

Why Are These Verses Missing in My Bible?

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[0 : 0 0] So, as we come to John chapter 8, many of you will probably notice something a little bit unusual in your Bibles. Unless you're using the New King James or the King James, you'll notice that John 7 verse 53 to 8 verse 11 is marked in a special way.

Some Bibles put this section in square brackets, others use horizontal lines above and below. I'm using the NIV and my Bible has the whole section in italics, almost like an extended quotation, just like that.

Most translations will have a little note or a footnote explaining why. So, what's going on here? Well, before we try to answer that, let's first acknowledge that this isn't the only place where this happens in the Bible.

Turn for a minute to Mark chapter 16. You'll probably notice that it's marked out in the last verses, verse 9 to 20, in the same way.

The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9 to 20, the note in my Bible says. Turn to Matthew 17, verse 21. Similar kind of thing here.

[1 : 3 4] In my Bible, the numbers go 20 right to 22. And there's just a little 21 with square brackets there.

The verse is missing. Flip forward to Matthew 18, verse 11. Again, you see a similar thing. You have verse 10 and then, in my Bible, 11's missing.

It's just the number 11 in small brackets with a little footnote. And then right on to 12. And you could flip forward again to a number of other verses.

We won't go to all of them. Matthew 23, verse 14. Acts 8, 37. Same thing. The verse is missing. It's just the number and a little footnote. So, I don't have the exact count, but I think if my online source is correct, there's at least 16 verses where this happens in the New Testament.

And two of them are those longer sections. The end of Mark there, and the one here, smack dab, in the middle of John. So, what's going on here?

[2 : 4 0] Why do some English Bibles have these verses and some do not? That's our big question for this morning. And just a heads up, it's going to be a little bit of a different kind of sermon this morning.

The truth is, it's a long story. The story begins a long time ago when the gospel writers and the apostles first wrote the scriptures of the New Testament. Hopefully, it's no surprise to you, but back in the first century when John wrote the gospel of John, he didn't write it in English.

He wrote it in Greek. Common Greek or Koine Greek, as it was called. That was the language that was spoken all over the Mediterranean world in his day. And it's good to be reminded of this every now and then.

I haven't heard it said myself, but I've heard someone else say that every now and then they come across a sweet little old lady who will say to them, well, if St. Peter used the King James Bible, then that's good enough for me.

Well, it may astound you to be reminded, but the first English translation of the Bible didn't come into being until over 1,400 years after the New Testament scriptures were originally written.

[3 : 55] 1,400 years later, before we got our first translation into English. And I think it's at about 100 or so for French.

And I don't know about Chinese, sorry. But when you think about it, it means that we haven't had an English translation of the Bible for very long. It's actually pretty close to about 500 years.

And if you think about how long a person lives these days, that's not that many generations ago. So the story of why some English translations have these verses and some do not is indeed a very long story.

Back in John's day when he wrote this and when Paul and Peter wrote their letters, it was a different world. They wrote in Greek on papyrus. And then they sent their letters by messenger to the recipients or to the churches.

When the church received the letter, they would read it aloud to the whole church. And then they made copies. And they did it by hand. And then they began passing out the copies.

[4 : 57] And then copies were made of the copies. And passed on and so on and so forth. Because the movable type printing press wasn't even invented until the 1400s.

So everything had to be done by hand. Some copyists or scribes were better than others. Some were very accurate. Some were not so accurate.

And so over the centuries, errors and sometimes even the intentional change or addition crept into some of the manuscripts. And then into the copies that were made of those manuscripts.

And then into the copies and so on and so forth down the line. And as the Mediterranean world changed, that also had a big impact on how the text of the New Testament was passed on from generation to generation.

There came a time when the church divided over regional lines. In 1054 was the official separation. Which you can kind of see the geographical boundaries on the map there.

[5 : 58] The Roman Catholic Church on the west, headquartered out of Rome. The Eastern Orthodox on the east, headquartered out of Constantinople. But long before these two regions officially separated, they began to grow apart.

Long before this, in the west, the Greek language kind of faded into the background. And Latin became the standard for the Western Europe area.

So in the 4th century, the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin. And that was kind of the standard Bible of the west. But then in the Eastern Church, the Greek language continued to be used.

And so they continued to make copies in Greek. There were even some Christians down in Egypt. And so there ended up being what's called families of manuscripts. Based on these regional divides as the copies continued to be made.

And then there was the fall of Rome. Much before this, there was the Dark Ages that came after that. There was a lot of upheaval and conquest in all of those years.

[7 : 07] And really, it was a miracle of God that the scriptures were preserved through that time. I mean, those were days in which libraries were burned to the ground. Entire cities were.

And thankfully, God used monks in scriptoriums at the monasteries to preserve his word. And to continue copying so that we could have copies today.

Now, there's tons of church history from the fall of the Roman Empire all the way up to the Reformation in the early 1500s. That factors into this story. But we're not going to go into all that.

For this morning, it's enough to know that up until the time that the printing press was invented in the 1400s, the Latin Vulgate, the Latin Bible, was the main Bible of the church.

And then after the fall of Rome, Latin literacy fell so badly that it was very few who were able to read the Bible. Mainly priests or bishops who were trained.

[8 : 0 6] The people were very much dependent upon church leaders to know anything of what God had revealed in the Bible. And unfortunately, the Roman Catholic Church became so corrupt that you weren't even guaranteed to have a bishop or priest who was a Christian in your local parish.

People went after leadership positions in the church for power and for prestige. And sadly, many of the corrupt church leaders were all too happy to keep the people in the dark.

But then, something big happened. In the 1400s, the movable type printing press was invented.

And it led to a whole bunch of changes. Within about 60 years of its invention, a man named Desiderius Erasmus published the first ever printed Greek New Testament.

There's a picture of what it looked like. They even managed to get colored ink on. And it's actually kind of nice. So this was a big deal.

[9 : 1 1] Up until this point, attempts had been made to translate the Latin Bible into German and French and even English. But the Catholic Church was very much opposed to it. There was one authorized translation of the Bible.

And at the time, it was the Latin Vulgate. Don't you dare make your own translation into another language. You may have heard about John Wycliffe. In the 1300s, just 100 years before the printing press-ish, he had been working to translate the Bible from the Latin into English.

Not only was he met with fierce opposition, but unfortunately, his translation wasn't very good. It was a translation of a translation of the original.

Because the New Testament was written in Greek, then translated into Latin in the 4th century. And now here's John Wycliffe translating the translation almost a thousand years later into English.

You can imagine the problem with that. I mean, just imagine writing a very important document, giving it to David. David translates that into French.

[1 0 : 2 0] And then it sits around for a thousand years. And some guy who speaks French and German picks it up and translates it into English. How close to the original intention of the wording do you think it's going to be?

You better believe there's going to be some major differences there. And if you don't believe me, you can just take one of Paul's long sentences in the epistles, punch it into Google Translate, translate it into one other language, and then try to translate it back into English.

And you'll see. There were some major problems with John Wycliffe's translation. But it was a start. So Desiderius Erasmus, after the printing press had been invented, he published the first ever Greek New Testament.

And Martin Luther, he actually got saved by studying this New Testament as he was studying in the Book of Romans. William Tyndale came along.

And he created the first ever published translation of the Bible into English in about the early 1500s. And he made it from Erasmus' Greek New Testament.

[11 : 28] In fact, there were a whole bunch of translations of the Bible into English that came within about 100 years of Erasmus' first publishing, the Greek New Testament, in 1516. And some of these translations were kind of based off each other and reworks and revisions.

A couple of them were still based off of the Latin Vulgate, out of kind of that respect for tradition in the Catholic Church. But the best of them were direct translations from the Hebrew Old Testament text that they had access to, and from Erasmus' Greek New Testament.

Later, this was revised by Erasmus a number of times, and then by a guy named Stephanas. And after that revision, the King James Bible translation was largely based off of Erasmus' Greek New Testament.

Now, before we talk about the major problem with Erasmus' Greek New Testament, let's first talk about the amazing blessing and gift of God that this was to the people of this day.

For the first time after 1,400 years, English speakers like you and me, though they spoke a little bit different version of English, they could read the Word of God, the very words of God, in their own language.

[12 : 44] And I'll just mention here that for this message, I'm relying significantly on Daniel Wallace for a lot of this information.

Daniel Wallace is one of the best Greek scholars alive today. He's a senior research professor of the New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. He's the director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.

He's traveled all over the world and photographed ancient manuscripts of the New Testament with his team. And he's, of course, he's been published all kinds of times and has served as a consultant for, I think, four major Bible translations, including the NIV, the ESV, the New King James.

Very helpful source. In his words, William Tyndale's, that first English translation of the Bible, was a superb translation. Back then they spoke in what's called Middle English, and Tyndale was a highly educated man.

He had studied Greek and Hebrew. He had a bachelor's and a master's degree from Oxford. He studied at Cambridge. He became fluent in six or seven languages. And he had a fantastic grasp of the English language of his day.

[13 : 59] Within 30 years of Tyndale's translation, there was another Bible that came to be printed, known as the Geneva Bible. It was translated in Geneva, of course, and it was the first English Bible translation done by a committee.

And it, too, was translated from Erasmus' Greek New Testament and from the Hebrew Scriptures rather than just from Latin. So finally, we come to the 1600s.

King James is on the throne of England. And while the Geneva Bible is the popular translation, which many people had in their homes, the Bishop's Bible was what was being used in the churches.

The Bishop's Bible was kind of based off of Tyndale's translation, though it had a whole bunch of different revisions at various points. One of the past monarchs decided that the Bishop's Bible should be the standard translation in England.

And so it was used in the churches, but it had never really caught on because the people didn't like it. The people liked the Geneva Bible translation better. But King James, he didn't like the Geneva Bible translation.

[15 : 10] And probably it wasn't so much because of the translation itself, but because of the notes that were packaged in it. Back then they used to put notes in the margins, just like we do today with our modern-day study Bibles.

And the Geneva Bible's commentary was very Calvinistic. Not only that, but the Reformers were very inclined to highlight examples of justified civil disobedience.

It kind of fit with the whole flavor of the Reformation. And King James did not like that in particular. So King James summoned all the religious leaders of England and he got them together to do some religious business.

They had a conference. And they made a resolution at that conference. The resolution was that a translation be made of the whole Bible as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek, and this to be set out and printed without any marginal notes and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service.

Actually, this resolution was made by somebody at the conference, but most of the church leaders didn't like the idea. They kind of preferred the Geneva Bible. But King James loved the idea.

[16 : 32] In fact, he was so enthusiastic about this new project that he himself took on a leading role in crafting the rules for who the translators should be, how they should organize. He saw to it that they had everything that they need to do the work.

He assigned six panels of scholars to do the work for the King James, three for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament, one for the Apocrypha, and altogether there were 47 men who worked together on the King James translation of the Bible.

And the scholars looked at all the English translations that had been done to date, as well as the Latin Vulgate, and specifically in the New Testament, they again looked at that New Testament done in Greek that Erasmus had done back in 1516.

Even though they weren't supposed to, funny thing, the translators of the King James Bible ended up going with the wording of the Geneva Bible a fair bit, but it was a good translation.

But even more surprising is how closely the King James translation, when it was done, resembled William Tyndale's translation from 80 years earlier. One analysis had that the wording was actually 90% the same as what William Tyndale had done in the first English translation ever made.

[17 : 51] So when all was said and done, the English-speaking churches, they had a new version of the Bible, and not only a new one, but they had an excellent translation of God's Word in their own language.

William Tyndale, back in his day, he was just a little bit more concerned with being faithful to the Greek and Hebrew wording and word order, so his translation was a little less easy to read.

It was a little less pleasing to the English ears. But King James, in his translation, they placed a little bit more emphasis on bringing the meaning through in a way that sounded good to the English speaker, a way that was memorable and understandable.

Understandable. And even today, the King James Bible still stands out as an elegant and beautiful translation for those who are willing to put in the work to learn some older words and grammar.

What a gift it was to the English speakers of that day, and even to many who still use it, even up to today. But there is one significant weakness or shortcoming, not just of the King James translation, but actually of all the English translations made around that time.

[19 : 06] It was that they relied exclusively on the published editions of this Greek New Testament done by Erasmus. That was the best that they had available in their day, many of them.

And as I mentioned earlier, there was a problem, there was a weakness, a shortcoming with his New Testament published back in 1516. Desiderius Erasmus, when he published this, and he actually admitted this, it was a rush job.

The printing press had been invented, and now it was, who's going to be the first to publish the Greek New Testament? And unfortunately, due to this rush, it ended up coming out in the first edition with a whole bunch of typos and errors.

But the bigger issue is that Erasmus' Greek New Testament was put together from a grand total of only eight manuscripts, eight Greek manuscripts.

There's only seven on this list. The eighth isn't on there, but he used eight. And the best manuscript Erasmus had was a manuscript copy of the New Testament that had been made in the 11th century, still a thousand years from the time that the New Testament was originally written.

[20 : 20] Not only that, but Erasmus didn't even realize that the 11th century one was his best manuscript. He used it the least, and instead drew more from some of the manuscripts that had been copied much closer to his own time of publishing.

In general, the closer to the time of writing the manuscript was copied, the more accurate the copy is likely to be. It's not the only factor that affects the accuracy, but it's a general principle.

So these 12th to 15th century manuscripts that he used to publish his Greek New Testament had all the copyist and scribal errors, and in some cases, additions, which had accumulated in them over the past 1,000 to 1,400 years.

In addition to that, all but one of these manuscripts came from the same family, regional family of manuscripts. And that in itself is not a bad thing. It's just that it was all he had in his day to use.

And out of all of these eight manuscripts, only one of them had the book of Revelation in it. And it was a copy of an earlier manuscript on which some archbishop back in the 1600s named Andreas had decided he was going to make all sorts of notes and comments.

[21 : 39] He wrote kind of a commentary and some textual notes all over it. And all of that commentary and notes had been copied forward for hundreds of years. And this was the copy that Erasmus had for Revelation.

And unfortunately, in most of the previous ones, it was easy to tell what the commentary and what the actual text of the New Testament was. But in this particular one, the person who had copied it actually wrote the commentary in between the lines of text of the Greek New Testament.

So this was the best that Erasmus had. And some of those notes or comments just above the words accidentally ended up getting into his New Testament.

But what was even worse than that was that his copy of Revelation, the manuscript, was missing the last page. They had codexes that were very much like books that we have today. You know how the last page sometimes falls out?

Well, Erasmus, he was missing the last page. And so he didn't have the last six verses of Revelation. So being the clever guy that he was, he cheated a little bit on that.

[22 : 46] And he actually opened up his Latin Bible. And then he wrote in Greek the words he thought they would have used to basically translate back from the Latin into Greek for the last six verses of Revelation.

Of course, he had to complete his translation. It's kind of a clever move. But when he finally did find some manuscripts of Revelation that had those verses, uh-oh, they aren't quite the same.

And already people have been translating off the one he had cheated on and making copies of that and distributing it. Turn for a moment to Revelation 22, verse 19.

Revelation 22, verse 19. It says, If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Now, if you're reading the King James, you'll notice that it says, God shall take away his part from the book of life. The difference is owing in part to Erasmus' back translation from the Latin Vulgate, because the Latin Vulgate says the book of life instead of the tree of life.

[24 : 06] But even today, with all the manuscripts of the New Testament that we have, we do not have a single one that says book of life in it that was copied prior to the time of Erasmus' Greek New Testament.

They all say tree of life. And probably, as some have noted, why the word book ended up in there is because in Latin, the word for book and the word for tree looks very similar.

Ligno versus libro. It's just two letters difference. Probably some Latin copyist had just made a mistake somewhere back in the centuries before, and it was carried forward all the way through to the 15th century.

And unfortunately, this error made it all the way into the King James version of the Bible, and even today, it still hasn't been corrected out of a respect for tradition.

In fact, even in 1982, when the New King James version was published, they had the opportunity to correct this, and they were advised to by some that they consulted with, and they chose not to.

[25 : 17] They chose to base their New Testament off of that same Greek text that Erasmus did out of respect for tradition. So, here's why this is such a shortcoming.

Erasmus had only eight Greek manuscripts, and all except one from a single family of manuscripts, but today, we have over 5,000 plus manuscripts.

The exact count is hard to get, so I picked a very conservative number. Some would say closer to 6,000. And these are in New Testament, they're in libraries, they're in music, museums, they're in personal collections, all over the world.

And we have several online catalogs of these manuscripts. It's quite something. You can actually go online, and for free, you can view the parchment, the papyrus, high-resolution photographs that have been taken of the actual manuscripts, which they've found.

It's amazing. Now, not all of these 5,000 contain the entire New Testament. Some are fragments and pieces, but according to one source, the average size of a New Testament manuscript is 450 pages.

[26 : 28] So it's quite significant. They used fairly big letters, all copied by hand. Not only do we have a huge number, but we also have manuscripts from all of the different families of manuscripts.

And beyond that, we have over 10,000 manuscripts of the New Testament translated into other languages, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, and even more. We also have copies of the writings of the church fathers today, who quoted from their copies of the ancient Greek New Testament.

So we can check and see does it match up. And most importantly, we have many manuscripts today which date back way closer to the time that the New Testament was originally written.

An earlier date of copy and an earlier manuscript means that it is closer to the original source which means that generally there's way less chance for error. We have a dozen manuscript fragments dating all the way back to the second century.

That's within a hundred years of the time that the apostles and the gospel writers wrote. Now those are fragments, most of them, not the whole New Testament.

[27 : 44] In the third century, 64 manuscripts. From the fourth century, about 48 manuscripts. And if you just take those 300 years together, we have about 125 manuscripts and in those 125 manuscripts the whole New Testament is found represented multiple times.

It's amazing. Not only that, but with the technology that we have today, we're able to analyze these manuscripts in ways that were never possible before.

We have different types of imaging today that can help better read old and faded text on parchment. We have computers that are able to catalog every manuscript that we have and we can program to sift through them all and try to help us narrow down the most likely original reading of the New Testament scriptures in those places where there are some variations.

We can pull up images of manuscripts, a manuscript that's in Germany, a manuscript that's in England, and pull them up on the screen side by side and compare, something that they couldn't do in Erasmus' or Stephanus' day.

So because of this, we have the ability to narrow things down even better and be even more confident that the Greek New Testament we have today contains accurately the words that the apostles originally wrote.

[29 : 08] And what that means is that the best of our modern-day English translations, they're actually more accurate than the early English translations ever could be. I don't know about you, but I find that reassuring.

I find that encouraging. Back to John 7 verse 53. The reason this passage is specially marked out like this is because there's a very high degree of confidence that it was not part of the original gospel of John, but that it was added later.

According to D.A. Carson, a very respected Bible scholar, the medieval Greek manuscripts, they have these verses, but if you go back before that to the earlier manuscripts, it's absent from virtually all of them across all families of manuscripts.

These verses are missing from the earliest translations of the gospel into Syriac, Coptic, Latin, and Armenian. All of the early church fathers omit this section completely. From their commentaries on the gospel of John, and the early church fathers were not known for being brief.

They loved to comment at length on every verse of the Bible, but they just passed right from verse 52 of chapter 7 to verse 12 of chapter 8 as if it wasn't even there in their commentaries on John's gospel.

[30 : 32] In fact, the earliest citation or quote from this passage by a church father that we know of isn't until the 10th century. And then on top of that, there are also a number of later manuscripts that have this section in John marked in a special way to show that they're not confident of its authenticity.

As the note in my Bible says, there are a few manuscripts that have these same verses in different places. Some of them in Luke in a couple different spots. Some of them in John 7 in a couple different spots.

At least one of them at the end of the Gospel of John. All of these indicating that they weren't sure if that was part of the original, probably because they had two different copies, one that had it and one that did not.

And this is the same kind of thing that's basically going on in all of these verses that we looked at at the start, that we talked about at the start. Somewhere along the way, a scribe or copier made an error, usually unintentional, though sometimes intentionally to correct or to adjust the text to what he thought it should say, or to add something that he thought should be in there.

And by the time it got to Erasmus' day, these verses and the others we looked at were all part of the eight manuscripts that he drew from. And so they're in the King James Bible today, and in many of your translations as well, whether they're in brackets or in italics.

[31 : 57] But since 1611, we've discovered and collected and analyzed thousands of manuscripts, and the earliest of them just do not have these verses in them.

Here's some pictures of Papyrus 66, P66. This has almost the complete gospel of John in it, and amazingly, it dates to about 200 AD.

It's amazing. It sure looks brittle in the picture there. There's another picture of the page. Straight on. This right here is the page that this is on, and right about that little dot right there, that's where the whole section of 753 to 8, verse 11 is, and it's not in this manuscript at all.

It just keeps on going, as if it never was there. So the evidence is pretty overwhelming that this excerpt was added later, and wasn't part of what John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

However, it's probably here for a reason. Just because John didn't write it himself doesn't mean that it never happened. So we don't need to assume based on this that, you know, somebody just completely fabricated a story and stuck it in, that it's completely fictitious.

[33 : 19] Something like this probably did happen at some time in Jesus' ministry. Even as we read it, we'll notice that most of it is something that very much fits with the kind of situations Jesus found himself in, and the kind of things that Jesus said and did.

The teachers of the law, it says in verse 3, and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say? They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. Well, if we look at the other places in the Gospels, that sounds pretty characteristic of the religious leaders.

They were often trying to trip Jesus up with all kinds of things. At one point in this account, Jesus bends down and starts writing on the ground with his finger. And there's been all kinds of speculation as to what exactly he wrote.

Some people are pretty sure that they know. It's kind of a strange thing, isn't it? Just in the middle of all this, start writing on the ground. We aren't told what he wrote or why, but it's not totally out of characteristic for Jesus.

[34 : 35] I mean, he has done some strange things. Among them is spitting in the mud and then smearing it into a man's eyes. That's how he healed one of the blind people that he healed.

And, you know, last time I got sand or dirt in my eye, it was a very unpleasant experience. Jesus does some strange things sometimes, so this isn't totally out of characteristic for him.

Jesus also tells the men that are gathered there, I love what he says to them. He says, whichever of you is without sin, cast the first stone. A very wise answer, a very clever way of reminding them that every single one of you is also guilty of breaking God's holy law.

All of you are in need of God's mercy, just as this woman is. And this too happened all the time. Jesus had that perfect wisdom and was able to answer his opponents every time.

At the end of this account, they all leave, of course, one by one. Nobody throws a stone. Jesus tells the woman that he does not condemn her.

[35 : 47] She receives mercy. And we're reminded from other places in the scripture that this is the kind of thing Jesus did. He said to the paralytic man who was lowered on the mat, your sins are forgiven.

He had the authority to forgive people of their sins on the spot. He says, I do not condemn you to this woman. We're also reminded of John chapter 3 verse 17, where it says, For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

I do not condemn you. But Jesus also doesn't condone her sin. I'm reminded of the guy at the pool of Siloam, whom Jesus healed and found later at the temple.

He said, Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you. In a similar way, Jesus tells the woman, Go now and leave your life of sin. He shows mercy, but he also takes sin seriously.

He commands her not to do it anymore. Be done with doing the things that you know are wrong. So as far as the content of this section, I think we can treat it as historical, just as we would any other literature from the time, even if we acknowledge that it wasn't written by John, or that it was later added in by someone else.

[37 : 09] Finally, what should we take from all this? It's been a different sort of sermon, I know, but I want to give some practical help as we think about Bible translations. This is not the kind of sermon we're going to do very often, but we'll refer back to this if we need to in future times when we come to similar passages.

First of all, I think we should thank God that after 1400 years of having no Bible translation in our own language, we should thank God that by his grace and mercy, he gave us his word in the language that we speak.

And we should thank God that he preserved all those manuscripts over that long period of time and allowed us to find them and collect them so that we can be confident that we do have his words.

We do. Second, I think it's important that we humbly admit that no translation of the Bible is perfect. What the prophets and the apostles wrote was in another language, and that alone is inspired by God.

That is the thing that was breathed out by God when they first wrote. And every translation of the Bible, since, has weaknesses.

[38 : 25] It's imperfect. The King James is elegant 17th century English, and it was beautifully done in its time. But its Greek manuscript basis is weak. And so it contains some of those scribal additions and changes that were accumulated over the years, and that tradition sought to keep going.

That, and if you want to use the King James, then there's a good number of English words that have since changed meaning that you'll have to look up or understand why they use it differently back then than we do today.

The NIV is a great, simple, readable, modern-day English translation. It's one that I like to use for most of my reading. But it has its weaknesses too.

It omits crucial conjunctions. It neuter participles in the epistles, all to make the sentences simpler and easier to read. Those conjunctions, those participles contain important information to help us see the logical flow of what Paul or Peter is saying.

It makes interpretive decisions in places where the wording of the original is ambiguous. Some of those decisions may be correct. Some of them probably aren't.

[39 : 40] The recent NIV revision also flirts needlessly, I think, with modern-day political correctness when it tries to be gender neutral. And in some places, it's fine.

Brothers and sisters, of course they're not meaning to exclude women when they write that. But in at least a place or two that I've seen, it's a big boo-boo. The New American Standard Bible, another fantastic word-for-word translation of the Bible.

If you want to do a word-for-word study, that's one of your best bets. You will have to wrestle with some words that have fallen out of usage in modern-day English and some really long, grammatically complex sentences in the epistles.

It's not always easy to read, but it contributes significantly to understanding the original words. The ESV is another solid Bible translation. It aims to be somewhat word-for-word and yet stay close to the old Revised Standard Version.

So you'll also have to put up with some strange word order and some 19th century English at times. But if you love the style and the wording of the King James Version, but you want a translation that takes the latest New Testament manuscript evidence into account, the ESV is probably the translation for you.

[40 : 57] Whatever translation of the Bible you choose to read in or study in or memorize, I encourage you to make sure you know its weaknesses. You probably already know why you like it, but do you know its weaknesses?

Do you know which other translations of the Bible might be able to help supplement those weaknesses? You can read God's Word in more than one translation.

And if you're studying, I would recommend it. It's one of the best ways to do it. Finally, let's not forget about context either. Which translation will be most understandable to the people that you are trying to minister to?

Whether you're teaching children or sharing a verse with an unbelieving friend, if you're talking to a young person here in Davidson who's scarcely been in church, it's probably not going to be all that helpful to quote from some passages in the King James.

A passage in Job comes to mind, And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it.

[42 : 07] You're going to get some strange looks if you do that. And not only will you have to translate what you just said into today's English, but then you'll have to explain what it means. So context is so important.

What will be most helpful to the people that you're sharing with? If you have any questions, or if you're looking for help on figuring out Bible translation stuff, I'd be happy to chat anytime.

And I just encourage you to let me know. And I'd be happy to sit down. It's been a bit of a different sermon, but I hope that it's been helpful to you. And I think it's important that we do talk about this kind of thing every once in a while.

I hope that you appreciate in a new way what God has done over centuries to bring his word into your very hands. It's easy to take this for granted. People in past generations have put in thousands of hours of study, of scholarly work, so that you could read it for yourself in the language that you know best.

So I want to encourage you this morning to read it. And let's thank God together for the gift of his word in our hands 2,000 years later. Father in heaven, we thank you that you have done this, that you have preserved your word for us.

[43 : 25] We know that there's still languages today that do not have your words translated into them yet. And we pray and ask that you would start a work and bring it to those people.

But we thank you so much that you have given it to us. And we ask that you'd help us not to take this for granted. We ask that you would help us to see the riches and treasures we have in your very words, in our own language, in our hands.

In Jesus' name, amen.