmos*. It should say that the contextual support is substantial and the resulting Christology remains strong.

9 Philippians 4:13

Immediate context

Paul has learned contentment in changing material circumstances. He knows hunger and fullness, abundance and need. The “all things” of verse 13 belong to that testimony.

NIV 2011 “all this” makes the backward reference explicit. The rendering prevents the verse from being detached into a promise of unrestricted ability.

Translation judgment

The Greek form remains broad. A more formal translation allows the context to define the breadth. The NIV places that contextual definition in the sentence.

This is a strong interpretation and a useful pastoral correction. It still illustrates functional equivalence because information from the paragraph is made explicit in the verse.

The commentary should not imply that KJV wording causes misuse. Context controls the KJV as clearly as it controls the NIV when the paragraph is read.

10 Psalm 51:5

Confessional setting

Psalm 51 is David’s confession after grave sin. Verse 5 deepens the confession beyond isolated actions and places sin within the whole human condition.

The KJV retains Hebrew prepositional form. NIV 2011 directly identifies David as sinful from birth and conception.

Theological strength

The NIV reading coheres with passages teaching universal sin and the fallen condition of humanity. It is not an attempt to introduce an anti-Biblical doctrine.

Translational caution

The direct predicate “I was sinful” is more explicit than “in iniquity” and “in sin.” The translation narrows how the relation between David, conception and sin will be heard.

The sermon’s statement that sound doctrine may be expressed through a more interpretive wording is important. Doctrinal agreement does not remove the need to describe the translation process accurately.

11 First Thessalonians 4:4

Context of sanctification

First Thessalonians 4:3 identifies God’s will as the believers’ sanctification and specifically commands abstinence from sexual immorality. Verse 4 continues that instruction.

Vessel interpretations

Greek *skeuos* commonly means vessel and can be used metaphorically. The two principal interpretations are body and wife. Within the wife interpretation, the verb may be understood in relation to acquiring a wife or living with one honorably.

NIV 2011 chooses “control your own body.” This fits the direct concern with bodily sexual conduct. The footnote preserves awareness of the alternative.

Why the footnote matters

The footnote is not an admission that translation is impossible. It is evidence of transparent uncertainty. The committee selected a main-text reading but informed the reader that another interpretation has meaningful support.

The KJV “possess his vessel” preserves the metaphor but can be opaque. A teacher using the KJV must interpret the metaphor verbally. The difference is partly whether interpretation occurs within the printed text or within exposition.

12 Matthew 11:1

Greek has a possessive expression represented by KJV “their cities.” NIV 2011 supplies “of Galilee,” drawing from narrative geography.

The added location is probably correct in general context. The concern is that an inference appears without an English signal such as “that region.” A reader cannot see from the NIV main text that “Galilee” was supplied.

The example is intentionally noncontroversial doctrinally. It demonstrates that overinterpretation does not require a false doctrine. It may consist simply of unnecessary specificity.

13 Sorting Allegations

The six categories prevent rhetorical confusion.

Underlying-text question

If the adopted Greek text lacks a phrase printed in the Textus Receptus, the resulting English difference is not primarily caused by functional equivalence. This belongs to textual criticism and RTS-102.

Translation-method question

If both source texts contain the same expression but one version preserves form and another communicates meaning, the issue concerns translation philosophy.

Exegetical question

If grammar or metaphor permits several interpretations, the issue concerns exegesis. Translation method affects how visibly the uncertainty is preserved.

Edition question

NIV 1984 and NIV 2011 may differ. A claim that quotes only “the NIV” is incomplete when the editions do not agree.

Accuracy and motive questions

A false claim should be corrected by checking the text. A motive claim requires direct evidence. An outcome with which a critic disagrees does not establish the committee’s intention.

14 Romans 3:25

Hilasterion

The Greek term *hilastērion* is related to atonement language and is used in Hebrews 9:5 for the mercy seat. Discussion includes propitiation, expiation and place of atonement.

KJV “propitiation” preserves a compact theological term. It can emphasize the satisfaction of divine wrath through Christ’s sacrificial death. The term requires teaching for many contemporary hearers.

NIV 2011 “sacrifice of atonement” communicates sacrificial effect broadly. Its footnote “the place of atonement” acknowledges the mercy-seat association.

The blood allegation

NIV 2011 reads “through the shedding of his blood.” The verse directly contradicts the allegation that the NIV removes Christ’s blood. The wording is more explicit about shedding than the KJV phrase “in his blood.”

Balanced conclusion

The NIV gains accessibility. The KJV retains a term with theological precision. A teacher can use the comparison to explain both atoning sacrifice and propitiation without accusing either translation of rejecting the doctrine.

15 Galatians 2:16

The genitive construction

Greek *pistis Christou* contains a genitive relationship. Objective interpretation gives “faith in Christ.” Subjective interpretation gives “the faithfulness of Christ.”

The debate involves Pauline usage, grammatical possibilities and theological context. English cannot preserve the complete debate naturally in one main-text phrase.

KJV and NIV

KJV “faith of Jesus Christ” follows the formal relation but remains open to misunderstanding in modern English. NIV “faith in Jesus Christ” states the objective interpretation. Its footnote acknowledges Christ’s faithfulness.

The sermon avoids using “traditional” as though it ends discussion. The purpose is to show that grammatical relationships require interpretation and that responsible translations can signal alternatives.

Salvation safeguard

Paul’s argument clearly denies justification by works of law. Both the saving faithfulness of Christ and human reliance upon Him are Biblical truths. The sermon should not suggest that salvation becomes uncertain because scholars debate the genitive.

16 The Whole Translation Test

Claims of systematic doctrinal removal should be tested across the translation rather than by one isolated phrase.

The NIV affirms Christ’s deity in John 1:1, John 1:18, John 20:28, Romans 9:5, Philippians 2:6, Titus 2:13 and Hebrews 1:8. It affirms the virgin conception in Matthew 1 and Luke 1. It repeatedly affirms the cross, shed blood, resurrection, grace and faith.

This whole-translation evidence does not prove each rendering correct. It does make the claim of a systematic anti-Christian program inconsistent with the text itself.

“A local weakness is not proof of a global conspiracy” should be delivered calmly. It summarizes a method rather than attacking critics.

17 Practical Use of Translations

Congregational norm

Using the KJV as the normal RTC text provides continuity. The congregation knows which wording will be read and memorized. This is a pastoral and liturgical decision rather than a claim that another translation is not genuine.

Memorization

Memorization benefits from stable wording. The NIV’s revision history may make different editions less convenient for shared recitation. Individuals who memorize the NIV should identify and retain one edition.

Public explanation

The NIV can clarify idioms and contextual relationships. Comparisons must be labeled so listeners do not confuse NIV 1984 with NIV 2011 or assume a phrase belongs to the KJV.

Detailed study

The KJV and NIV expose different features. The KJV often displays form and traditional terminology. The NIV often displays an exegetical conclusion. A third translation closer to formal contemporary English can help identify whether a difference concerns archaic English or the source structure.

Original-language tools should be used where they clarify a real question. Displaying Greek or Hebrew without explaining the decision can create the appearance of authority without providing understanding.

18 The Practical Rule

“Use one translation for consistency, more than one for comparison and the original languages when the question truly requires them” assigns resources to tasks.

It does not encourage readers to construct a personal Bible by selecting whichever wording they prefer. Comparison is diagnostic. A difference identifies a question to investigate.

The warning against majority voting is important. English translations may depend on one another, share the same interpretive tradition or adopt the same source text. Truth is not determined by counting English renderings.

19 Return to Romans 6

The conclusion returns to the opening phrase so the sermon ends with the standard established at the beginning.

The answer “It is a translation, and like every translation it interprets” is intentionally qualified. It recognizes the NIV’s legitimate identity without approving every decision.

The repeated statements about reading carefully, comparing and consulting footnotes turn a technical lesson into practical discipleship.

20 Gospel Invitation

Second Timothy 3:15 provides the bridge from translation questions to Scripture’s saving purpose. The Bible makes readers wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The invitation states Christ’s identity, sinless life, atoning death, burial and bodily resurrection. It identifies salvation as grace received through faith.

The sentence “The exact English words of a prayer do not save us” quietly applies the sermon’s distinction between wording and meaning. The prayer expresses reliance upon Christ but Christ Himself saves.

The prayer closes “in the name of Jesus” according to established RTC practice.

21 Closing Application

Application follows Amen so believers are not left outside the sermon’s final appeal.

The closing imperatives address likely failures on several sides:

1. Checking claims confronts careless criticism.
2. Distinguishing categories prevents confusion.
3. Refusing to equate familiarity with inspiration protects the doctrine of Scripture.
4. Refusing to equate ease with accuracy protects against uncritical modernism.
5. Refusing to equate difficulty with faithfulness protects against romanticizing obscurity.

The final command is to read the Bible. Translation controversy becomes spiritually unhealthy when discussion about the text replaces submission to its message.

The closing returns to Reason Together Church’s invitation and ends “Aloha Nui Loa.”

22 Final Teaching Judgment

The sermon should be preached as an investigation with a clear conclusion.

The NIV is a genuine translation. Its functional choices often clarify meaning and sometimes obscure inspired detail. The KJV remains the normal RTC Scripture text because of its stability, formal character and established place in the church’s teaching. The NIV remains useful for comparison, public understanding and identifying exegetical judgments.

Readers should neither fear translation differences nor ignore them. They should identify the kind of difference, examine the evidence and allow the whole counsel of Scripture to govern doctrine.