

The Inerrancy, Preservation, and Translation of Scripture (Part 2)

Selected Scriptures

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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Welcome back to our Anchored series as we continue to look through what the Scripture teaches about the Scripture. And we're in the middle of a two-part sort of message. I started last week, and we'll finish up this week on the issues of inerrancy, the preservation of Scripture, and the translation of Scripture. Now let me just admit to you that part of last week and this week will be just a little more technical than I would normally do. So, if it feels that way to you, don't be discouraged, don't give up. I think it's important, and I'll explain why as we go through it, but the entire Anchored series won't be quite the same as some of the things we'll cover this evening; just the nature of our topic forces us to do that.

Now last week, we examined the inerrancy of Scripture. We looked at the fact that our Lord Himself affirmed the total inerrancy of the Word of God. This is what the church has believed throughout its history. This was not seriously questioned until the 17th century and the rationalism of the Enlightenment. And so, it's important that we understand that this is what the Scripture teaches about itself, it's what Jesus affirmed about the Scripture, it's what the church has affirmed about the Scripture, and there is no justifiable reason for leaving this position, except for the compromise of the church in desiring to reflect the values of the world around them. So, that's the inerrancy of Scripture. Again, if you weren't here, you can go back and catch up and make sure you understand why we believe the Scripture is without error, not only in the message of salvation that it teaches, but even down to the details of what it teaches as well, in other areas and in other issues.

Now, tonight, we come to the preservation of Scripture, the preservation of Scripture, that is that the Holy Spirit has preserved for us the Word of God so that we can benefit from it. We'll talk about what that means and what it doesn't mean and how we can be assured of that, but to begin with, we need to remember that our Bibles were constructed in several stages. The first stage, of course, is what we call the original autographs so the *autographa*, is that sort of technical description of it. By that, we mean the original manuscripts of Scripture. When we talk about the original autographs, we're talking about the animal skins on which Moses wrote in the 1400s

BC, or we're talking about the pieces of papyrus in which, in the 1st century, Paul's amanuensis wrote and which he then signed with his own hand - those actual original documents.

Now when you think about the Bible's history, it's important to remember the overall context of Scripture. The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years; the first writings in the life of Moses, sometime after 1445 BC, down to 95 AD and the last writings of the Apostle John (the Book of Revelation). It was written by 40 different different...over 40 different authors. And, of course, it's divided into 66 books; at least that's how we divide it. The Hebrews divide it...the Jewish people divide it a little differently. But in our case, the Old Testament, 39 books, the New Testament, 27.

Now the process of the Bible is pretty straightforward. You know, as we discovered last week, that God commanded men to write His words. Those original documents that we're talking about, in which...when the Bible was originally written, that original document itself, was in three different languages. There was, in the Old Testament, Hebrew of course (the majority Old Testament written in Hebrew), Aramaic, which is half of Daniel and two parts of Ezra were written in Aramaic, and that's because of when it falls in conjunction with the Babylonian captivity and afterwards. And then the New Testament, of course, written in Greek. So those are the languages in which the Bible was originally written. And the original documents themselves would have been written, in the case of the New Testament books (many of them), on papyrus, potentially. Or because they were documents that were intended to be kept, that were intended to be preserved (many of them, and certainly in Old Testament times), would have been written on parchment (also called vellum, which is writing material made from the skin of animals).

Now, I think you understand this. In fact, I'm confident you do that none of those original autographs exist today. We don't have the actual document that Paul dictated and that his amanuensis wrote down the letter to the Ephesians; we don't have that document. Instead, what we have are copies of those originals that were meticulously made, and then copies of the copies, and copies of the copies and that's what we have today. Now, let me just kind of picture it for you because I... just in case you're not following with me. You have, initially, the original

autographs, the original manuscripts. And then manuscript copies were made in the original language. Think about this for a moment. You're in the church at Ephesus, for example, and you get a letter from the Apostle Paul. What are you going to do with that letter? Well, you understand that he's writing as an apostle. You know you're surrounded by other churches that could benefit from that letter. And so, you're going to either keep the original in Ephesus or you're going to make careful copies of that document and pass the original along and so forth, as you cycle through the churches throughout the region. This is how the copies were made. And then, of course, as the church grows and as it spreads, guess what? Those other churches, understanding the writings of the apostles as we saw several weeks ago, are to be added to the body of Scripture, you want your own copy of those documents and copies are made and so forth. So, you have the original autographs and then you have the copies of those copies as they circulated among the churches and the Christian communities. Archaeologists have recovered thousands of these carefully made copies. Now what happens then, when we have all of these manuscripts, all of these copies, linguistic scholars pull together all of the available manuscripts and they carefully compare them noting what's likely the original text and noting all variations from that. The process that this goes through is called lower textual criticism. Higher textual criticism is when liberals attack the Bible and try to say it wasn't written by whom it was written and so forth. But lower textual criticism is the comparing of these manuscripts and trying to discern sort of a central and a flow of text that makes sense, that would have reflected the original. Now from their careful work a definitive Hebrew and Greek text is created. From comparing all of those manuscripts with all the possible variations, a definitive Hebrew text is formed, and a definitive Greek text is formed, and, in the apparatus of the footnotes, all of the possible variations are noted so that it's all there. And then from these definitive texts in Hebrew and Greek created by comparing all the manuscripts and the variations, other scholars create a translation in, of course, the language that their people speak, again, carefully including the variant readings in the marginal footnotes. So, that's the process.

Now you look at that process and you say, "Well, Tom, can we be sure and how can we be sure that God has preserved His Word through that process?" Well, I think we have to start by reminding ourselves that Scripture is very clear that God's Word is a fixed and settled reality. Psalm 119:89: "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled [and notice this interesting expression] in

heaven.” Isaiah 40:8: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Now those verses, and others like them that I could quote for you, are not ironclad promises from God that He will preserve His Word on earth. So, where do we get the concept of the preservation of Scripture? Well, turn with me to Matthew 5 and notice verse 18. It’s very important that you understand that Jesus’ comments here do not absolutely guarantee the preservation of Scripture, but they do clearly imply it. Verse 17, Matthew 5:17 - this is a key text in understanding the Scripture, this is Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets [that is a reference to the 39 books we call the Old Testament]; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you...” Now, watch this. This is one of Jesus’ sayings for “Amen” (literally is what the Greek text says). “*For Amen I say to you. This is absolutely true*”, Jesus says. “...until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” Now what’s interesting about how Jesus says this is He doesn’t say the truth of God’s Word will pass away. He doesn’t say the promises of God’s Word won’t pass away. Notice what He says: not the smallest letter (not the smallest letter written), not the smallest stroke, that distinguishes one letter from another, will pass away. In other words, while not guaranteeing it, Jesus is clearly implying that God had preserved His Word and would preserve it.

Now think about this for a moment. Jesus no longer had the original autographs in the 1st century, okay? They didn’t have them then either, that is, the actual scrolls, the actual parchments on which Moses and the rest of the prophets had written. What they had in the 1st century, is what we have. They had copies of copies of copies that could be traced back to the originals. Yet, in spite of that, Jesus constantly referred to those copies as what? Scripture. In fact, the Bible from which Jesus and the apostles often quote, was the Septuagint. It was a Greek translation from the Hebrew Old Testament. Now, don’t misunderstand me. Jesus was not saying that a translation is inspired in the same sense the original autographs were. And He’s not saying that God’s Word has been preserved in one specific place or one specific translation. But what He was clearly implying is that God, in His providence, does preserve His Word in written form so that He could say in the 1st century, without any of the original autographs existing, “*not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass away until all is fulfilled.*”

Now let's move on from that to understanding that basic implication. I want to give you some level of comfort with the manuscripts that we have, the existing manuscripts of the Scripture. First of all, let's consider the number of existing manuscripts. I think you probably know this, but we have more manuscript copies of the Bible than any other ancient document. Take the Old Testament, for example. We have 3000 manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament and we have 1500 of the Septuagint, which is of course the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was translated before Christ. That's the Old Testament. What about the New Testament? Well, in the case of the New Testament, we have 25,000 manuscripts of the New Testament. Now if that doesn't impress you, then compare that to the second largest number of manuscripts that we have of an ancient document; it's Homer's *Iliad* and we only have 643 copies of it. And yet, which of your professors in college doubted the authenticity of Homer's *Iliad*.

Now that 25,000 manuscripts of the New Testament includes this. First of all, it includes actual Greek manuscripts. In other words, copies that were translated or excuse me, copies that were made in the Greek language from existing copies in Greek - we have more than 5700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Again, make a comparison. Compare that to less than 20 each for the majority of the classical Greek and Roman works. The Greek text of the New Testament is constructed from manuscripts that date from 125 AD to about 1200 AD. That's the range, most of them concentrated earlier. Now some of these manuscripts are as small as a postage stamp, just a little fragment of a manuscript. Others are complete manuscripts of the entire New Testament and everything in between. So, we have this huge body of manuscripts of the New [correction: Old] Testament - 3000 of the Old, 1500 of the Septuagint. And in the New Testament with Greek manuscripts - more than 5700 of them. In addition, that 25,000 is made up of early translations from Greek into Latin into Syriac and into Coptic. And we have more than 19,000 copies of those early translations. A third way that that 25,000 is broken down is - and this really sends it way over the top, this is really beyond the 25,000 - we have quotations of Scripture within the writings of the early church fathers that number over a million quotations. In fact, just the quotations - if you went back and you looked at the early 100s after the resurrection of Christ and after the New Testament age, just the quotations from the early church fathers are extensive enough that we could reconstruct almost the entire New Testament from their quotations. One scholar has estimated that if all the copies of the New Testament had been

burned at the end of the 3rd century, we would have all of the New Testament except for 11 verses just by reconstructing it from the quotations from the early church fathers. So, when we look at the thousands of manuscripts of the Old and New Testament that have been preserved, preserved for us to look at, we can have confidence that the meaning of the Scripture has been preserved. Our English Bibles were translated from a synthesis of those ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

Now you might be sitting there thinking, “Well yeah, Tom, you’re talking about the number of manuscripts, but maybe those are like late manuscripts.” That isn’t true. Let’s look at the dates of the existing manuscripts. In addition to the sheer number of manuscripts, it is equally remarkable how soon after the original documents were written that the surviving manuscripts we have were copied. Again, when you look at other ancient documents, you find that there’s often a large gap between when the originals were written and when the surviving manuscripts were made. In the case of the biblical documents, the biblical manuscripts date closer to the original autographs and the events they document than any other ancient document. For example, again, the case of the *Iliad* - we have the most copies of it but the time gap between the original writing and the earliest manuscript we possess of the *Iliad* is a time gap of 400 years. Now think about that for a moment. Think about if we had a document that was written 400 years ago - that a copy was made today of that document written 400 years ago. You might assume maybe there’s some chance that some degradation in the document has taken place, that somehow the truth of it has been lost, that it’s been distorted in some way. 400 years. Well, the earliest manuscripts we have of most of the classic Greek and Roman works, were copied 700 to 1400 years after the originals were written. What about the New Testament? Well, in the case of the New Testament, we have a fragment of John’s gospel. I’ve actually seen it, the Rylands papyrus, that dates to about 25 years after John wrote his gospel. That’s unbelievable in terms of ancient documents. We have copies of complete New Testament books within 100 years of the original and we have complete manuscripts of all of the books of the New Testament within 150 years of the originals. Compare those years. The Bible, at the outside, the New Testament, at the outside - we’re looking at 150 years; the *Iliad* 400 years. And that’s second place.

A powerful illustration of just how remarkably Scripture has been preserved, is found in the

Dead Sea scrolls. Some of you went with us to Israel, and I think it was on our trip we got to see...one of the trips I had and I think it was on ours...we got to go to the museum and see the Isaiah Scroll. It is a powerful illustration of how Scripture has been preserved. You remember the story. The Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1947 in caves at Qumran, near the north end of the Dead Sea. The centerpiece of the discovery of Qumran was a complete scroll of Isaiah. And this scroll of Isaiah was written in the 2nd century BC, somewhere between 100 and 200 years before Christ. Scholars, then, have compared the Isaiah scroll, that was found in the Dead Sea scrolls area, in the Qumran area there - they have compared the Isaiah scroll to the Hebrew text that we already had, that was used to translate your Bible, that was used to translate originally Isaiah in most of our Bibles. What they discovered is that the more recent manuscripts we have were extremely close to the one that was 2000 years old. Let me give you an example. If you compare in the Dead Sea scrolls (Isaiah scroll) with the manuscripts that we already had and what was, you know the Hebrew text that was used in classrooms, you would find that there were only 20 minor differences in the first chapter of Isaiah. And not one of them affects the meaning. In fact, only once do the two texts even use a different word. Most of the differences, and you can imagine this, are in spelling. The bottom line is this: by every standard (and don't let anybody ever convince you otherwise), by every standard used with ancient documents - the volume of the manuscripts we have, the date with which they have come to us and how close they are to the original writings - by every standard used with ancient documents, the evidence for the reliability of the biblical documents is overwhelming. If secular scholars didn't hate what the Bible said, not one of them would ever be questioning its authenticity and reliability. It has been remarkably preserved for us.

I think that was part of the point Jesus was making in Matthew 5. Think about this. How many times do you read the gospels and you find Jesus confronting the Jews of His time with undermining the meaning of the Scripture with their traditions? It's like every page almost. And yet, never once do you find Jesus in His ministry accusing the Jews of having a flawed corrupted version of the Scriptures. In fact, He used the same Hebrew Bible. He used the same Greek translation they used. And here's the clincher: He called them both, in different places during His ministry, the Word of God. The Spirit who revealed the Scripture, who breathed out all of it in its entirety and in each of its smallest parts and down to its letters and its strokes, has also

remarkably preserved it in written form.

Turn to 1 Peter. Look at 1 Peter 1:22. Peter says, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again [you have been regenerated] not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, [and] that [seed] is, through the living and enduring word of God. And then he quotes the prophet: “For [because], ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass [this is Isaiah 40]. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but [notice verse 25] the word of the Lord endures forever.’” Now, two things are going on there. Peter is quoting Isaiah (that’s the word of the Lord) and he’s quoting Isaiah saying the word of the Lord beyond Isaiah. You see that? He’s talking about both. He’s talking about Isaiah because he’s quoting Isaiah. But Isaiah is not just talking about Isaiah. He’s talking about all of the word of the Lord. So, you got this mass of text. It endures forever. And then notice what Peter says. Notice the end of verse 25 is not in all caps because this is not the Old Testament; this is Peter: “And this is the word which was preached to you.” Peter says it’s the word of God that endures forever, that was preached to you. What was preached to them? The Hebrew text they had in the 1st century that did not...was not the original autographs and, in the case of the Septuagint, was a translation from the Hebrew text. And Peter affirms that that is the word of God and that’s exactly what was preached to them. We could bring it to our times. We could say, in our times, the word of the Lord endures forever and it’s that very word which is preached to you.

Now, briefly, and I don’t want to spend a lot of time here, but just a couple of technical things that I warned you about. I think this will arm you because there’s a lot of stuff out there, a lot of debate on the internet etc. I just want to arm you enough, so you understand a couple of the issues. There are families of existing manuscripts. What I mean by that is when you compare the manuscripts that we have and their minor variations, the variations that exist between them, scholars recognize that there are several trains that those manuscripts come to us in because they share the same variations. Let’s say it’s a different spelling, a unique spelling of a word or several words. Then likely, if they share that unique spelling, they kind of came to us through the same channel. Therefore, they fall into a family of manuscripts. Does that make sense? They have the same variations.

And so, the families of existing manuscript, scholars have broken down into four families: there's the Alexandrian Text (based out of the city of Alexandria in Egypt), the Western Text, the Caesarean Text, and then the Byzantine Text, which is also known as the Majority Text. And it's called the Majority Text because a majority of the manuscripts of Scripture we possess fall into this group, the Byzantine text.

Now, scholars disagree, when they're comparing manuscripts, they disagree which should be given the greatest weight, when deciding between those variations, because there are different philosophies. And, again, I don't want to belabor this. I want to arm you on this one issue. There are those who say that the approach we should take in deciding between the variations is we should always go with the Majority Text. In other words, we should always choose the reading in the largest number of manuscripts we possess. It's kind of reading by democracy, you know. Let the largest number of votes weigh in. Well, there's a problem with that. I mean, think about this with me. The fact that there are more of a certain manuscript family may not mean that that is in fact closer to the original, right? Because there may just have been more made of that. There maybe...maybe it was an area where the documents, the writing documents, were more easily preserved because of the climate or whatever. So, there are any number of reasons that could be. But this is a view that's out there.

And out of this view has come a bizarre sort of version of this majority view. It's called the King James-only view. And I just want you to understand a little bit about this. You'll run into people who believe this. There's a church here in Southlake that takes a King James-only view of the Scripture. What're they saying? Well, they're saying a couple things. Those who take this approach maintain, often, that the English translation made in 1611 is inspired by God. For example, in the October 1978 issue of Bible Believers' Bulletin, Peter Ruckman, who's one of the bizarre founders of this idea, wrote this, "The Holy Ghost honored the English text above any Greek or English text." By this he meant that the King James translators were guided more accurately in their translation by the Holy Spirit than were those men who copied the original manuscripts. There's a group - there are a group of pastors out there who say this about themselves, "Men who are unashamed to proclaim the King James Bible, AD 1611, as God's

holy perfect Word, God still has a few men who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of scholarship.” They say, “It’s the Textus Receptus (have you heard this?) that we ought to believe and embrace.” Well, what do they mean by that? Well, the Textus Receptus is just a term that was coined back in a Greek testament in 1633. And the King James version used a lot of that family of manuscripts. It’s one part of the Majority Text or of the Byzantine Text family. The King James was based largely on that. But, it was very different. Approximately 190 differences between the Textus Receptus and the KJV. The Textus Receptus is just a sub-family of the Byzantine or the Majority Text. And so, this is a bizarre deal. You need to understand that. You don’t...I don’t need to go into it much further. Let me just show you that even the King James translators did not claim for their work what the modern King James-only movement claims. In fact, in the preface to the original KJV, this is what the editors wrote (and this is in that Old English text in which it was written): “Therefore, as Saint Augustine sayeth, that variety of translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures. So, diversity of signification and sense in the margin, where the text is not so clear, must needs do good, yea, is necessary as we are persuaded.” In other words, even as they translated it, they realized that in every case they weren’t...they didn’t have enough manuscript evidence. They didn’t have the same number of manuscripts that we have today. And they were acknowledging that there was some question and so they included it in the margin. By the way, the New King James version, published by Thomas Nelson, is not an improvement on the King James version. The original intent was to produce a new translation from the Byzantine or the Majority Text. What ended up happening with the New King James, was they just changed the English text by modernizing some of the archaic wording. So, it was not a translation from the Majority or Byzantine Text. It was, instead, just an updating of the English of the King James.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I’m not dumping on the King James. The King James version, in its time, was a magnificent translation. I’m just saying don’t buy into this King James-only thing. Know where it comes from. They’re arguing that, because the majority of the manuscripts we possess are in fact in this line, therefore the King James bears a special weight and authority and some, as you saw, go beyond that and say the Holy Spirit essentially inspired the King James in a way that He didn’t in the original autographs.

So, you have the Majority Text view and I'm just going to skirt through these. You have what's called the Thorough Eclectic view. This is a liberal approach - just choose the reading based on your own subjective literary analysis. This is unacceptable. Then there is the approach that's called the Westcott-Hort approach, named after two scholars. This approach says always choose the reading in the oldest manuscripts. They're the ones most likely to be closest to the original so go with the oldest. You see the difference here? The two primary ones that are out there is either the majority or the oldest. And then, what I would suggest and what has become more popular, and I think is the right approach, is what some scholars call the Balanced Eclectic. Don't be scared by that. It just means choose each individual variation after you've investigated it based on its own merits. Don't come at it with some predisposition because the majority says this or because the oldest say this. No! Look at each one individually and carefully and accurately.

Now, just in case that rattles you a little bit, let me show you the essential agreement of the manuscripts we have. Remember, we have 3000 Hebrew manuscripts. We have 1500 Septuagint manuscripts. We have the equivalent of 25,000 manuscripts for the New Testament plus over a million quotes in the early church fathers. The textual variations are almost always incidental and do not significantly affect the meaning of Scripture. In fact, look at the specifics. When you look at all those manuscripts, take the New Testament - more than 5700 Greek manuscripts plus the other supporting documentation we have, about 10,000 places in the New Testament, are there variations or variants of any kind. But most of those have to do with spelling, as you just saw. That's why, part of the reason I showed you that Old English quote - differences in spelling - that happens over time. Some of you wish there were no Websters Dictionary so you could spell it however you want. That's how they used to do it. Thank you very much, Noah! But if that's true, if there's no standard, then there are going to be different spellings. The other way that it varies, is by a change in word order because Greek (not?) is unlike English. English is based on word order. Greek - you can put words in whatever order you want because they have endings; it's an inflected language. And so, you can put it where you want for emphasis. And so, word order can be changed.

Now, when you then look at those, once those easily explained variants are removed, 99% of the text of our Bibles can be confirmed as accurate without any reservation whatsoever. And among the 1% of potentially significant variations, not a single doctrine in the historic Orthodox Christian faith is affected by one textual variant. And - here's the kicker and this is what ought to give you encouragement. Modern translations, like the NAS and like the ESV that many of you use - those two translations - modern translations, in their footnoted versions, have put all of the potentially significant variant readings in the marginal notes. If it's something beyond spelling, beyond word order, when you look at your Bible, and you'll sometimes hear me say, "Look at the note in the margin", that's what they're providing us. That 1% of potentially significant variant readings in those manuscripts, they're giving us all of them in the notes, in our Bibles. They're all there. So, scholars understand this. The scholars, who are working through this process, are not working in some smoke-filled room and are hiding things from you. They are giving you every significant variation. You look at the text of your Bible and you have it there. Geisler writes, "We have 100% of the New Testament and we are sure about 99.5% of it." In other words, it's in the flow of your text. And the other half percent we may have the reading that's the original in the footnote, in the margin.

So, you can be absolutely confident. Think of it this way, Believer. You can be absolutely confident that between the actual text in your English Bible and the marginal footnotes in your English Bible, you have the inspired Scripture. Look at the volume of the manuscript evidence. Look at the closeness of the manuscript evidence to the original writing. Look at the carefulness of the scholars who put it together. Look at the fact that if it's any potential significant variation whatsoever, if it's something beyond spelling and word order, you have it reflected in your English Bible. You can be confident of the Scripture.

Now, there are three passages in the New Testament that are debated passages - three primary debated passages in the New Testament. These are all marked in our modern translations. I just bring them up to you. First of all, Mark 16:9-20. In fact, turn there. I just want you to see this. I don't know how your particular translation will deal with this. But go to Mark 16:9, and if you have the NAS, you'll notice that there is a marginal note at verse 9. And it's bracketed all the

way down through the end of verse 20. Look at the marginal note in verse 9. It says, “Later manuscripts add verses 9 through 20.” But they include it. Why did they do that? Because it’s probably not authentic. It only appears in manuscripts that show up later in church history. But they can’t be absolutely sure, and they don’t want to make that decision for you, so they include it in your text. But they note it for you. They tell you; you need to know this as you evaluate the Scripture.

The second passage is Mark 7:53 to...John. I’m sorry! I said Mark, I meant John. John 7:53 to John 8:11. And, again, you’ll notice the same sort of noting. Look at John 7:53. And, again, in the New American Standard and I’m assuming probably in the version you have, if it has notes at all, it has a marginal note and, again, it’s bracketed down through verse 11. And the marginal note on verse 53 says, “Later manuscripts add the story of the adulteress woman numbering it as John 7:53 to 8:11”. Again, this is a significant variation. They’re telling you. They want you to know. They’ve included it. Now I will tell you that, while the end of Mark is probably not authentic but may be, this passage is probably authentic, but not likely original, in this place in John. Because if you take it out and you read without this in there, the text flows reasonably. Much...makes much more sense. But, again, what I want you to see is there only three debated passages and you have been given that clearly, that information clearly, in your version of Scripture.

The third debated passage is...there’re only three. The third one is 1 John 5. Turn 1 John 5 and look at verse 7: “For there are three that testify...” And, then, notice the marginal note at the beginning of verse 8. Go over to the marginal note. It says, “A few late manuscripts add, ‘in heaven, the father, the word, and the Holy Spirit and these three are one and there are three that testify on earth: the spirit...’” and so forth. So, they’re telling you that there are just a few very late manuscripts that contain that verse. I’ll just tell you that that passage is only in four Greek manuscripts and all four of them are dated very, very late. None of the early church fathers quote that passage and, if it had existed, they would have used it in the Trinitarian controversies of the early centuries. It’s also absent in all ancient versions. In fact, first time it shows up is when Erasmus didn’t include it during the Reformation, the Roman Catholic scholar, Erasmus, didn’t include it in his Greek testament, he said he couldn’t find a single Greek manuscript that

had it. Guess what? One showed up. And so, he included it under the pressure of the Roman Catholic Church. And so, this text clearly was not in the original.

Now, here's the point I want you to see. I'm showing you how we got our Bibles. I'm showing you the confidence we can have. Even the fact that we know that these three passages are the primary disputed passages, is in itself a testimony to the reliability of the text that has been passed down to us. There is so little discrepancy. Again, you can be absolutely confident that between the actual text in your Bible and the marginal notes in your English Bible, you have the inspired Scripture.

Now let's move on quickly to the translation of Scripture. Some Christians object to modern translations but, frankly, unless you know Greek and Hebrew and are fluent in them, you need a good translation of the Scripture. And Jesus, think about this, Jesus and the apostles used a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint. By using it, and by allowing His apostles to use it, Jesus affirmed the validity of translations. In addition, we need Scripture to be translated into modern English. You know, there are those, I remember when back...I'm old enough to remember when sort of the onslaught of new modern translations started coming along, I grew up with the King James. And there were people who objected to new translations because, you know, they said we lose the beauty of the language of the KJV and we lose that sense of respect, you know, God's referred to as Thee and Thou and... Well, think about this now. The pronouns thee, thou, and thine, were ordinary pronouns in Elizabethan English. They were not divine pronouns. They were used if you were referring to God or if you referring to your dog. So, it's not like they're elevating pronouns. And in the original language, there are no different pronouns used for people or for God. Also, the language as it ages, becomes frequently misunderstood. You know, I run into people who, when I say that, say, "Look, I understand the King James just fine." And if you grew up with it, you do understand it better than most. But let's just let a man who taught English literature at Oxford weigh in on this issue. Here's C.S. Lewis: "We must get away from the Authorized Version", he wrote, "if for no other reason simply because it is so beautiful and so solemn. Beauty exalts, but beauty also lulls. Early associations endear, but they also confuse. Through that beautiful solemnity, the transporting or horrifying realities of which the book tells, may come to us blunted and disarmed and we may

only sigh with tranquil veneration when we ought to be burning with shame or struck dumb with terror or carried out of ourselves by ravishing hopes and adoration.” It’s a great quote. We need modern translations.

I want you to understand, though, that there are different philosophies. All English translations are not alike. They’re not equally helpful because there are different philosophies. The Bible has been translated into English, into a variety of translations. Which translation is best for serious Bible study? Well, there are three translation philosophies. First of all, there is what’s called formal equivalence. This is word for word equivalence, as much as is possible. You look at a Greek word, and as much as you’re able, you pick an English word that exactly corresponds to that Greek word. The King James used this approach, the NAS uses this approach, the ESV uses this approach. Formal equivalence. You get the word formal equivalence. They are... there’s a formal equivalency between the original language and the translated language.

A second translation philosophy is called dynamic equivalence. This is idea or concept equivalence. Now, if we’re looking at a passage in the New Testament in Greek, we’re not looking for an English word that corresponds exactly to the Greek word. Instead, we’re thinking, “What did this Greek writer intend to say?” We’re translating that into an English thought and then translating it into English words. That’s dynamic equivalence. The NIV is more in this direction, the New English Bible and, of course, the New Living Translation is very much in keeping with this.

And the third approach is paraphrase. And, frankly, a paraphrase is really just a commentary of sorts. It’s the author’s interpretation of the original. J.B. Phillips translation, the Living Bible that some of you grew up knowing about it, and in more recent years The Message would be an example. Now let me show you how these translation philosophies lay out on the translation continuum. You have formal equivalence. You have the NAS, is about the most formal equivalent Bible in the...in English. For study, it is superior to all the others. Why? Because it’s telling you, as much as possible, what the original language is saying. The farther you go toward paraphrase, the more you’re dealing with somebody else’s ideas about what the Scripture says, not the exact words simply brought over from the language of Greek into English or Hebrew into

English. What does this look like? Well, just look at one passage. Here's 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3. Here's the NAS: "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father." That is a very formal equivalence translation, word- for-word as much as is possible. ESV, similarly: "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father [they changed the word order a little bit but still the same words] your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Now skip down to the New Living Translation. This is dynamic equivalence: "We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, they're making decisions for you. The original says "work of faith" which could mean a couple different things. But they say that means "faithful work". That's what it means and that's what they give you. So, if you don't know Greek what are you left with? You're looking at that going, "Oh, that must be what it says." It doesn't say that. It says "work of faith". Look at the Phillips translation; this is a paraphrase: "We are always thankful [to God] as we pray for you all, for we never forget that your faith has meant solid achievement [you see what he's doing? He's interpreting. He's giving you a commentary on what this passage says rather than a translation], your love has meant hard work, and the hope that you have in our Lord Jesus Christ means sheer dogged endurance in the life that you live before God, the Father of us all."

Okay? I just want you to see why it's important that you choose the translation you use carefully. You want an English text that gets you as close as possible to the original language. You don't want to rely on a translation that is making interpretive decisions for you and isn't even telling you. Do you see why this is important? That's why we use here the New American Standard, not because there aren't other good translations, but because it is the most formal equivalent version in English that we can get so that what you hold in your hand, if you don't know Greek and you don't know Hebrew, is as close as we can get reasonably in the language without changing the word order and doing all the things that now will make it awkward to read in English. So, with that in mind, the best English translations are those that use formal

equivalence like the New American Standard or the ESV. And you can see...you, I mean, just glance at this passage; you can see the difference. You want one that's as literal and close to the original as possible. So, that's translation.

I want to finish our time together, this evening, by considering...We talked about a high view of Scripture. Scripture is inerrant. Scripture has been preserved for us. We have the Word of God. What difference does that make? How should it affect our daily practical use of Scripture? Well, let me tell you, you can see it in the life of Jesus. If, like Jesus, you and I have a high view of the Word of God, then we will treat Scripture the way Jesus treated it. Let me just briefly remind you of how He treated it.

Number one: He read it all and expected others to read it. He read it all and expected others to read it. Luke 24:27: "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." How did He do that? It's because He studied it all. He read it all. He knew it all. He did. But, He expected us to as well. In Matthew (he meant Mark) 12:10 (and this is a pretty common response for Jesus): "Have you not even read this Scripture..." He's saying how could you have the Word of God and not have read it, and not have understood it, not have pored over that text to understand it? He would say the same thing to us. Jesus read it and He expected others to read it as well.

Number two: He memorized it and He used it against temptation. He used it, like Paul talks about in Ephesians 6, like the sword of the Spirit to fight in that moment of temptation; just a little portion of Scripture He preached to Himself and, in His case, to Satan in the moment of temptation. In Matthew 4, in the temptation of Christ, three times in verse 4, verse 7, and in verse 10, Jesus says, "It is written", "It has been written". And He quotes the Scripture that He'd memorized to fight temptation. And so should you. You know, Martin Lloyd Jones, as you know is one of my favorites, and I don't think he has said anything more profound for me personally. It has more effect on my life than that little saying of his when he says, "You have to stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself." What he meant was stop listening to where your mind takes you naturally, those habits of thinking. If you just let your mind go, where does it go? Lloyd Jones says, "Stop that!" Stop listening to where your mind just goes

and, instead, talk to yourself with the Scripture. Preach to yourself with the Scripture. You have to know it like Christ did. You have to know it in a proper application to your situation and throw it back at that temptation. If you were to see me at times riding around Southlake, you would think I'd lost my mind because, literally, I'm talking to myself, out loud. There are many times when I will say out loud to myself in the car (never when Sheila is there but when I'm there), I'll say, "Pennington, shut up! Shut up! That isn't true! That's a lie! Here's the truth..." And I'll remind myself what God says. That's what Lloyd Jones meant. Stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself. That's what Jesus did. He memorized the truth and He used it in the moment of temptation.

Thirdly, because He had such a high and elevated view of Scripture, He believed it could be understood, He studied it, and He rebuked others for not understanding it. You know, we have a group of people alive today who are post-modernists, who believe that a written document can't really be understood as the original authors intended for it to be understood. Jesus rejected that out of hand. Jesus didn't believe that. In Luke 2:46 we read that "Then, after three days they [that is His parents] found Him [Jesus] in the temple [the age of 13, the age of 12 rather], sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." About what? About the Scripture. What does the Scripture teach? He wanted to understand. His mind wanted to grasp the truth. And you see that He teaches the same things. Look at John 7. John 7:14: "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. The Jews then were astonished, saying, 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?'" - that is, having never gone through formal education with the Pharisaic system, the Rabbinical system. "So Jesus answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will [notice this, if anyone is willing to do His will], he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.'" Jesus said you will understand and know. You will understand it and you will know that it's the truth of God if you have a willing heart. This is what Jesus believed. In John 17:8, listen to what Jesus says as He prays to the Father. "...the words [listen to this, the words] which You gave Me I have given to them [my disciples]; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me." In other words, they heard the words I taught; they understood the words I taught; they believed the words I taught. That's exactly what

Jesus expects. Jesus says the disciples were able to fully understand the propositional truth that He had taught them. And that's what He expects for us as well.

Number four: He obeyed the Scripture and expected us to, as well. John 15:10: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jesus said, *'I've obeyed the Father. You need to obey. You need to obey My commands.'* Luke 8:21: "My mother and My brothers..." Remember when Mary and His brothers showed up to take Him back to Nazareth, and He was sitting there in the house with His disciples around Him, and He pointed to them and He said, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." Luke 11:28: "...blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

And, finally, Jesus taught the word as the focus of His ministry and demanded that people place themselves under His authority. He did that throughout His ministry. I've cited several references there, but I want you to turn to one that isn't cited. Go to Luke 24. This is where we'll end tonight, Luke 24. This is after the resurrection and that's what makes this remarkable. Think about this. Jesus has died for our sins. He has been buried for three days. His human soul was in the presence of God for those three days while His human body was in the grave. Then, He is resurrected, and He now is going to teach His disciples. He has 40 days to teach them. Now, if you're the risen Christ, if you're the Son of God, think of all the things, the fresh amazing things, you could have brought out of the well to teach your disciples. But what does Jesus do? Twice, He does the same thing. Look at verse 27. This is the Emmaus Road disciples. "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Jesus said, *"I've got nothing better to tell you than what you already have in the Scripture. I just need to explain that to you better."* Go to verse 44. "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures..."

Listen, if the resurrected Christ had no resource better to give His disciples than the Scriptures, He has no resource better to give you. You have His best. Embrace it as He embraced it. Love

it as He loved it. Teach it to those under your influence as He taught it. Obey it as He obeyed it. And pass it on to the next generation.

Let's pray together.

Father thank You for Your word. What an amazing treasure. What a miraculous gift. Father help us to have the same view of Scripture that our Lord did. Help us to respond to it as He did. Thank You for how You have amazingly preserved it for us. Thank You that we can have confidence that we have Your Word. Oh, God, don't let us be like those Jesus rebuked. Don't let our Lord ever be able to say to us, "Have you not even read?" We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!