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Editor's Introduction

Articles from new writers continue to arrive on my desk and so I am delighted to introduce you to Phil Richardson from Harrogate. Have a read of his article where he discussed Peter's temporary failure and how the Lord Jesus handled it. It is very helpful. The new Career Choice series continues; this issue looks at life for a Christian in the accountancy profession. There's a lot more to come in this series, so watch this space. What are dispensations? Maybe you know, maybe you don't. In this issue we start to have a look at this topic. There is more, but I'll leave you to find out for yourself.

Every blessing,

Stephen Baker

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE:

No 5 - TRANSLATION



BY **TM SE ASIA**

Which version of the Bible should I read? This is one of the most emotive and controversial subjects Christians face. Knowing how the Bible is translated into English from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek will better equip us to make an informed decision. There are three main factors which influence Bible translation:

1. Choice of Manuscripts

We have considered how the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the words of scripture. We have seen how the original manuscripts were copied and circulated. Over time, small scribal errors crept in to the various copies and the originals were lost.

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed International*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

Today, translators have two broad categories of manuscripts from which to choose. These are the 'majority texts', and the 'earlier texts'.

The vast majority of ancient manuscripts are all very similar. Some translators prefer to use these as the basis of translation because the fact that there are so many of them attests to their reliability and authenticity. Ancient scribes trusted these manuscripts and copied them over and over again. The KJV and NKJV are based largely on these documents.

There are a smaller, but significant number of documents which vary from the majority. These are generally believed to be older, and therefore were copied nearer to the time of the originals. The argument in favour of these manuscripts is that in being copied fewer times, there was less chance of scribal errors creeping in. The ESV and NIV lean heavily on these texts.

As an example, compare Revelation chapter 1 verse 5 in the NKJV with the NIV:

'To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood' (NKJV).

'To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood' (NIV).

Most of the surviving Greek documents we have use the word *lousanti*, washed. But a small number of earlier manuscripts have the verb *lusanti*, freed. It is easy to see how a scribal error crept in, but since both meanings are true, it is difficult to be sure whether the letter 'o' was accidentally added, or if it was inadvertently omitted.

The process of textual criticism helps translators determine which manuscripts most likely reflect the originals. It involves studying multiple manuscripts, comparing scripture with scripture, and considering context. If the translation team cannot agree, they sometimes put the one they feel is most likely in the text, and the alternative in a footnote.

2. Philosophy of Translation

The goal of Bible translators is to communicate clearly the original Hebrew or Greek into English which is both natural and accurate. Often this involves striking a balance. Generally speaking, a more formal translation such as the NKJV will favour a literal, word-for-word translation, even if the result sounds a little stilted in English. A freer translation, such as the NIV, tries to convey the meaning in more natural English, even if some of the nuances of the original are lost.

For example, compare Philemon verse 20 in the following versions:

'Refresh my bowels in Christ' (JND).

'Refresh my heart in Christ' (ESV).

'Give me this encouragement in Christ' (NLT).

Paul literally used the Greek word for bowels, because in ancient thought the bowels were the seat of the emotions. But today, we think of emotion as being centred in the heart, so the ESV gives a 'dynamic equivalent' translation. The NLT simplifies things even further by paraphrasing the meaning without using body parts or even the word 'refresh'. It does convey the overall meaning, but the details are lost. This makes a freer translation easy on the eye for bedtime reading, but a more literal translation is indispensable for serious Bible study.

3. Changing Language

Language changes over time, and eventually revisions may be needed. Outdated language sounds odd, can be distracting, and sometimes even conveys the wrong meaning. Compare, for example, James chapter 2 verse 3 in the KJV with any modern version. Whatever translation we personally prefer, thought should be given to what we use publicly. When addressing the assembly, it is important to respect the convictions of church leaders. When communicating with children or engaging in evangelism, we should consider the impression our choice of version makes on our hearers.

**THE YOUNG BELIEVER AND CAREER CHOICES:**

Accountancy

BY GRAEME SMITH WALLINGFORD

If you thought that the Bible is silent on accounting practices, then you would be wrong. When King Josiah was collecting funds to pay for repairs to the temple the usual reckoning, or accounting, was not needed for the money due to the honesty of those involved.¹ It would also appear that one of the Levitical roles was that of accounting for the temple finances.² In the parable of the unjust steward, the steward was required to give an account of his stewardship so that it could be scrutinized.³ These principles are still practised today in modern-day accountancy. The purpose of this article is to give young believers a flavour of the types of issues they may face within the accountancy profession.

Some accountants work in a practice, often as auditors, while others work for a business in industry. I have spent my entire career in industry, and so most of my remarks will apply to this sphere of work. The following thoughts are based on my own personal career, and it is highly likely that others in similar positions may have had different experiences.

Accountancy is primarily an office job, where predictable office hours generally apply. This has meant for me that it has been possible to schedule a regular morning 'quiet time'. With added responsibility often comes longer working hours, which might interfere with such routines, so the need for discipline has been important. In some areas, excessive working hours are a prerequisite for career progression and I have been faced with difficult decisions here. Accountancy is not generally⁴ a 'customer facing' career and so I have never had to entertain clients, which is an area where there may be temptation to sin. Work culture sometimes involves socializing and nights out which may lead the believer to sin. I have never been under immense pressure to be involved in unsavoury office social events. When called upon to make a stand as a Christian at work, we can look to the great role-model, Moses. He was offered a big

job with lavish palace accommodation included, but chose rather to stay with God's people.⁵

Another issue to consider is the fact that certain accountancy roles and employers will insist that you become a member of a professional body. Membership of such bodies need not be viewed as an 'unequal yoke' as they are simply a means by which the profession can ensure professional standards are kept.⁶

Accountancy is a profession which often leads to positions of responsibility within an organization. The role is regularly quite mentally stimulating, which can mean it is not always easy to 'switch off' after work and at weekends. This may be a danger, because it can sometimes make it difficult to study the scriptures and pray effectively.

Most areas of work come with time pressures, and accountancy is no exception with its monthly reporting deadlines, and year-end audit issues. In these situations, I have found that it is best to be upfront with management with regards to assembly commitments during the week and on the Lord's Day. If you show a strong work ethic, and willingness to be flexible on other occasions it may be possible to protect assembly meeting times in your diary.



A Christian friend of mine once worked for an accountancy practice and his first assignment was to prepare the books for a shop of very unsavoury character. Naturally, as a Christian, he was very unhappy to be closely involved with such a business, and requested of his employer not to take on this work. My friend paid the price of faithful Christian testimony and lost his job. I have never faced such issues in the industries that I have worked in, although there have been some issues of conscience to deal with. The management of some firms do try to persuade accountants to prepare accounts that creatively misrepresent the true financial position of the firm.⁷ Accountants are, however, bound by regulations that largely protect us from being asked to work in an unscrupulous way. Section 393 of the

Companies Act 2006 requires that the directors of a company must not approve accounts unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view. Another area of potential conflict with Christian principles comes from the responsibility for authorizing payments to suppliers. At times we may be asked to significantly delay payments, which can have major consequences for smaller vendors. Here we face possible difficulty, but also the opportunity to apply our principles to the situation.

A final consideration is that accountancy is a profession that is not tied to a specific location or industry. For this reason, I have found it easy to find work in locations with easy access to my local assembly.

¹ 2 Kgs. 22. 7

² 1 Chr. 26. 20

³ Luke 16. 2

⁴ Editor's comment – Many accountants are 'customer facing'. They are very much engaged with customers not only in advice, auditing etc, but trying to ensure their client only pays the

right amount of tax! A lot of Christians within this profession do have major ethical challenges when they deal with their clients especially those who are trying to elude the fiscal grasp!

⁵ Heb. 11. 24-26

⁶ 2 Cor. 6. 14

⁷ Prov. 11. 3

The Courage to Continue

BY PHILIP RICHARDSON HARROGATE

On the subject of failure, WINSTON CHURCHILL is alleged to have said that 'success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts'. That sentiment marks so many of the men and women in the Bible who achieved greatness through God – the courage to continue. Such people struggle but find their strength in God, they make mistakes but gain forgiveness, they fall but are lifted up. In short, they are mirrors of us in their failure, and models for us in their success. In His grace, God has populated the Bible with people 'subject to like passions as we are', Jas. 5. 17, so that we can learn lessons and gain encouragement from His treatment of them.

One such occasion is found in Luke chapter 22 verses 31 to 34, the lead-in to Peter's denial. Remembering the Passover with His disciples,

the Lord has a special message for Peter – as He does for Philip in John chapter 6 verse 4, and for Thomas in John chapter 20 verse 26 – and it is wonderful to remember that the Lord still has messages for individuals today.

The personal word to Peter starts with the double address 'Simon, Simon'. It is interesting that, instead of the new name, Peter, which the Lord gave him in John chapter 1 verse 42, the Lord uses the old name, Simon. This may reflect the reality of the struggle all believers face between the sinful flesh and the Spirit, the struggle Paul speaks of in Galatians chapter 5 verse 17 when he talks about 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit' which war against each other because they are 'contrary the one to the other'. Although Peter has been given a new name, he doesn't lose the old one;

even though we have been made new creatures in Christ the old sinful disposition is not removed, and so there is an ongoing battle in all of us. The encouragement comes from the fact that though Peter loses this particular battle the Lord knows it all in advance and is still prepared to use him. The Lord has complete knowledge of His failing servants, for 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust', Ps. 103. 13, 14.

The Lord doesn't simply know all about us, He cares about us. The Lord tells Peter that 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat', Luke 22. 31. Satan desires to sift, to shake, to destabilize all Christians. This is potentially a scary thought, nevertheless the next verse starts with the comforting word 'but'. Satan may be working against us, but the Lord is working for us. This is something Paul expands on when he writes, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' Rom. 8. 31.

We discover how the Lord is 'for us' in the specific assurance given to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee'. In the face of adversity, the Lord, the Creator, the almighty God of the universe, is praying for a single servant about to fall. Satan may long to sift all the Lord's followers (the plural pronoun 'you' encompasses all the disciples) but the Lord focuses on just one (using the singular pronoun 'thee', showing He is speaking only of Peter). The Lord cares for the individual child of God.

And it gets even better. The Lord doesn't simply pray for Peter in general, but for Peter's faith in particular. The difference may seem small but it is evidence of expert understanding.

Just as a skilful mechanic's understanding goes beyond, 'Your car is broken' (which is evident to all) to accurately diagnosing the precise problem with that car, 'Your fan belt needs replacing', so the Lord Jesus knows the specific, individual needs of each of his failing servants.

Lest we limit the Lord's prayerful interest to Peter, John chapter 17 offers encouragement to all believers. On the eve of Calvary, the Saviour said to His Father, 'Neither pray I for these alone [the apostles], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word', John 17. 20. Whatever we face, whatever makes us feel weak, whatever makes us feel lost, whatever makes our faith waver, the Lord is working with us and is working for us. This truth may remind us of the words to a popular hymn:

'Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea:
A great High Priest, whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me'.

Luke chapter 22 continues beyond the prediction of Peter's failure. The Lord, who has acknowledged that Peter will deny Him, doesn't pray that Peter won't fail but that Peter's faith will not fail; that Peter won't be so discouraged by his lapse that he 'throws in the towel'. The Lord's petition is a powerful thing; in fact, it is a guarantee it will come to pass. This confidence can be seen in the Lord's careful choice of words: 'when', not if, 'thou art converted'. Peter was going to get through this because the Lord had prayed for him. Because of the Lord's continual intercession for us, we can have confidence that whatever we endure He is able to bring us through.

But why does the Lord tell Peter he is going to fail at all? I like to think that it is a kindness. The emphasis is not so much on Peter's weakness as on the Lord's grace. In disclosing Peter's slip the Lord foregrounds His mercy, assuring Peter of restoration and future service.



Personal failure is not the end. John reminds us that 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous', 1 John 2. 1.

The final point to make is that Peter learnt from this. The proof is found in his First Letter, where we discover he learnt that the devil is an 'adversary . . . a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour', 1 Pet. 5. 8. More importantly, he learnt the truths he records just before and after this warning about Satan's antagonism, that '[God] loveth and careth for you', v. 7, and that 'the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, [will] make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you', v. 10. Satan's ferocity

should always be viewed in the light of God's faithfulness.

Every believer should remember Peter's important life lesson. Because Peter fell and was lifted up, he was the better able to strengthen his brothers and sisters. Although we fail, the Lord knows, cares, and prays for us. Indeed, as Peter discovered, He can even use our failures to equip us for the accomplishment of His great purposes for us. After all, 'we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose', Rom. 8. 28. This should fill us with the courage to continue.



The Dispensation of The Fullness of the Times

BY TM SE ASIA

1. GRAND UNIFIED THEOLOGY

'having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him', Eph. 1. 9, 10 NKJV.

Science is searching for a Grand Unified Theory (GUT), a single equation to harmonize the disparate physical laws of the universe. As yet, it remains an unsolved mystery.

However, the Bible has its own GUT, a Grand Unified Theology which explains the purpose of the universe. This, too, was a mystery for ages and generations, but was revealed by Christ, through Paul, in Ephesians chapter 1.

The goal of history, the purpose of the universe, is that one day everything and everyone will be under the headship of Christ, that the whole universe will submit to Him and be complete in Him.

But like its scientific counterpart, God's Grand Unified Theology is comprised of different parts which, at first sight, do not seem to fit together.

In this study, we will investigate how God has, at different times, and in different ways, revealed Himself to mankind, and how the different methods He has used are part of the bigger picture which will ultimately be displayed in the unification of all things under Christ.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Have you ever wondered why Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 does not say, 'In the beginning God created the universe'?

Had He wanted to, God could have established a universe in which the heavens and the earth were already united under Christ. But He created a separate heavens and earth. Heaven is where God and the angels reside. Earth was made for man. If God wanted fellowship with man, He had to 'come down' and walk in the garden.

But one day, in the 'Grand Unification', this separation will be removed. Then, 'the

tabernacle of God [will be] with men, and He will dwell with them', Rev. 21. 3.

In the original creation, God committed authority to Adam. Satan rebelled, and forfeited his place in heaven, making it his mission to take down Adam with him. As we know from Genesis chapter 3, he succeeded.

One day, in God's plan, a man will have authority over the earth again, and the heavens too. That man is the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But God's plan is not accomplished suddenly. Rather, it will happen, as Ephesians chapter 1 verse 10 states, 'in the dispensation of the fullness of times'.

We do not often use the word 'dispensation' in modern English, and other Bible translations have paraphrased it as 'plan' (ESV) or 'put into effect' (NIV). DARBY gives a more literal alternative – 'administration'.

Perhaps the best way to understand what this word means is to see how it is used elsewhere in scripture. The first usage is in Luke chapter 16 verses 1 to 4 where it describes the way a house owner delegates the stewardship (NKJV, DARBY) or management (ESV, NIV) of his property to a servant. The owner tells the steward how he wants his house to be run, and a faithful steward should ensure that it is run according to the owner's

wishes. The Greek word is *oikonomia*, from *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law).

God appointed Adam as manager or steward over the earth. In this arrangement, since Adam was largely innocent regarding God's 'house-law', he would need to be in regular contact with his Master. Perhaps, if Adam performed faithfully in innocence, it would have been very easy for God to bring about His purpose in uniting heaven and earth. But Adam soon proved to be an unfaithful steward, a bad manager. He did not run things according to the owner's very minimal stated requirements in Genesis chapter 2 verse 17 but preferred to do things his own way. Consequently, the whole house fell into ruin, Rom. 8. 20.

Despite the failure of the manager, God did not abandon His plan. In our next study we will see how God introduced a new arrangement and gave mankind another chance.



Fruit of the Spirit – Introduction

BY **LESLIE CRAIG**

Visitors to New York are still impressed with the Statue of Liberty as it welcomes people to the USA. For years, this copper lady has stood as a beacon of refuge for those 'yearning to breathe free'. She became the symbol of hope for many who sought refuge from political and economic oppression.

Grace stands in the pages of the Bible as the Christian's Statue of Liberty. For centuries, the frowning standard of the Law stood condemning all humanity. There was no pleasing the Law – it asked too high a morality. A morality that no fallen human could attain. God intended the Law to have this effect. For too long people had imagined that they were only a little damaged by sin and that with enough religious effort they could pull themselves back into line. But they were grossly underestimating the problem.

They had not properly reckoned with the power of Satan and the wickedness of their nature. If only the people could be set free from Satan's tyranny, would all not be well? No, that is never enough. Individuals who reached America and celebrated their freedom from some earthly dictator had something still to learn. They were just as capable of doing as much evil as had been done to them. So, for sinners condemned by the Law, it would require an almighty power to break the bondage of Satan. And it would take no less power to overcome the weakness of human nature. For Christians, it is the power of a risen Christ that liberates them from the bondage of Satan. And it is the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit that frees them from a life of sinful domination.

The Bible often uses the word 'flesh' to refer to our fallen human nature. It is the engine that drives sinners. Lust fuels it and it would have destroyed us eternally. Satan knows how to rev that engine, and the sinful world around us offers many wicked roads to travel. When we were saved, we received a new clean motor that is fuelled by the life of God. It is very efficient, and it will literally save our lives. But we are a hybrid! The old 'fleshly' engine is still there, chugging out its poisonous fumes, while the new

motor silently impels us on a different track. Sadly, we will be troubled with the old engine until we get our complete body upgrade at the Lord's return.

So how can we have liberty from our old way of life? Firstly, grace stands forth and proclaims the death of Christ for our forgiveness. He has fulfilled the Law as a man, yet has also suffered its curse for our Law-breaking. All who trust Him have been counted by God to have been crucified with Him. In this way, we are free from the Law and its condemnation. And by Christ's death, we are free from bondage, since through death Christ stripped Satan of his power to hold us. Therefore, grace stands to welcome us into this new life of spiritual liberty. The apostle Paul explained this in his letter to the Galatians. As he reached the climax of his argument in chapter five, he declared; 'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore', Gal. 5. 1 ESV.

Secondly, having begun to **stand** in liberty, Paul encourages them to **walk** in the Spirit. It is for us to decide which energy will drive us forward. We can still allow the old engine of the 'flesh' to direct us towards sin, or we can let the new power of the Spirit produce better things in our lives. These better things are called 'the fruit of the Spirit'. Paul lists nine things that the Spirit can produce in our lives. These things are divided into three triplets. There are things that look **upward**: love, joy and peace. There are things that look **outward**: patience, kindness and goodness. And there are things that look **inward**: faith, meekness and self-control. In further articles, their meaning will be explored. Meanwhile, let us assess our lives: what is fuelling my desires today? Which power am I allowing to dominate my direction?