

# WE ARE ENTRUSTED WITH MUCH

---

We are so blessed to have a whole range of Bible translations that we can read. But with all of the many translations available, have you ever read the **Cho Bible**? Well, unless you are from Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, you wouldn't have any need for a Cho Bible because it is the first Bible ever translated into the native language of Myanmar. On May 25, 2019, the Cho Chin people in that country were overjoyed to finally have God's Word in a format that they could sit down and read without the need of a translator. There was probably no one more grateful for this wonderful translation than the key translator who was responsible for making this Bible translation a reality. His name is Rev. Thang Ngai Om who actually was born and raised as a Buddhist. His is an amazing story of how God can use any one of us to do amazing things. When Rev. Thang was a young man, he was introduced to Jesus Christ and that's when everything started to change in his life. It was then that a Christian missionary encouraged him to attend a Bible School. And this was a very different experience for him considering the fact that Thang didn't know a thing about the Bible. In fact, he was one of the first students who managed to score a "0" on his entrance exam into this little Bible School. But Thang's faith grew and he excelled in his Christian religious training and eventually became a pastor at the age of about 45. And that's when his real chore started. Because for the next 25 years, Rev. Thang committed his life to translating the Bible into the Cho language until it was finally published and distributed to fellow Christians in Myanmar last spring. He described his work in producing this crucial translation as his "**legacy for the next generations**" of Christians in his country.<sup>1</sup>

This is quite interesting because translating the Bible from one language into another is always a difficult and painstaking task. That is certainly true with respect to the various Bible translations that have translated the ancient texts into English. One of the first major publications of such a translation was the **King James Version** of the Bible. King James I of England appointed 54 scholars to translate the available Greek and Latin texts into what we now call The King James Version (KJV), a/k/a the Authorized Version (AV), since it was authorized by the king. It was first published in 1611 and has undergone several revisions over the years—the last one being in 1762 which gives us the same version that is used today. The KJV was nothing short of a miracle, not just of scholarship, but also as a model of what good language translation is all about. It set the bar quite high for all modern day translations by successfully translating the ancient language into common, every-day language that people could read and understand. And without question, the cadence of its wording and its poetic style has really never been matched.<sup>2</sup>

Now, some people tend to think that the more modern Bible translations used today are simply a re-working of the old English that is found in the King James Version. But that is not the case. The modern day Bible translations are actually translated directly from the Hebrew language for the Old Testament and from ancient koine Greek or Aramaic for the New Testament. The Hebrew and Greek languages are so very rich and it's often hard to capture the depth of thought that is being communicated when trying to pick English words and phrases to convey the meanings of these ancient Hebrew and Greek texts. Now, occasionally you will still hear some people swear by King James Version—and for them these “modern” biblical translations just won't do. Of course, people have their favorite version—that is only natural. I was at our Christian Men's breakfast yesterday down at Ragland Memorial Baptist Church near Sandy Hook in Goochland and Dale Robertson taught our study lesson after we finished eating. He'll occasionally look at some of those carrying the New International Version of the Bible, commonly referred as the “*NIV*” for short. And, he will joke that the letters “*N-I-V*” stand for: “*Non-Inspired Version.*” But, I love the NIV version. Dale prefers the New American Standard Bible that is the favorite of such renowned pastors John MacArthur and Charles Stanley. And I love the NASB as well. The truth is that we are so very blessed by God to have a multitude of Bible translations that, when read together, help us to better understand what God is saying to us. And so, I like all of the major recognized translations that are used by most Baptist churches today—each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

But, let me give you just one example how reading more than one translation can help us. In the King James Version, we find the wording that was very familiar to folks back in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but they are just too strange for us to understand today. Now bear in mind, I am not reading this to make fun of the King James Version. In fact, there are some passages, such as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, that just don't sound right to me unless coming from the King James Version. But most of us wouldn't get too much out of the following verse found in 2 Kings 4:38 as presented in the King James Version—“And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.” (KJV) For me, at least, that's a little hard to decipher. But if we read this same verse in the New Living Translation or one of the more modern translations, it's not hard to see what's going on. The same verse in the New Living Translation reads: “Elisha now returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. One day as the group of prophets was seated before him, he said to his servant, “Put a large pot on the fire, and make some stew for the rest of the group.” 2 Kings 4:38 (NLT2) That makes

sense to me. That's why it's good to recognize that when we read a couple different translations together, it can assist us in having a better grasp on what's being communicated.

And there is a wide spectrum of translations to select from that range from a modern *paraphrase* format to a more literal *word-for-word* translation from the original Hebrew or Greek into English. For example, *The Living Bible* and *The Good News Bible* a/k/a *Today's English Translation* offer translations that are more like a paraphrasing of the ancient texts. They have the advantage of bringing clarity to what we read—that's their strength. But, they can sometimes do that at the cost of losing key words or phrases that have specialized thought and theological meaning in the Hebrew and Greek. Or take the *New International Version*, the *New Revised Standard Version*, the *Holman Christian Bible* and the *New Living Translations*—they offer a middle ground between the *paraphrased* versions and the more literal *word-for-word* translations. They are a bit more precise than the *paraphrased* versions and offer a fairly accurate "*thought-for-thought*" translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts.

And then on the other end of the spectrum we have the *King James Version*, as updated by the *New King James Version*, the *English Standard Version*, the *Amplified Version* and the *New American Standard Bible*. They are better "*word-for-word*" translations that bring the Hebrew and Greek into formats that we can understand—that's their strength. But if they have a weakness, it is that their sentence structure and phraseology sometimes seem awkward by our modern day English standards. Yet, for personal study and growth in Christian doctrine, they should not be ignored. And if you are really into "*word-for-word*" translations, there is what is called the "*interlinear versions*" that show the actual Hebrew or Greek words and texts with their English counterparts above them, as well as the tenses of each verb in the original languages

But, don't panic and worry as to whether or not your particular translation is best as compared to one of the other versions. The simple fact is that the *Word of God is best*. It has an incredible power that no other written word can possibly claim. And the Bible translations mentioned this morning that are so readily available to us in this country convey that power because all of them have the *Power of God between their covers*. Now, it's true that some bible translations offer that power better than others—but, they all convey the incomparable power of God's Word. I think this fact is evident in an experience that Christian speaker and writer Josh McDowell had when he was a young man. Back then McDowell was certainly not what you'd call a "*believer*." In fact, he was only 19 years old when he'd left college and took off to Europe intent on finding evidence to *disprove* Christianity.

In particular, he wanted to explore the ancient biblical texts in order to point out what he thought would be historical inaccuracies in the Bible. And more specifically, he wanted to try to show that Jesus was not the Son of God. You don't usually think of someone like Josh McDowell as having had such a twisted mindset. And yet he went to Scotland where he found his way to the University of Glasgow's ancient texts library and there he found something extraordinary. There, encased in a protective glass cover, was an extremely rare third century fragment of an ancient New Testament manuscript. The ink and paper had been used by a Christian about 1700 years ago to write part of John chapter 16 that quoted the very words of Jesus. Those words, of course, were not written in English, but in Greek. And back then, McDowell could not read or understand a single sentence in Greek. And yet, he said: ". . . ***Those words seemed to reach out to me in an almost mystical way. Even though I was an unbeliever at the time, I sensed an uncanny power about those words.***"<sup>3</sup>

If you take the time to regularly read the Bible—if you will just open the covers of any one of the translations mentioned this morning and read and study God's Word, you can feel that power as well. It's a power that comforts. It's a power that brings peace. It will heal you of the things of this world that we allow to wound us and to weight us down. So don't worry about which translation to read—just make sure that you are reading at least one of them. Better yet, read the same texts from two of them: One of the literal ***word-for-word*** versions (NASB, ESV, etc.) along with one of less literal ones (***NIV, NLT, The Living Bible***, etc.) But, don't just read the Bible occasionally—not just once a month or once a week. You don't eat food just once a month or once a week. If you only did it that infrequently, you would starve to death. And that's the problem with so many Christians today—they are starving themselves spiritually by failing to partake of God's Word on a regular basis. Those hours spent and dollars wasted watching Netflix or renting a DVD movie from Red Box or playing a video game could be spent and invested much more wisely. None of those things offer us any spiritual food. God plainly asks us: "Why spend your money on food that doesn't give you strength? Why pay for groceries that do you no good? Listen and I'll tell you where to get good food that fattens up the soul!" Isaiah 55:2 (TLB) The words of the Bible are sweeter than honey<sup>4</sup> and more precious than gold.<sup>5</sup> So partake of it—read God's Word every day and replace TV time with Bible time.

And do this with great joy knowing that the Bible itself promotes the idea that God's Word needs to be translated into various versions, with God-inspired nuances in each. These various bible translations give us the same great spiritual food, but with each one offering varying spices! And that's why we are so blessed to have in this country the many excellent translations and versions of the Bible that we do. But, where does the Bible encourage this idea of using good, clear translations that the

ordinary guy of the street can readily pick up, read and understand? Well, at least one good example of this can be found in the Old Testament.

In this regard, consider the Book of Nehemiah. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra and Nehemiah were confronted with the task of addressing the needs of the Jewish population who had spent many years in Persian where they had been living in exile. But, they had now finally come back to Jerusalem to live and they had finally completed the rebuilding of the wall around the city. And because of the restored wall, they had come to feel a degree of safety from outside invaders. But as is so often the case, once the pressure is off and the crisis atmosphere is in the rearview mirror, they began to lose their spiritual vitality. And at that time, most Jews who were living in Judea didn't speak Hebrew anymore. Rather, they had adopted Aramaic as their primary language because it was the predominant language that they had become accustomed to while they living in Persia during their captivity. How do you go about reading the Word of God—which was written in Hebrew scrolls—to a population that knew only Aramaic? What was Ezra's approach to all of this? Well, it might surprise you to learn that instead of forcing the people to learn the ancient Hebrew language of their forefathers, Ezra actually had the priests read to the people in Aramaic—the language with the words and phraseology that they could understand. Nehemiah 8:8 tells us: "They [the priests] gave an oral translation of God's Law and explained it so that the people could understand it." (TEV) This was essentially, as one commentator explains, a ***"reading accompanied by a translation in Aramaic with some level of explanation."*** So, we can see here that as far back as the Old Testament that when a language barrier separated those who needed to have an understandable presentation of God's Word available to them, God provided for His people. He gave them godly leaders who could clearly translate and interpret the biblical texts so that they could understand it if they would just make the time to take God's Word in and treasure it in their hearts.<sup>6</sup>

You see, it is not so much that we need to read one Bible translation vs. a different one. That is not the problem at all. The real problem is that Christians tend to listen to sermons, watch Christian DVD's, read books by Christian authors—all of which are extremely good things to do—but even so, they fail to actually read, in any consistent and organized way, the very powerful Words of the Bible itself. There is no substitute for doing that. If you want to know Jesus in a personal and intimate way, the best approach in doing that is to go directly to Him. And when you read the Bible with a receptive heart and attentive mind, that is exactly what you will be doing—you will be going directly to Jesus Christ. Why?—because as John's Gospel confirms: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. . . We have seen His glory,

the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”—all in the person of Jesus Christ. John 1:1, 14 (NIV)

And so, we want to come to know God—actually that is the purpose of life. It is what gives life meaning—both life here and in eternity. And with something so very important as that at stake, our goal should be to read and consume God’s Word without misunderstanding it—with getting as few words as possible wrong in the translation. That’s why we are blessed with the multiple translations to help us along in this way. Now some people might shrug at that. They might say, “***So what if I miss the meaning of a word here or a thought there in reading the Bible.***” Well, sometimes even one word can be crucially important. Let me give an example outside the Bible itself. If you asked the folks who ran a certain hospital in Florida if words are important, they’d give you 71 million reasons why they are because they were familiar with an 18-year-old by the name of Willie Ramirez. Willie was rushed to this hospital in very serious condition. In fact, he was in a comatose state. And the doctors in the ER fanatically tried to understand what his family members were trying to tell them as to how Willie had fallen into such a grave state. The difficulty was that his family members could only speak Spanish and none of the medical staff could understand them. Willie’s family kept screaming to them the word “*intoxicado, intoxicado!*” And the doctors assumed that this Spanish word *intoxicado* meant that Willie was intoxicated—i.e., that Willie had simply had too much to drink and now he had passed out and was “sleeping it off.” But that was a fatal mistake because in Spanish the word *intoxicado* doesn’t mean “*intoxicated*”. Rather, it means that you have been “***poisoned.***” And in Willie’s case, it was extremely severe food poisoning that had so stricken him that, without proper medical attention, the ensuing damage to his nervous system caused him to become a quadriplegic. And rather than going to court in a medical malpractice lawsuit, the hospital finally settled with Willie for \$71 million.<sup>7</sup>

Words are important things. How they are translated can be a matter of life or death. For Willie Ramirez, the wrong translation meant a horrible physical disability. \$71 million was the price the hospital paid for its mistaken translation—for its failure to take the time and get a good translator—for right down the hall one may have been available. What is the price that has to be paid for a disabled soul? A soul that is malnourished and sickly—***poisoned by sin*** perhaps? I don’t know about you, but I don’t have \$71 million to pay for my ***sin-sick*** soul. But if I did, it wouldn’t matter any way, for as Jesus asked a rich man whose wealth may have well exceeded 71 million: <sup>36</sup> “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” <sup>37</sup> Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” Mark 8:36 (NIV) Jesus said something else. And what He said pertains specifically to you and me. Jesus told His disciples one of those ***life or death*** revelations that we need to know and take heed. And this revelation comes

straight out of Luke 12:48.<sup>8</sup> Well, I don't need to read it to you because it's right there in your Scripture Handout for you to read. See it there?— **“παντι δὲ ὧ ἐδόθη πολὺ, πολὺ ζητηθήσεται παρ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὧ παρέθεντο πολὺ, περισσότερον αἰτήσουσιν αὐτόν.”**<sup>9</sup>

But, wait a minute! What are all those squiggly letters? It's all Greek to me! What do they possibly say? Well, in a way, it says that we have been blessed with God's Word in so many ways considering all the wealth of translations that we have been entrusted with. And because of that we don't have to guess what those Greek words say because all we have to do is open one of the many translations available to us and read in our own language this: “When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.” Luke 12:48 (NLT2) Indeed, we have been entrusted with much, and are expected to take advantage of that fact—both with respect to our own salvation, as well as those to whom we are called to spread the Good News of God's Word. The faithful Christians in Myanmar have but one translation of the Bible and they are overjoyed to finally have that—and they read it with great care every day, and treasure it above all else. How can we do anything less?

Let us pray.

Forest Hill Baptist Church  
January 19, 2020  
Darvin Satterwhite, Pastor  
©2020 All Rights Reserved

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Downie, “Your Bible Translation Is Imperfect. It's Also a Miracle: *We've forgotten that translation was God's idea from the start.*” Christianity Today, October 2019, Vol. 63 No. 8

<sup>2</sup> Halley's Bible Handbook: Deluxe Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Josh McDowell, *God-Breathed: The Undeniable Power and Reliability of Scripture*, Barbour Publishing, Inc. Used by permission. © 2015 by Josh McDowell Ministry.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 19:10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Downie, “Your Bible Translation Is Imperfect. It's Also a Miracle: *We've forgotten that translation was God's idea from the start.*” Christianity Today, October 2019, Vol. 63 No. 8

<sup>7</sup> Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetzsch, *Found in Translation* (Perigee Trade, 2012), pp. 3-5, [www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com).

<sup>8</sup> Luke 12:48 (NLT2) “When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.”

<sup>9</sup> Translated literally: “*But to everyone to whom was given much, much will be required from him, and to whom was entrusted much, even more they will ask from him.*” Greek-English Interlinear New Testament Bible, Tyndale:Wheaton (1990, 1997) Luke 12:48.