

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

# THE BIBLE TRANSLATION QUESTION

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART SEVEN OF TEN

## KJV AND NASB: WHICH IS MORE LITERAL?



DR. THOMAS W. HAWKSLEY

TRUSTING GOD'S WORD THROUGH CAREFUL EXAMINATION

# **KJV and NASB Which Is More Literal**

## **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.

We are grateful for every honored guest who has joined us.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Today we have reached Part Seven of our ten-part series, "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 the NKJV.

In Part Five, we compared the KJV and the NIV and asked whether translation sometimes becomes interpretation.

In Part Six, we compared the manuscripts behind the KJV and the ESV.

Today our question is narrower.

KJV and NASB: Which Is More Literal?

Next time, in Part Eight, we will examine word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation more broadly.

Today we are not going to settle every question about translation philosophy.

We are going to examine one word that Christians use very often.

Literal.

Someone will say, "I prefer the most literal Bible."

That sounds clear.

It sounds safe.

It sounds as though we could arrange translations on a ruler and measure their distance from the original.

The difficulty is that literalness is not one single measurement.

Does literal mean preserving the same basic word?

Does it mean preserving the grammar?

Does it mean preserving the order of the words?

Does it mean preserving an idiom even when English readers do not understand it?

Does it mean using the same English word every time the same Greek word appears?

Does it mean adding no English words that are not separately present in Hebrew or Greek?

Those are different questions.

They do not always produce the same answer.

Suppose I say, "Only Peter spoke to John."

That means nobody else spoke to John.

Suppose I say, "Peter spoke only to John."

That means Peter spoke to nobody else.

Suppose I say, "Peter only spoke to John."

That may mean Peter spoke but took no other action.

The same five English words can carry different emphasis when their order changes.

Greek can mark relationships through word endings that English often marks through position.

Copying Greek order into English may therefore place emphasis where an English reader does not expect it.

Literal order and literal meaning are not always the same thing.

Let us begin with one verse that makes the problem visible.

First Peter 1:13 in the KJV reads:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The NASB 1995 reads:

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Which one is more literal?

At the beginning of the verse, the answer appears to be the KJV.

The Greek expression pictures a man gathering the long folds of his garment so that he is ready to work, run or fight.

The KJV allows us to see that picture.

"Gird up the loins of your mind."

The NASB 1995 tells us what the picture means.

"Prepare your minds for action."

Then we reach the second half of the verse.

The KJV says, “Hope to the end.”

The NASB 1995 says, “Fix your hope completely.”

The Greek word there points to completeness.

At that point, the NASB expresses the force of the command more precisely for a present-day reader.

In one verse, the KJV preserves the metaphor more literally while the NASB communicates another expression more precisely.

Literalness must be measured, not merely heard.

Awkward English is not automatically accurate English.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for giving us Your Word.

We believe that every word of God is pure.

We thank You for the people who preserved the Scriptures and translated them into languages that we can understand.

Give us wisdom as we compare two faithful English Bibles.

Keep us from pride in our preferences.

Keep us from suspicion where the evidence does not justify it.

Help us to love truth more than slogans.

Help us to read carefully and listen humbly.

Most of all, help us to understand Your Word and obey what You have spoken.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our Scripture reading is Nehemiah 8:8.

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

That verse is not a command to use one modern translation method.

It does give us a sound pastoral purpose.

Read the Word distinctly.

Give the sense.

Help people understand the reading.

First Corinthians 14:9 gives a related principle:

“Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?”

The inspired words matter.

Understanding those words also matters.

Before we continue, let me briefly explain giving at Reason Together Church.

We do not pass an offering plate.

Guests are never expected to give.

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

If the Lord leads you to support this ministry, there is a giving box in the back.

The Bible says in Second Corinthians 9:7:

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

We also have a guest card available.

We ask only for your first name and email address.

You are welcome to join us afterward at the Reason Together Café for free coffee and free refills on conversations.

The Keiki Kids Center is available for our younger guests.

The giving note says something important about our church.

We want people to know what we are doing and why.

The same honesty is helpful when translators tell us what they are doing and why.

That brings us to the New American Standard Bible.

The Lockman Foundation began the NASB project in 1959.

The New Testament was published in 1963.

The complete Bible appeared in 1971.

The complete text was revised in 1977, 1995 and 2020.

That means there is not only one NASB wording in circulation.

When someone says, “The NASB says,” a careful reader may need to ask, “Which edition?”

The NASB developed from the tradition of the American Standard Version of 1901.

Its translators sought to use more current English while remaining close to the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.

The Lockman Foundation describes the NASB as a formal-equivalence translation.

It attempts to preserve original words and sentence patterns as closely as readable English permits.

Those last words matter.

As readable English permits.

Even the NASB never claimed that translation could be performed by replacing each Greek word with one English word in the same position.

The NASB preface explains that translators sometimes use a current English idiom when a strict word-for-word rendering would be unacceptable English.

It explains that Hebrew expressions such as “answered and said” may be reduced in English.

It explains that Greek tense sequences sometimes must be adjusted to ordinary English usage.

Those are not confessions of failure.

They are descriptions of translation.

The NASB 1977 retains more traditional English than the later editions.

It uses older pronouns when people speak to God.

It sometimes preserves older formal expressions.

The NASB 1995 updates grammar and vocabulary while retaining a strong formal-equivalence approach.

That is the NASB edition we will normally use today.

Every time we use another edition, I will identify it.

The NASB 2020 makes additional changes for clarity and contemporary English.

Sometimes it explains an idiom more openly.

Sometimes it replaces a traditional formal expression with a modern equivalent.

Sometimes it improves precision.

The editions should not be arranged automatically from faithful to unfaithful.

They make different judgments about which features of the original expression English should carry most visibly.

That is why we should read a translation’s preface.

The preface does not settle whether every individual decision was correct.

It does tell us what the translators were trying to accomplish.

It also keeps us from judging an edition by a sentence taken from a different edition.

Consider Romans 6:2.

The KJV says:

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

The NASB 1977 and NASB 1995 say:

“May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

The NASB 2020 says:

“Far from it! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

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

“God forbid” was an established English expression of strong rejection.

It communicates the force of Paul’s answer.

It is not, however, a word-for-word reproduction of the Greek.

“May it never be” is closer to the form of the Greek construction.

“Far from it” sounds more natural to many readers today.

Which NASB is more literal?

The 1995 wording is closer in form.

The 2020 wording may communicate the force more naturally.

Both are trying to carry something important across the distance between languages.

The phrase “word-for-word” is therefore useful only if we understand its limits.

Greek verbs often contain information that English expresses with a separate pronoun.

Hebrew frequently omits a present-tense form of the verb “to be” where English requires “is” or “are.”

Greek grammatical cases may require English prepositions.

One Hebrew word may need several English words.

Several Greek words may be gathered into one natural English expression.

A translation can add an English word without adding an idea.

It can omit a source-language form without omitting its meaning.

Psalm 23:1 gives us a simple example.

“The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.”

In a standard KJV, the word “is” appears in italics.

The NASB 1995 also places “is” in italics in this verse.

Hebrew can say, in effect, “The LORD my shepherd.”

English normally requires the verb.

Supplying “is” does not add a new doctrine.

It makes the Hebrew sentence grammatical in English.

The KJV commonly uses italics to mark words supplied for the sense in English.

In the original 1611 printing, a contrasting typeface served this purpose.

Later editors regularized the system that readers now recognize as italics.

The NASB also uses italics for many words that are not represented by separate Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek words but are understood from the original construction.

Italics are helpful.

They are not inspired.

They do not mean that the supplied word is false.

They do not mean that the word should be removed.

They do not identify every judgment made in translating a sentence.

Sometimes an italicized word is necessary for accurate English.

Some readers have been taught to read every italicized word as though it were suspicious.

That reverses the translators' purpose.

The mark is an invitation to notice a difference between languages.

It is not a warning that the Bible printer slipped an unauthorized idea into the verse.

The supplied wording still must be evaluated in context, but it should not be condemned merely because it is supplied.

Psalm 7:11 shows why supplied words still deserve examination.

The KJV says:

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with *the wicked* every day.”

In standard KJV printing, “the wicked” is italicized.

The NASB 1995 says:

“God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.”

The Hebrew construction describes God as a righteous judge.

The NASB represents that construction more directly.

The KJV translators supplied an understood object for God's indignation.

Their decision is understandable in context.

Still, this is a place where the NASB is more formally literal than the KJV.

The Bible that sounds older is not automatically closer to the Hebrew form.

Word order presents another problem.

English depends heavily upon order to tell us who did what to whom.

Greek uses grammatical endings that allow words to move while their functions remain identifiable.

A Greek writer can move a word forward for emphasis without producing the same confusion that movement might produce in English.

Hebrew also uses patterns that sound repetitive or incomplete when copied mechanically.

A translator must ask what the original order is doing.

Is it ordinary order?

Is it emphasizing a particular word?

Is it connecting this sentence to the sentence before it?

Then the translator must decide how English can represent that function.

Changing the order is not necessarily changing God's Word.

Sometimes the order must change so that the meaning does not.

This also explains why an interlinear Bible is useful but cannot replace a translation.

An interlinear can show which English gloss is placed beneath a Hebrew or Greek word.

It can help a student notice order and repetition.

It usually cannot display in one small line all the grammar, idiom and contextual sense carried by the source expression.

It is a study aid, not a completed English Bible.

Now let us look fairly at passages where the KJV preserves more of the original form.

Genesis 4:1 says:

“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.”

The NASB 1995 says:

“Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.”

The Hebrew uses the ordinary verb “to know.”

The KJV preserves the Hebrew expression.

The NASB states what the expression means in this context.

The KJV is more formally literal.

A reader who knows the Biblical idiom also receives its tenderness.

This is not a clinical statement.

It places physical union within a personal relationship.

A reader who does not know the idiom may wonder what Adam learned about Eve.

The NASB sacrifices part of the image in order to prevent that misunderstanding.

First Samuel 24:3 gives us an even clearer idiom.

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

The NASB 1995 says that Saul “went in to relieve himself.”

The KJV preserves the Hebrew euphemism.

The NASB communicates the action intended by that euphemism.

If we translate only the parts of the Hebrew expression, many readers will picture Saul putting a covering over his feet.

That is not the scene.

The KJV is more literal in form.

The NASB is more immediately understandable in meaning.

Neither observation insults the translation.

It simply identifies what each one preserves.

John 2:4 records the Lord's response to Mary at the wedding in Cana.

The KJV says:

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.”

The NASB 1995 says:

“Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”

The KJV keeps more of the shape of the ancient expression.

Yet in modern English, “What have I to do with you?” can sound like complete rejection.

Jesus was not insulting His mother.

He was establishing that His actions and His appointed hour were governed by the Father's purpose.

A rendering can preserve the structure of an idiom while giving English readers a stronger emotional impression than the original audience received.

Literal form does not always preserve equivalent tone.

Then there is the opening phrase of First Peter 1:13.

“Gird up the loins of your mind.”

That is not ordinary modern English.

It is a powerful Biblical picture once it is explained.

A person wearing a long garment gathered it and secured it before serious action.

Peter tells believers not to allow their minds to trail loosely behind them.

Gather your thoughts.

Prepare yourself.

Be ready to obey.

The NASB 1977 says, “Gird your minds for action.”

It preserves a portion of the picture while explaining where the action occurs.

The NASB 1995 and NASB 2020 say, “Prepare your minds for action.”

They give the meaning but remove the garment imagery.

Here the KJV gives the student something precious.

It lets us see the metaphor Peter chose.

Formal literalness can preserve the texture and beauty of Scripture.

We should not dismiss that strength.

Now let us look just as honestly at passages where the NASB is more formally literal or more precise.

We have already seen Psalm 7:11 and Romans 6:2.

Ephesians 6:12 gives another example.

The KJV says:

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The NASB 1995 says:

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

The Greek expression refers to the heavenly or celestial realm.

Today, “wickedness in high places” may make us think of corrupt politicians or powerful executives.

Those may be examples of earthly wickedness, but that is not Paul’s expression here.

The NASB makes the heavenly term visible.

In this verse, the modern translation is closer to the Greek idea.

Hebrews 9:26 gives us another example.

The KJV says that Christ appeared “once in the end of the world.”

The NASB 1995 says that He appeared “once at the consummation of the ages.”

The Greek expression contains the idea of ages brought to their culmination.

The KJV word “world” once had a broader range of meaning than many readers now give it.

Modern readers may imagine the physical destruction of the planet.

The NASB preserves the plural ages and the idea of culmination.

It is more precise at that point.

First Thessalonians 4:15 shows what happens when English changes.

The KJV says:

“We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.”

The NASB 1995 says:

“We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

In earlier English, “prevent” could mean to go before or precede.

The KJV was not saying that living believers would stop dead believers from rising.

It was saying that living believers would not go ahead of them.

The KJV accurately communicated that idea in the English of its time.

The dominant meaning of “prevent” changed.

The KJV did not become false.

The English language changed around it.

For most readers today, “precede” communicates Paul’s meaning more accurately.

This is why we cannot judge literalness by sound alone.

An old word may sound dignified while carrying the wrong meaning in a modern listener’s mind.

Some figures can remain literal because the context explains them.

Amos 4:6 says:

“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places.”

Both the KJV and NASB preserve “cleanness of teeth.”

The next phrase explains the image.

The people’s teeth were clean because they had no bread to eat.

The figure is vivid.

It is unusual, but it does not have to be erased.

The context gives the sense.

The wise question is not, “Can we copy this idiom literally?”

The wise question is, “Will an English reader receive substantially the same meaning?”

Sometimes the answer is yes.

Sometimes a footnote can preserve the image while the text gives the meaning.

Sometimes a teacher can explain the idiom, as we have done today.

Sometimes a literal reproduction would reliably point the reader toward the wrong scene.

Translation requires judgment.

Every translation requires judgment.

That includes the KJV.

That includes every edition of the NASB.

It also includes the translation choices we make when we explain a verse in a sermon.

Consistency is another part of literalness.

The NASB has long been valued for translating repeated original-language terms consistently when context permits.

That helps students notice repeated themes and verbal connections.

It is a genuine strength.

Yet complete mechanical consistency would be inaccurate.

Think about the English word “bank.”

A bank may hold money.

A river has a bank.

An airplane may bank to one side.

If another language used one word in all three sentences without sharing that range of meaning, the translation would confuse its readers.

Hebrew and Greek words also have ranges of meaning.

The Hebrew word often represented by “soul” can refer in different contexts to life, a person, a living creature, appetite or the self.

Translating it “soul” in every occurrence would sometimes obscure the meaning.

The KJV translators understood this.

In their preface, they rejected the claim that the same Hebrew or Greek word must always be translated by the same English word.

They believed that context sometimes required variety.

That fact deserves emphasis.

The translators who produced the KJV did not follow the simplistic rule sometimes defended in the KJV’s name.

They valued accuracy more than artificial verbal sameness.

Consistency is valuable when meaning is consistent.

Context must guide us when the sense changes.

A concordance or Bible-study tool can help us identify repeated Hebrew and Greek terms without forcing one English word into every verse.

Next time, we will explore translation methods more broadly.

Today our conclusion is narrower.

Does greater literalness always produce greater accuracy?

No.

But that does not make literalness unimportant.

Literal wording can preserve imagery.

It can reveal grammatical connections.

It can help us trace repeated words.

It can limit unnecessary explanation inside the text.

It can allow students to see more of the original form.

Literal wording becomes less helpful when an idiom means something different in English.

It becomes less helpful when copied word order produces confusion.

It becomes less helpful when an English word has changed its meaning.

It becomes less helpful when the tone heard by the reader is different from the tone expressed by the writer.

Accuracy includes faithfulness to words.

It includes faithfulness to grammar.

It includes faithfulness to imagery.

It includes faithfulness to context and meaning.

Often one English rendering can preserve all of these reasonably well.

Sometimes translators must decide which feature needs to remain most visible.

So which is more literal, the KJV or the NASB?

If we mean a consistent formal-equivalence policy expressed in contemporary English, the NASB 1995 generally has the stronger claim.

If we examine particular expressions, the KJV is sometimes more formally literal.

At other points, the NASB is more formally literal or more precise.

Neither translation wins every comparison.

That is not an evasive answer.

It is the answer produced by the evidence.

We should be willing to let one verse commend the KJV and another commend the NASB.

Truth does not need us to adjust the score before we examine the text.

When the KJV preserves an image, we may thank God for the image and learn what it means.

When the NASB exposes a grammatical detail, we may thank God for that help as well.

The translations do not become rivals simply because they preserve different features of a sentence.

Use the KJV with confidence.

Read its older English with historical awareness.

When a familiar expression is unclear, investigate it.

Use the NASB 1995 as a careful comparison Bible.

If another NASB edition is quoted, identify it.

Notice italics, but do not assume that italicized words are unnecessary.

Notice footnotes.

They often preserve information that cannot fit naturally into one line of English.

Do not build doctrine upon a misunderstood English expression.

Do not mistake unfamiliar English for inspired Hebrew or Greek.

Do not assume that natural English proves a translation has compromised God's Word.

Do not use a preferred translation as a reason to look down upon another believer.

The purpose of literalness is not to help us boast about our Bible.

The purpose is to help us hear what God said.

We do not honor the Word of God merely by defending an English sound.

We honor the Word of God by seeking faithfully to understand what God has spoken.

Second Timothy 3:15 says:

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The Bible was not given merely so that we could compare translations.

It was given to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The message is clear.

Romans 3:23 says:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

That includes every translator.

That includes every preacher.

That includes every person listening today.

Romans 6:23 says:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Jesus Christ died for our sins.

He was buried.

He rose again.

He offers forgiveness and eternal life as a gift.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

You cannot earn salvation by choosing the right Bible translation.

You cannot earn it by church attendance, giving or good works.

Salvation is received by trusting Jesus Christ.

If you have never trusted Him, you may call upon Him today.

You may pray something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I believe that You died for my sins.

I believe that You were buried and rose again.

I cannot save myself.

I turn from trusting myself and place my faith in You.

Forgive me and give me the eternal life You promised.

Help me to follow You from this day forward.

I ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer and trusted Christ, please speak with me after the service.

We would be honored to pray with you and help you begin growing in the Word of God.

Church family, let us leave with confidence and humility.

We have the Word of God.

We also have a responsibility to read it carefully.

Let the KJV’s preserved images slow you down and make you look more closely.

Let the NASB’s precision help you notice details that older English may conceal.

Let comparison produce understanding rather than suspicion.

Let understanding produce obedience.

Read the Word distinctly.

Give the sense.

Help others understand the reading.

Then live what God has made clear.

Love God.

Love your neighbor.

Forgive one another.

Preach the gospel.

Care for the poor.

Walk humbly with your God.

The KJV and NASB do not present different Saviors.

They proclaim the same crucified and risen Lord.

Literalness matters because words matter.

Meaning matters because God spoke to be understood.

Aloha Nui Loa.

# **KJV and NASB Which Is More Literal**

## **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 principal claims. The research vault preserves the fuller source record. This document focuses on why the sermon says what it says and how each comparison serves the congregation.

The controlling distinction is between formal literalness and communicative accuracy. The sermon does not oppose them. It shows that one rendering may preserve source form more visibly while another preserves contextual meaning more immediately. Often a good translation accomplishes both.

## **1 Series Introduction**

The opening identifies the preceding six studies so listeners understand the narrow place of RTS-106. Manuscript questions are acknowledged but not reopened. The preview of RTS-107 protects this sermon from becoming a general lecture on formal and functional equivalence.

The repeated question “Does literal mean” introduces literalness as a cluster of features rather than a single scale. This prepares listeners to hear apparently conflicting judgments without assuming inconsistency.

## **2 First Peter 1 13 Opening**

First Peter 1:13 was selected because it refuses a partisan answer. The KJV preserves the clothing metaphor in the participial expression about girding the mind. NASB 1995 interprets the metaphor as mental preparation. Later in the verse, the adverb *teleiōs* is communicated more clearly by NASB “completely” than by the potentially temporal KJV phrase “to the end.”

The sermon does not say that NASB 1995 mistranslates the metaphor. “Prepare your minds for action” is a defensible statement of its meaning. The loss is literary visibility. The reader no longer sees the garment image without a note or original-language aid.

The lines “Literalness must be measured, not merely heard” and “Awkward English is not automatically accurate English” are designed as memorable controls. They challenge assumptions without belittling the sound of the KJV.

## **3 Prayer and Scripture Reading**

The opening prayer thanks God for preservation and translation while asking for humility. It avoids implying that scholarship replaces faith. The phrase “love truth more than slogans” identifies the spiritual danger on all sides of translation controversy.

Nehemiah 8:8 supports distinct reading, explanation and understanding. The sermon carefully says that the verse does not prescribe one modern method. First Corinthians 14:9 supplies an analogous communication principle. These passages frame translation as service to understanding without making intelligibility the only value.

## **4 Congregational Elements and Segue**

The giving note follows Reason Together Church practice. Guests are not pressured, members of other churches are directed toward their home churches and giving is voluntary. The guest card, café invitation and Keiki Kids Center appear before the main technical section.

The segue from financial transparency to translator transparency is intentionally modest. It does not equate church administration with Bible translation. It introduces the value of stating what one is doing and why, which leads naturally to the NASB prefaces.

## **5 NASB Origin**

The dates 1959, 1963, 1971, 1977, 1995 and 2020 come from Lockman Foundation materials. The brief history establishes that NASB is a revision tradition with identifiable editions. The sermon avoids unnecessary committee biography and publishing detail.

The American Standard Version connection explains the NASB's formal character. It should not be used to imply that NASB simply modernized every ASV sentence. The project incorporated renewed work in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and later revisions made independent judgments.

## **6 NASB Philosophy**

Lockman's description of formal equivalence is quoted in substance rather than treated as a guarantee of identical technique in every verse. The limiting phrase "as readable English permits" is central. It acknowledges that English grammar and idiom place legitimate constraints upon reproduction of source forms.

The sermon notes examples from the 1995 preface, including reductions of Semitic formulas and adjustment of tense sequences. These show that the NASB's translators distinguish faithfulness from mechanical substitution. The observation is explanatory rather than critical.

## **7 NASB Edition Control**

NASB 1995 is the normal comparison because it is closely associated with the translation's modern reputation for formal equivalence. NASB 1977 and NASB 2020 appear only when their wording demonstrates a revision issue. Repeating edition labels prevents the congregation from combining three texts into an imaginary single NASB.

Romans 6:2 demonstrates the method. NASB 1977 and 1995 "May it never be" remain closer to the optative form. NASB 2020 "Far from it" gives strong contemporary rejection. The sermon does not call either inaccurate. It identifies the different feature each foregrounds.

## **8 Limits of Word for Word**

The grammatical examples are deliberately elementary. Pro-drop information in Greek verbs, the absence of an expressed copula in Hebrew nominal clauses and the English need for prepositions after Greek cases are sufficient to disprove a mechanical one-word replacement theory.

The phrase “add an English word without adding an idea” is important. It separates form from content and prepares the discussion of italics. Conversely, a translator may omit a repetitive form while seeking to retain its discourse function in natural English.

The sermon’s word-order illustration using “only” demonstrates that sequence itself can distribute emphasis. It prepares listeners to understand why copying source order can distort rather than preserve function. The interlinear observation similarly places a valuable tool within proper limits.

## **9 Supplied Words and Italics**

Psalm 23:1 provides an accessible example. The supplied verb “is” does not represent translator speculation. It completes in English what Hebrew expresses through a nominal clause. Removing it would not make the English more faithful.

The KJV typography developed from contrasting roman type within black-letter printing to the italic practice familiar in later editions. Editors did not apply the system with perfect uniformity. The sermon therefore calls italics helpful but not inspired or exhaustive.

The NASB employs a related convention. Its italics identify many words implied by the original construction but not represented by separate source words. The exact policy must be read in the preface of the edition being used. Italics never grant permission to delete a word without reconsidering English grammar and context.

## **10 Psalm 7 11**

Psalm 7:11 is particularly valuable because it reverses the expected stereotype. KJV “judgeth the righteous” can be parsed as verb plus object, while the Hebrew construction describes God as a righteous judge. The NASB reflects that construction directly.

The KJV supplies “the wicked” as the object of divine anger. The immediate psalm gives contextual reason for that interpretation. The commentary nevertheless distinguishes contextual defensibility from formal correspondence. The NASB is more literal in form at this point.

## **11 Word Order**

The sermon avoids displaying an unreadable interlinear sentence. Instead, it explains why inflection permits Greek flexibility and why English order carries a heavier grammatical burden. The central issue is function. A translator should ask whether order marks emphasis, connection or ordinary syntax and then reproduce that function as well as English allows.

The line “Sometimes the order must change so that the meaning does not” summarizes the principle. It does not excuse arbitrary rearrangement. It explains why sameness of order cannot serve as the only measure of fidelity.

## **12 Genesis 4 1**

The Hebrew verb *yada* retains its ordinary lexical identity within a recognized marital euphemism. The KJV preserves both word and relational texture. NASB 1995 disambiguates the action. The sermon credits each gain without claiming that one line proves a universal philosophy.

The pastoral explanation prevents immature humor and keeps attention on covenantal relationship. “Knew” is not merely a mysterious archaic substitute. It is a meaningful Biblical idiom that requires readers to know its contextual use.

### **13 First Samuel 24 3**

The euphemism “cover his feet” is one of the clearest cases in which reproduction of parts can obscure the whole. NASB 1995 “relieve himself” is interpretive but accurately communicates the received meaning. The sermon handles the bodily reference briefly and without unnecessary detail.

### **14 John 2 4**

The idiom *ti emoi kai soi* occurs in contexts of relational distance or differing concern. Its force varies with setting. The sermon avoids overdefining it and concentrates on tone. Modern “What have I to do with you?” can sound like personal repudiation, which would misrepresent Jesus’ conduct toward Mary.

NASB 1995 “what does that have to do with us” is less similar in surface form but can be closer to the immediate issue. The following statement about Jesus’ hour governs the interpretation.

### **15 Return to First Peter 1 13**

The return explains the ancient practice behind girding one’s loins. The application “Gather your thoughts. Prepare yourself. Be ready to obey” unfolds the force without claiming to be another translation. The distinction between text and sermon explanation remains clear.

Mentioning all three NASB editions here makes revision visible: 1977 retains “gird,” while 1995 and 2020 use “prepare.” This is one of the most instructive edition comparisons in the sermon.

### **16 Ephesians 6 12**

The adjective *epouranios* in the plural construction points to heavenly places or realms. KJV “high places” is susceptible to a modern political interpretation. NASB 1995 “heavenly places” preserves the lexical domain more transparently and fits the letter’s earlier uses of the same expression.

### **17 Hebrews 9 26**

*Synteleia* denotes consummation or culmination and *aiōnōn* is plural, “ages.” NASB 1995 preserves both features. The sermon treats KJV “world” historically rather than as a careless error. Earlier English could use world more broadly than the physical globe sense dominant for many readers today.

### **18 First Thessalonians 4 15**

This is the sermon’s primary semantic-change example. KJV “prevent” once carried the sense precede, consistent with the underlying idea. Modern usage makes hinder the likely reading. The line “The English language changed around it” allows respect for the KJV choice while stating why NASB “precede” is more useful now.

## **19 Amos 4 6**

Amos 4:6 prevents overcorrection. Both translations retain “cleanness of teeth,” and the parallel phrase about lack of bread supplies the meaning. The figure remains intelligible and rhetorically powerful. Translation should not flatten imagery merely because it is unfamiliar.

## **20 Translation Judgment**

The sermon states that every translation requires judgment. Lexical sense, idiom, syntax and discourse connection cannot be selected without interpretation. This does not mean that all interpretations are equally sound. It means that claims of interpretation-free translation should be understood as an aspiration to minimize unnecessary expansion rather than a literal description of the process.

The scholarship behind this distinction includes formal-equivalence advocates who seek maximum transparency and critics who warn against misleading calques. The sermon does not name scholars from the pulpit because the congregation needs the principle more than the debate. The vault preserves the representative sources.

## **21 Lexical Consistency**

The bank illustration shows semantic range in familiar English. The *nephesh* example then applies the principle to Biblical Hebrew. Possible senses include life, person, living creature, appetite and self. Context determines which English expression is responsible.

The KJV translators’ preface is important because it shows that controlled variety is not merely a modern defense. They rejected rigid verbal uniformity and defended the use of different English words where context warranted it. NASB consistency remains valuable, especially where an author deliberately repeats a term.

## **22 Final Evaluation**

The verdict answers three related questions. As a general policy in contemporary English, NASB 1995 is more consistently formal. In individual expressions, the KJV sometimes preserves more source form. In other expressions, NASB is more literal or more precise. The three answers are not contradictory because they operate at different levels.

The sermon refuses both a universal winner and a vague tie. It makes a real general judgment while insisting upon passage-level evidence. This is the most accurate response to the approved title.

## **23 Pastoral Application**

The application does not ask KJV readers to abandon their Bible. It asks them to read historical English intelligently and to welcome careful comparison. NASB 1995 is commended as a study witness rather than installed as a replacement pulpit text.

The warnings about italics, footnotes and misunderstood expressions give listeners specific habits. The warning against looking down upon another believer protects the study from becoming a loyalty test.

The statement that translations need not become rivals is pastorally important. Comparative reading can be an act of reverence when it is used to recover form, sense and context. It becomes spiritually harmful when it is used to measure another believer's faith by a preferred English edition.

## **24 Gospel Invitation**

Second Timothy 3:15 moves from the form of Scripture to its saving purpose. Romans 3:23 identifies universal sin. Romans 6:23 contrasts sin's wages with God's gift. Ephesians 2:8-9 excludes salvation by works. The invitation states Christ's death, burial and resurrection and calls for personal faith.

The prayer is offered as an expression of repentance and trust, not as a work that earns salvation. It closes in the name of Jesus according to Reason Together Church practice.

## **25 Closing Application**

The final lines return to Nehemiah 8:8. The congregation is not called to become professional linguists. It is called to read, understand, explain and obey. The paired strengths of the KJV and NASB lead toward humility rather than competition.

The final declaration keeps the sermon Christ-centered: the translations do not present different Saviors. Literalness matters because words matter, and meaning matters because God spoke to be understood.

## **Source Guide**

The research vault contains the full source record. The following resources are especially useful for verifying the translation history and linguistic claims in the sermon.

The Lockman Foundation. New American Standard Bible NASB Accuracy History Updates. <https://www.lockman.org/new-american-standard-bible-nasb/>

The Lockman Foundation. About NASB 1995. <https://www.lockman.org/about-nasb-1995/>

The Lockman Foundation. About NASB 2020. <https://www.lockman.org/new-american-standard-bible-nasb/about-nasb-2020/>

Preface to the New American Standard Bible 1995. <https://www.bible-researcher.com/nasb-preface.html>

The Translators to the Reader. Preface to the 1611 King James Bible. <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/kjv-preface.html>

Mark L. Strauss. Bible Translation and the Myth of Literal Accuracy. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003463731110800204>

William D. Mounce. Do Formal Equivalent Translations Reflect a Higher View of Plenary Verbal Inspiration? <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/do-formal-equivalent-translations-reflect-a-higher-view-of-plenary-verbal-inspiration/>

NET Bible. Principles of Translation. <https://bible.org/sites/bible.org/resources/netbible/principles.htm>