

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION QUESTION

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART EIGHT OF TEN

WORD-FOR-WORD OR THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT: WHICH METHOD IS BETTER?



DR. THOMAS W. HAWKSLEY

TRUSTING GOD'S WORD THROUGH CAREFUL EXAMINATION

Word for Word or Thought for Thought Which Method Is Better

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 Eight 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 examined whether the KJV we read today is the same as the KJV printed in 1611.

In Part Three, we considered why some verses 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 when translation becomes interpretation.

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

In Part Seven, we asked whether the KJV or the NASB is more literal.

Today we step behind those individual comparisons.

We are asking how translators decide what to place on the page.

Our title asks:

Word-for-Word or Thought-for-Thought: Which Method Is Better?

Next time, in Part Nine, we will examine paraphrases and simplified Bibles more closely.

In Part Ten, we will bring the entire series together and ask which Bible a Christian should use.

For today, imagine that I say to you, "Keep your eyes peeled."

You probably know what I mean.

I am not asking you to do something painful to your eyes.

I am saying, "Watch carefully."

Now imagine translating those individual English words into another language.

Keep.

Your.

Eyes.

Peeled.

Every word might be represented.

The sentence might still communicate the wrong thing.

If the translator replaces the expression with “watch carefully,” the picture disappears.

If the translator preserves the picture, the reader may misunderstand it.

Which choice is more literal?

Which choice is more faithful?

That small illustration takes us directly into the work of Bible translation.

Let us pray.

Our Father, thank You for speaking through Your Word.

Thank You for preserving the Scriptures and for those who have labored to translate them.

Give us humility as we examine their work.

Protect us from careless accusations and easy slogans.

Help us value every word You inspired while seeking the meaning You intended.

Give us wisdom, clarity and charity.

We ask this 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.”

Nehemiah does not provide a modern theory of translation.

It does provide an important pastoral principle.

The Word was read distinctly.

The sense was given.

The people were caused to understand.

Accuracy and understanding belonged together.

That remains our concern today.

Before we continue, let me mention a few things about 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 through your home church.

For those who call Reason Together Church home, there is a giving box in the back.

Give only as the Lord leads you, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

We would be glad to keep you informed without filling your mailbox or pressuring you.

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

The coffee is free and there are free refills on conversations.

COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

Our Keiki Kids Center is also available for our younger guests.

The way we handle giving reflects a simple principle.

People should understand what is happening and why.

Translation requires the same kind of openness.

We should not merely hear a label such as “literal” or “dynamic.”

We should understand what the translators were trying to preserve.

The first label is formal equivalence.

Most Christians know it as word-for-word translation.

Formal equivalence tries to preserve the form of the original text as closely as good English allows.

That includes vocabulary.

It includes grammar.

It includes repeated words.

It includes figures of speech.

It includes literary patterns.

It includes connections between one passage and another.

That approach has real strength.

If the same word is repeated five times, a formal translation will usually try to let us see it five times.

If a writer uses a metaphor, a formal translation will usually try to preserve the metaphor.

If an argument depends upon a singular word, a formal translation will try to keep that singular word visible.

It allows the English reader to see more of the evidence before receiving an explanation.

But formal equivalence has a limitation.

Hebrew is not English.

Aramaic is not English.

Greek is not English.

The same form does not always perform the same function in another language.

An ancient idiom can be copied accurately and understood incorrectly.

A Greek sentence can be reproduced so closely that it becomes poor English.

Awkward English is not automatically accurate English.

The second label is functional equivalence.

It was often called dynamic equivalence.

Most Christians know it as thought-for-thought translation.

I prefer the expression meaning-for-meaning because it is less likely to be misunderstood.

Functional equivalence asks what the expression did in the original setting.

What did it communicate?

What would the first hearers have understood?

How can that meaning be expressed naturally in English?

This approach also has real strength.

It can explain an idiom without requiring a commentary.

It can make a long sentence understandable when read aloud.

It can communicate information the first audience already knew.

It can help a child, a new believer or a reader using English as a second language.

But functional equivalence also has a limitation.

The translator must state more directly what the translator believes the passage means.

A metaphor may become an explanation.

A repeated word may become several different English expressions.

An ambiguity may disappear.

The translation can begin doing work that properly belongs to the teacher or commentator.

Some people speak as though formal translations handle words while functional translations ignore words and translate thoughts.

That is not accurate.

There are no thoughts floating above the sentence waiting to be translated.

The translator discovers meaning through the words, grammar, context and literary form.

Other people speak as though formal translation requires no interpretation.

That is also inaccurate.

Before translating a word, the translator must decide what that word means in this sentence.

The same word may have several legitimate meanings.

The context determines which meaning is active.

Every translation translates words.

No responsible translation translates words in isolation.

That is why translation methods belong on a spectrum.

The NASB and ESV generally stand toward the formal side.

The NIV stands closer to the middle while favoring natural communication more often.

The NLT generally stands farther toward the functional side.

The KJV is relatively formal, but it also contains many functional decisions.

These are tendencies, not locked positions.

A formal translation can be functional in one verse.

A functional translation can be quite formal in the next.

The CSB uses the term optimal equivalence.

Its stated aim is to translate relatively literally when that produces clear English and more functionally when a formal expression would obscure the meaning.

That is a useful description of a mediating policy.

It is not a third kind of language.

Every translator must ask where form can be preserved and where form must be adjusted.

The translations do not stand at fixed addresses on the spectrum.

They move according to the passage before them.

The King James translators understood this.

In “The Translators to the Reader,” they explained that they had not tied themselves to an exact uniformity of phrasing or identity of words.

They did not believe the same Hebrew or Greek word must always receive the same English word.

They knew that context matters.

They also placed alternative meanings in the margin when the evidence permitted more than one understanding.

That was not carelessness.

It was humility before the difficulty of the work.

Consider Romans 6:2.

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

The Greek expression behind “God forbid” contains no Greek word for God.

It is a forceful rejection.

It means something like, “May it never be,” “Certainly not” or “By no means.”

“God forbid” was strong English.

It communicated the force of Paul’s response.

It was not a mechanical replacement of the individual Greek words.

The KJV translators used functional equivalence.

Consider Exodus 34:6.

“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”

The Hebrew expression behind “longsuffering” is connected with being long of nostrils or long of anger.

In Hebrew thought, the nose could be associated with anger because anger changes the face and breathing.

English readers would not understand “long of nostrils” as patience.

The KJV gives us “longsuffering.”

Many modern translations say “slow to anger.”

Both communicate the function of the Hebrew expression.

Once again, the KJV did not substitute English words mechanically.

It translated meaning.

This is important because some Christians condemn functional translation while reading functional decisions in the KJV every day.

The issue is not whether a translation ever communicates function.

It must.

The issue is whether it communicates the right function without unnecessarily removing meaningful form.

Now let us consider where formal translation helps us.

Turn to Galatians 3:16.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

Paul draws attention to the word “seed.”

The word can refer collectively to descendants, yet Paul directs the promise toward its fulfillment in Christ.

If a translation replaced “seed” everywhere with a broad explanatory phrase, the reader could lose the wording upon which Paul comments.

Here concordance matters.

Concordance means preserving the same term where the writer uses repetition deliberately.

It is not an absolute rule.

It is a valuable goal when the repeated word carries the argument.

The form helps us follow Paul’s reasoning.

Now consider John 15.

Jesus says:

“Abide in me, and I in you.”

He speaks about His words abiding in us.

He tells us to abide in His love.

The repeated verb joins the passage together.

A translation may use “remain” instead of “abide.”

That can be perfectly accurate.

The important thing is preserving the repetition when possible.

If one word becomes “remain,” another becomes “live,” another becomes “continue” and another becomes “stay connected,” the English may sound varied.

The reader may no longer see the thread Jesus placed through the passage.

Sometimes the form is part of the meaning.

Genesis 2:23 gives us another kind of problem.

Adam says:

“She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

The Hebrew words for woman and man sound related: ishah and ish.

The relationship is heard more clearly in Hebrew than in English.

No English translation can reproduce every part of that wordplay.

A footnote can tell us what the main line cannot show.

That footnote does not weaken the Bible.

It honestly preserves information that English cannot carry by itself.

Now let us look at the other side.

Sometimes preserving the form can hide the meaning.

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: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

What does “cleanness of teeth” mean?

To a modern reader, it may sound as though God gave everyone excellent dental care.

The parallel phrase explains it.

There was “want of bread.”

Their teeth were clean because they had nothing to eat.

The NIV says, “I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town.”

The KJV preserves Amos’s vivid picture.

The NIV communicates the result immediately.

Which one is faithful?

The KJV is faithful to the image.

The NIV is faithful to the function.

The preacher can read the KJV and explain the image.

The new reader may benefit from the explanation already present in the NIV.

We do not have to accuse either translator of dishonesty.

We need to understand what each translation preserved.

First Peter 1:13 gives us another example.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end.”

In the ancient world, a person wearing a long garment gathered it around the waist before running, working or fighting.

The physical action meant getting ready.

Peter moves that picture into the mind.

Prepare your thinking.

Gather up loose thoughts.

Be mentally ready for action.

A modern translation may say, "Prepare your minds for action."

That is not the visible form of the metaphor.

It is the command the metaphor communicates.

The KJV gives the picture.

The functional rendering gives the explanation.

As a preacher, I do not have to throw away the picture.

I can read the KJV and teach what the picture means.

That is one of the privileges of preaching.

The translation does not have to place the entire commentary into the verse.

Philippians 1:8 is even more direct.

"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

The Greek word refers to inward organs.

In that culture, those inward parts could represent deep affection and compassion.

Modern English usually places those emotions in the heart.

If someone says, "I love you with all my bowels," modern hearers will probably not think of tender Christian affection.

The dictionary form may be represented.

The meaning may not be.

Modern versions therefore speak of the affection or tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

That is a functional decision.

It communicates what Paul's expression communicated.

First Samuel 24:3 says Saul entered the cave "to cover his feet."

The expression discreetly refers to relieving himself.

The KJV preserves the ancient euphemism.

A modern version may state what Saul was doing.

One keeps the expression.

The other supplies the meaning.

Neither method wins every passage.

Now we must add another warning.

Sometimes a translator should not explain too much.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 says:

“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

The Hebrew word translated “vanity” is hebel.

Its concrete picture is breath or vapor.

Vapor is visible, but it cannot be grasped.

It appears and disappears.

Throughout Ecclesiastes, the word can suggest transience, frustration, insubstantiality or enigma.

Some translations render the conclusion “Everything is meaningless.”

That is clear English.

It is also a strong interpretation.

Is the Preacher claiming that nothing has any meaning?

Or is he describing life under the sun as fleeting, frustrating and impossible for us to control?

“Meaningless” may narrow a rich image into one conclusion.

The formal expression requires more explanation.

It also leaves room for the full argument of the book.

Functional equivalence can go too far when it decides more than the original wording decides.

John 3:3 presents a different problem.

Jesus says:

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The Greek word translated “again” can also mean “from above.”

Nicodemus responds as though he heard a second physical birth.

Jesus leads him toward birth produced by the Spirit from above.

The Greek wordplay carries both dimensions through the conversation.

English forces the translator to choose.

“Born again” helps us understand Nicodemus’s response.

“Born from above” helps us hear Jesus’ heavenly meaning.

No single natural English expression carries everything.

This is where a footnote becomes valuable.

The note can preserve the alternative that the main line cannot contain.

Sometimes the most honest translation says, in effect, “The original permits more than one understanding here.”

That is not unbelief.

That is respect for what God inspired and restraint about what we claim to know.

Formal equivalence can go too far.

It goes too far when it produces English no English speaker would naturally use.

It goes too far when an ancient idiom gives a modern reader the wrong idea.

It goes too far when Hebrew or Greek grammar is copied into confusing English.

It goes too far when awkwardness is treated as proof of accuracy.

It goes too far when readers are given the sound of precision without the substance of understanding.

Functional equivalence can also go too far.

It goes too far when it removes a meaningful Biblical image.

It goes too far when repeated words disappear.

It goes too far when an uncertain passage is made to sound certain.

It goes too far when commentary is placed into the text without warning.

It goes too far when the ancient world is replaced completely with our modern world.

Formal translation can preserve words while obscuring meaning.

Functional translation can explain meaning while removing too much of the text.

This brings us to paraphrase.

A paraphrase is a freer restatement of the message.

The Living Bible began as Kenneth Taylor’s rewording of an existing English Bible, the American Standard Version.

The Message was produced with reference to Hebrew and Greek, but it deliberately uses highly contemporary and interpretive English.

Its own presentation describes it primarily as a reading Bible rather than a study Bible.

A paraphrase can help a familiar passage sound fresh.

It can help someone follow the movement of a difficult paragraph.

It can encourage extended reading.

It may provide a useful devotional comparison.

But the freer the rendering, the more interpretation the reader receives along with the text.

A paraphrase should not ordinarily stand alone when we establish doctrine.

It should not be our only source for a word study.

It should not settle a disputed passage by itself.

It should not become the foundation of an argument based upon exact wording.

A paraphrase can help us hear a passage freshly.

It should not prevent us from examining what the passage actually says.

The kind of Biblical writing also matters.

Poetry is not translated exactly like law.

Law requires careful terminology and precise distinctions.

Poetry depends upon imagery, parallelism, rhythm and sometimes deliberate ambiguity.

Narrative needs natural movement, but historically important details must remain.

Wisdom literature uses compact sayings, memorable forms and wordplay.

Prophecy depends upon symbols, covenant language and connections with earlier Scripture.

The Gospels contain natural speech, repeated themes and Old Testament echoes.

The Epistles require clear logical relationships and careful theological vocabulary.

Apocalyptic literature should retain its images rather than turning every symbol into the translator's explanation.

We should not translate every poem into an outline.

We should not translate every vision into a commentary.

We should not translate every ancient measurement into a modern approximation and make the original disappear.

Genre tells us what kind of meaning the form is carrying.

Now someone may ask, "Pastor, which kind of Bible should I use?"

For preaching, use a stable and dependable primary translation.

At Reason Together Church, our ordinary Scripture quotations come from the KJV.

When an older expression is unclear, we explain it.

We do not pretend that every listener already understands seventeenth-century English.

We also do not discard a beautiful and durable translation merely because it sometimes requires teaching.

For detailed study, begin with your primary Bible and consult translations at different places on the spectrum.

Compare a relatively formal translation with a functional translation.

Read the footnotes.

Use sound commentaries.

Consult Hebrew or Greek when it materially clarifies the issue and when you have reliable help.

Do not build a doctrine upon unusual English wording without asking whether that wording represents the original text.

For public reading, clarity and cadence matter.

Listeners cannot pause the reader and inspect a footnote every few seconds.

A sentence that works on a study desk may be difficult to follow when heard once.

For new believers, use a translation they can understand and will read.

Difficulty is not a measure of spirituality.

We should teach people the Bible, not shame them because they need help understanding it.

For children, use accurate language appropriate to their stage of reading.

Bible storybooks may help, but they should not permanently replace the Bible itself.

For readers using English as a second language, natural syntax and current vocabulary can be especially important.

Whenever possible, encourage them to read Scripture in the language they understand best.

For memorization, consistency matters.

Choose one dependable version so that the wording becomes established in your mind.

My practical recommendation is simple.

Use one translation as your home Bible.

Use several translations as witnesses when you study.

Do not misunderstand that statement.

Ten English translations are not ten ancient manuscripts.

Several English versions may use the same Hebrew and Greek editions.

Some belong to the same revision family.

We do not settle a question by taking a vote among English Bibles.

We compare them because their differences show us where translators made decisions.

When translations differ, ask why.

Is there an idiom?

Is the original expression ambiguous?

Has one version preserved the form while another explains the function?

Does a footnote identify another possible meaning?

Has one translation retained a repeated word that another varied for style?

The goal is not to pick a winner before opening the passage.

The goal is to understand what God said.

There is also a pastoral lesson here.

A Christian carrying a formal translation is not automatically more faithful.

A Christian reading a functional translation is not automatically less serious about Scripture.

A new believer should not be embarrassed because the KJV is difficult at first.

A lifelong KJV reader should not be treated as though affection for its language is ignorance.

We can examine translations honestly without examining one another uncharitably.

Romans 14:4 asks:

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?”

Our preferred Bible should not become a platform from which we look down upon another believer.

Translation faithfulness matters because God’s words matter.

Understanding matters because God spoke to be understood.

That brings us back to 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.”

Read the Word distinctly.

Give the sense carefully.

Help people understand the reading.

Then call them to obey what God has made clear.

The purpose of the Bible is not to give us another argument to win.

Second Timothy 3:15 says that the holy Scriptures “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The Scriptures direct us to Christ.

They tell us the truth about our sin.

Romans 3:23 says:

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

They tell us the result of sin and the gift of God.

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.

Salvation is not earned through scholarship, church attendance or good works.

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 carrying the right translation.

You cannot earn it by knowing Hebrew or Greek.

You cannot earn it by giving, serving or becoming religious.

Salvation is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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, take one dependable Bible and make it familiar.

Read it until its words live in your memory.

Compare other translations when they can help you see a decision more clearly.

Do not be afraid of a footnote.

Do not be impressed by a slogan.

Do not assume that old English is always more literal.

Do not assume that easy English is always more accurate.

Preserve the words when the words carry across.

Preserve the meaning when the words do not.

Value the form because God inspired words, sentences and books.

Value understanding because God did not speak to hide the truth from those who sincerely seek Him.

Let comparison produce investigation rather than suspicion.

Let investigation produce understanding.

Let understanding produce faith and obedience.

Read the Word.

Give the sense.

Help others understand.

Then live what God has made clear.

Aloha Nui Loa.

Word for Word or Thought for Thought Which Method Is Better

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. It also marks important limitations so that memorable illustrations are not pressed beyond what the evidence supports. The sermon's governing distinction is between preserving form and communicating function. Neither priority is treated as a complete definition of faithfulness.

1 Series Introduction

The opening places RTS-107 after the individual KJV comparisons. It does not repeat the detailed conclusions of RTS-104 or RTS-106. Instead, those studies become evidence that a single translation can make more formal choices in one passage and more functional choices in another.

The preview of Parts Nine and Ten gives the listener a reason to distinguish the present subject from the remaining series. Paraphrase is introduced here only enough to define its relationship to translation. A fuller evaluation belongs to Part Nine. The final recommendation concerning Bible choice will be synthesized in Part Ten.

2 Eyes Peeled Illustration

The opening idiom gives listeners an immediate experience of the problem. "Keep your eyes peeled" consists of ordinary English words but functions as a unit. Mechanical replacement could preserve lexical items while losing the intended command. "Watch carefully" communicates the function while losing the image.

The illustration is not offered as proof that Biblical idioms must always be replaced. It establishes the decision translators face. The later examples show that sometimes the image should be retained, sometimes the function should be expressed and sometimes the text should retain the image with explanatory help.

3 Prayer and Nehemiah 8 8

The prayer thanks God for preservation and translation without implying that all translations are equally successful. It asks for humility because translation disputes often become moral accusations before evidence is examined.

Nehemiah 8:8 is applied pastorally rather than anachronistically. The historical event involves public reading and explanation of the law. The verse is not made to teach formal or functional equivalence. It supplies the ministry goal of distinct reading, sound explanation and genuine understanding.

4 Congregational Elements and Segue

The giving note follows Reason Together Church practice. Guests are not expected to give, members of other churches are directed toward their home church and giving by the local congregation is voluntary. The guest card, café invitation and Keiki Kids Center are included before the teaching develops.

The segue uses transparency as a modest connection. It does not equate administrative communication with inspired translation. It prepares listeners to ask what a label means rather than accepting promotional terminology without examination.

5 Formal Equivalence

Formal equivalence is defined as a priority toward preserving source-language form where English permits. The qualifier is essential. A completely form-matching text would cease to be normal English and in many places would not communicate the source accurately.

The sermon identifies the genuine exegetical value of formal translation. Repeated words, metaphors, grammatical contrasts and textual echoes can be visible to readers who do not know the original languages. Formality becomes unhelpful when readers assume that English word order or English morphology duplicates Hebrew or Greek.

6 Functional Equivalence

Functional equivalence is described as meaning-for-meaning to avoid the suggestion that translators receive free-floating thoughts. Meaning is inferred from lexical choices, grammar, discourse, genre and historical context. Functional translation remains accountable to the words of the source.

The principal risk is not that functional translators necessarily disrespect words. The risk is that the translator's interpretation becomes more explicit. When the source permits more than one sense, a highly functional rendering may conceal the alternatives.

7 Translation Spectrum and Optimal Equivalence

The spectrum model comes from the practice described in official prefaces and recognized translation theory. General classifications remain useful. NASB and ESV normally preserve more formal correspondence, while NIV and NLT more often choose natural idiomatic communication. The classification must not be treated as an accuracy score.

Optimal equivalence is presented as the CSB's named mediating strategy. The sermon neither promotes nor dismisses the term. It explains that all translation still requires decisions about form and function.

8 The KJV Translators on Varied Wording

The KJV preface directly challenges a rigid one-word policy. The translators said they did not bind themselves to an identity of words because the same original word does not carry the same sense in every location. This historical evidence is particularly useful for listeners who equate loyalty to the KJV with mechanical concordance.

Their comments about marginal alternatives also support the sermon's defense of footnotes. A note that preserves another probable sense does not deny inspiration. It distinguishes the certainty of Scripture from the limitations of a translator's decision.

9 Romans 6 2

Greek *mē genoito* is a strong negative response. The conventional KJV phrase "God forbid" contains a divine reference not lexically present in the expression. The sermon uses this only to demonstrate idiomatic translation. It should not be presented as an improper addition or theological distortion.

The example also prevents a simplistic contrast in which the KJV is always formal and modern versions are functional. The KJV often chooses vigorous English that carries the force of an expression.

10 Exodus 34 6

Hebrew *erekh appayim* is conventionally analyzed with the imagery of length and nostrils or anger. Ancient descriptions of anger often involve the nose because anger affects breathing and facial expression. English "longsuffering" or "slow to anger" conveys the idiomatic meaning.

The sermon avoids a crude wooden gloss as though “long-nosed” were the divinely preferred English wording. The value of the underlying image is explanatory. The theological emphasis is God’s patience rather than anatomy.

11 Galatians 3 16

Greek sperma, like English “seed,” can function as a collective singular. Paul knows the Abrahamic promises concern descendants, yet under inspiration he identifies their climactic fulfillment in Christ. The sermon must not suggest that Paul’s point rests on ignorance of collective nouns.

Retaining “seed” helps readers follow Paul’s explicit attention to wording and the lexical connection with Genesis. This is an example where functional expansion can make a local phrase easier while making the larger argument harder.

12 John 15 and Concordance

Greek menō occurs repeatedly in the discourse. KJV “abide” and modern “remain” can both serve as accurate equivalents. The issue is not preference for an older word. The issue is whether deliberate repetition remains visible.

Absolute concordance is impossible because lexical meaning shifts with context. Local concordance within a sustained argument is often valuable. The commentary therefore distinguishes thoughtful consistency from a universal one-word rule.

13 Genesis 2 23

Hebrew ishah and ish create a sound relationship that English only partially suggests through “woman” and “man.” This is not evidence against translation. It is evidence that languages package sound and meaning differently.

A concise note can preserve the information without forcing an artificial English coinage. The example supports the use of marginal notes in both historical and modern Bibles.

14 Amos 4 6

“Cleanness of teeth” depicts hunger because no food has soiled the teeth. The KJV’s parallel “want of bread” helps readers infer the meaning. The NIV’s “empty stomachs” removes the risk that a modern reader will think of hygiene.

The sermon deliberately refuses a winner. Amos's imagery has rhetorical value, so preserving it is not pointless obscurity. Immediate comprehension also has value, so explaining it is not necessarily unfaithful. A pastor using the KJV can retain both advantages by explaining the image.

15 First Peter 1 13

The participial image concerns gathering the loose portions of a garment for action. Applied to the mind, it calls for readiness, sobriety and disciplined hope. "Prepare your minds for action" communicates the function but does not reproduce the clothing metaphor.

This passage is ideal for the sermon because both renderings make a real contribution. The KJV gives the preacher an image to explain. A functional version gives a new reader the command directly.

16 Philippians 1 8 and First Samuel 24 3

Greek *splanchna* denotes inward parts and developed an emotional sense involving affection or compassion. Older English "bowels" could carry that association more readily than present English. Modern "affection" is functionally accurate even though it is not the anatomical term.

First Samuel 24:3 supplies a brief Hebrew euphemism. The sermon keeps the explanation restrained. Its purpose is to show that a literal English reader may not recover the cultural function merely by defining each word.

17 Ecclesiastes 1 2

Hebrew *hebel* is a major literary keyword. Its concrete sense of breath or vapor supports a range of contextual implications. "Vanity" is traditional but may also require explanation today. "Meaningless" selects one possible implication and can sound more absolute than the book's developing argument warrants.

The sermon uses this as a caution against overinterpretation in the main text. A translation should sometimes preserve an image and allow the book itself to develop its significance.

18 John 3 3

Greek *anōthen* has the senses "again" and "from above." John frequently uses words with more than one level of meaning. Nicodemus understands physical repetition while Jesus directs him toward heavenly origin and the work of the Spirit.

English cannot preserve both senses in one ordinary expression. The appropriate response is not to claim that one translation alone has captured everything. A main rendering joined with a note can represent the evidence responsibly.

19 When Either Method Goes Too Far

The paired warnings are intentionally symmetrical. Formality is not condemned for requiring study, but it is questioned when copied form produces false understanding. Functional clarity is not condemned for interpretation, since all translation interprets, but it is questioned when explanation suppresses imagery, ambiguity or textual connections.

The sermon's standard remains passage-specific faithfulness. This prevents translation philosophy from becoming a proxy for doctrinal allegiance.

20 Paraphrase

The distinction between The Living Bible and The Message avoids a common factual error. The Living Bible is properly described as a paraphrase of an English version. The Message is a highly idiomatic one-author rendering made with reference to the original languages and marketed primarily for reading.

The pastoral counsel concerns use rather than denunciation. Freer renderings may renew attention, but their expanded interpretation makes them weaker as sole authorities for detailed exegesis.

21 Genre

Genre determines which features carry meaning. In poetry, metaphor and parallelism may be central. In law, stable terminology and scope matter. In narrative, natural sequence and culturally meaningful detail must be balanced. In epistles, logical connectors and repeated theological language are especially important. In apocalypse, debated symbols should not be replaced with one interpreter's proposed referent.

The sermon keeps this section concise because genre could support an entire separate study. Its function here is to show why no translation policy can be applied identically to every sentence.

22 Choosing and Using Translations

The recommendation separates primary use from comparative use. One home Bible supports memory, familiarity and congregational unity. Multiple comparisons expose decisions and alert readers to difficulty.

The warning that ten translations do not equal ten manuscripts is essential. English versions may depend upon the same critical editions or related revision traditions. Comparison is diagnostic, not a vote on the original wording.

23 Pastoral Charity

Romans 14:4 is applied to judgment among believers, not used to claim that all translation choices are equally sound. Christians may evaluate a version rigorously without treating its readers as disobedient servants.

The sermon specifically protects new believers and readers using English as a second language from shame. Comprehension is a ministry concern. Difficulty does not establish holiness and readability does not establish compromise.

24 Gospel Invitation and Closing Application

Second Timothy 3:15 connects Scripture with wisdom unto salvation through faith in Christ. Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9 present sin, its consequence and salvation by grace. The invitation makes clear that translation knowledge, church attendance, giving and good works cannot save.

The salvation prayer ends “in the name of Jesus” as required. The closing application follows Amen and returns to the sermon’s practical counsel: establish one dependable Bible, compare responsibly, welcome notes and reject slogans. The final movement from comparison to understanding, faith and obedience brings the sermon back to Nehemiah 8:8.