

Grace OPC High School Sunday Class Teaching Notes			
Year:	1 of 4		Date: 12/14/2003
Quarter:	2 of 4	Bible Study/Survey	
Lesson Title:	Comparing Bible Versions		
Lesson Purpose:	To examine the approach taken by different English Bible versions to translating the Scriptures and to see the elements that make up the more trustworthy translations.		

1. Introduction

Last week we looked at Bible translation. We saw:

- ❑ There are good reasons to translate the Bible:
 - So people can have access to God's Word in an understandable form
 - To avoid the danger of men claiming the sole right to interpret Scripture for the people
- ❑ There is Biblical support for translation:
 - Faith comes through hearing and the Gospel is addressed to the mind. Therefore, God's Word must be presented in an intelligible form.
 - The New Testament writers made free use of the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament
- ❑ There are different approaches to translation – Formal Equivalence, Dynamic Equivalence and Paraphrasing (which is not really translation at all)
- ❑ The First English Language Scriptures were translated from the Latin Vulgate, beginning in the 7th Century
- ❑ At the Renaissance, Greek and Hebrew began to be studied and printing was invented – the Word of God in English was translated from the original tongues and freely distributed
- ❑ Today we have many English Language versions

This week, we will examine some of these versions and see their strengths and weaknesses. We will see if it really matters which version we use – a practical session!

2. Comparing Bible Verses

There are some passages which it is useful to turn to in a Bible version to quickly assess its adequacy. Passages that deal with the doctrines of God's Decree, His Providence, Election, Predestination etc. are one example. Passages that deal with the Deity of Christ or with His blood sacrifice for sin, the anger and wrath of God are another. Passages that deal with the last things might also be worth looking at to see if they reveal a bias in the translators' thinking. Here are some examples of Bible verses in different versions:

2.1. 1 John 2:1-2 – Propitiation

1 John 2:2 talks of Christ and what He accomplished in relation to our sins. Below the translations are the definitions of the words propitiation and expiation.

2 He is **the propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ESV
 2 and He Himself is **the propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. NASB95

2 And He Himself is **the propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. NKJV

2 and he is **the expiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. RSV

2 He is **the atoning sacrifice** for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. NIV

2 It is he who is **the atoning sacrifice** for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's. ISV

2 and he is **the atoning sacrifice** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. NRSV

When he served as a sacrifice for our sins, he solved the sin problem for good—not only ours, but the whole world's. Message

2 He is **the way our sins are taken away**, and not only our sins but the sins of all people. NCV

2 He is **the sacrifice** for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world. NLT

2 And Christ himself is **the means by which our sins are forgiven**, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone. GNB

expiate *verb* **expiated; expiating** [Latin *expiatus*, past participle of *expiare* to atone for, from *ex-* + *piare* to atone for, appease, from *pious* faithful, pious] (1594)

propitiate *transitive verb* **propitiated; propitiating** [Latin *propitius*, past participle of *propitiare*, from *propitius* propitious] (1583) to gain or regain the favor or goodwill of : APPEASE, CONCILIATE. **propitiator** *noun*. **propitiation** *noun* (14th century) **1** : the act of propitiating, **2** : something that propitiates; *specifically* : an atoning sacrifice

2662 ἵλασμος (*hilasmos*), **means of forgiveness**, an atoning sacrifice (NRSB, NIV, REB), expiation (RSV, NAB, NJB), propitiation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB), the remedy for defilement (NEB), (1Jn 2:2; 4:10) note: expiation focuses on the means for the forgiveness of the sin, propitiation would focus on God's view of satisfaction or favorable disposing. There is much debate which English word is the better rendering. A Dictionary of Biblical Languages (James Swanson).

Which Bible translations seem preferable, and why?

2.2. Colossians 1:16 – Do prepositions matter?

Three prepositions feature in the verse in Colossians shown in bold below. Here is some information on the Greek word in each case (presented in the order they appear in the verse). Two questions arise: how have the translations dealt differently with these prepositions, and does it matter?

a) 1722 ἐν, ἐν, ἐν, ἐν, ἐν [en/en/] A primary preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by implication) instrumentality (medially or constructively). AV translates as "in" 1874 times, "by" 141 times, "with" 134 times, "among" 117 times, "at" 112 times, "on" 46 times, "through" 37 times, and translated miscellaneously 321 times. **1** in, by, with etc.

b) 1223 διὰ [dia /dee-ah/] A primary preposition denoting the channel of an act; 647 occurrences; AV translates as "by" 241 times, "through" 88 times, "with" 16 times, "for" 58 times, "for ... sake" 47 times, "therefore + 5124" 44 times, "for this cause + 5124" 14 times, "because" 53 times, and translated miscellaneously 86 times.

c) 1519 εἰς [eis /ice/] A primary preposition; AV translates as "into" 573 times, "to" 281 times, "unto" 207 times, "for" 140 times, "in" 138 times, "on" 58 times, "toward" 29 times, "against" 26 times, and translated miscellaneously 321 times. **1** into, unto, to, towards, for, among.

16 for **in** him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created **through** him, and **unto** him; ASV

16 For **by** him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created **through** him and **for** him. ESV

16 For **by** him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether they are kings, lords, rulers, or powers. All things have been created **through** him and **for** him. ISV

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started **in** him and **finds its purpose in** him. Message

16 For **by** Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created **through** Him and **for** Him. NASB95

16 **Through** his power all things were made—things in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen, all powers, authorities, lords, and rulers. All things were made **through** Christ and **for** Christ. NCV

16 For **by** him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created **by** him and **for** him. NIV

16 For **by** Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created **through** Him and **for** Him. NKJV

16 Christ is the one **through** whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created **through** him and **for** him. NLT

16 for **in** him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created **through** him and **for** him. NRSV

because **in** Him were created all things in the heavens and upon the earth, the visible things and the invisible ones, whether they are thrones or lordships or principalities or authorities. All things **through** Him as intermediate agent and **with a view to** Him stand created. WUESTNT

16 For **through** him God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities. God created the whole universe **through** him and **for** him. GNB

2.3. 1 John 5:7-8 which three bear witness?

What do you notice about the KJV and NKJV versus the other versions in the following table?

⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. KJV

⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree . NKJV

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. NASB95

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. NIV

⁷ So there are three witnesses that tell us about Jesus: ⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three witnesses agree. NCV

The difference comes from relatively late manuscripts which contain the extra words and are used for the NT in the KJV and NKJV.

2.4. *What happened to Christ when He became a man?*

Compare Philippians 2: 1-11 in Today's English Version and in the NASB. Can you determine something of the emphases of those who produced each? Which one is preferable and why?

Philippians 2:1 Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. **2** I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. **3** Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. **4** And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. **5** The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had: **6** He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. **7** Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. **8** He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross. **9** For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. **10** And so, in honour of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, **11** and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. TEV

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, **2** make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4** do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. **5** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. **8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NASB

2.5. *Romans 8:28-30 – A question of emphasis*

These verses are very well known and deal with God's providence, predestination, election etc. Examine the way the various versions have handled the text. What are some key differences? Which version are preferable and why?

28 And we know that ¹God causes ^aall things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are ^bcalled according to *His* purpose. **29** For those whom He ^aforeknew, He also ^bpredestined *to become* ^cconformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the ^dfirstborn among many brethren; and these whom He ^apredestined, He also ^bcalled; and these whom He called, He also ^cjustified; and these whom He justified, He also ^dglorified. NASB95

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those ¹who are the called according to *His* purpose. **29** For whom ^aHe foreknew, ^bHe also predestined ^cto be conformed to the image of His Son, ^dthat He might be the firstborn among many brethren. **30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also ^ecalled; whom He called, these He also ^fjustified; and whom He justified, these He also ^gglorified. NKJV

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, ^a who ^b have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. NIV

28 We know that all things work together for good¹ for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.^v **30** And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. NRSV

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together ^hfor good,² for ⁱthose who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he ^fforeknew he also ⁶predestined ⁴to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be ^mthe firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also ⁿjustified, and those whom he justified he also ^oglorified. ESV

²⁸ And we know that he works all things together^j for the good of those who love God who are called according to his purpose.²⁴ ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.²⁵ ³⁰ And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.²⁶ ISV

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun. Message

²⁸ We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan. ²⁹ God knew them before he made the world, and he decided that they would be like his Son so that Jesus would be the firstborn ^b of many brothers. ³⁰ God planned for them to be like his Son; and those he planned to be like his Son, he also called; and those he called, he also made right with him; and those he made right, he also glorified. NCV

And we know that God causes everything to work together^r for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory. NLT

²⁸ We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him,¹ those whom he has called according to his purpose. ²⁹ Those whom God had already chosen he also set apart to become like his Son, so that the Son would be the eldest brother in a large family. ³⁰ And so those whom God set apart, he called; and those he called, he put right with himself, and he shared his glory with them. GNB

2.6. Romans 10:14 – Who Speaks when someone preaches?

Here is the text of Romans 10:14 from an interlinear Bible

14 Πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν ; πῶς δὲ
 πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέω εἰς ὃς οὐ πιστεύω πῶς δέ
 How then might they call on in whom not they trusted How but
 BX CCB V3PAMS PA ORRMSA TN V3PAAI SJ BX CCB

πιστεύσωσιν οὐ οὐκ ἤκουσαν ; πῶς δὲ ἀκούσωσιν χωρὶς κηρύσσοντος ;
 πιστεύω ὃς οὐ ἀκούω πῶς δέ ἀκούω χωρὶς κηρύσσω
 might they trust whom not they heard How but might they hear without announcing
 V3PAAS ORRMSG TN V3PAAI SJ BX CCB V3PAAS MG VPAPMSG SJ

See Eph 2:17 and 4:21, then compare with the versions below. What are the differences? Do they matter? Which versions seem to handle the verse better and why?

¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him ^awhom they have not heard? And how will they hear without ^ba preacher? NASB95

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear ^cwithout a preacher? NKJV

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? NIV

¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? NRSV

¹⁴ But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him ^dof whom they have never heard? ^eAnd how are they to hear ^fwithout someone preaching? ESV

¹⁴ How, then, can people^g call on someone they have not believed? And how can they believe in someone they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone preaching?¹¹ ISV

But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? Message

¹⁴ But before people can ask the Lord for help, they must believe in him; and before they can believe in him, they must hear about him; and for them to hear about the Lord, someone must tell them; NCV

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? NLT

¹⁴ But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? GNB

2.7. Romans 9:19-21 Which choice on Election?

C H Spurgeon used to say that the doctrine of election was safe as long as Romans 9 was in the Bible. How faithfully has the doctrine of God's dealings with men been preserved in the versions below?

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For ^zwho can resist his will?" ²⁰But who are you, O man, ^ato answer back to God? ^bWill what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹^cHas the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump ^done vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? ESV

¹⁹You may ask me, "Then why does Godⁿ still find fault with anybody?" ^oFor who can resist his will?"¹⁷ ²⁰On the contrary, who are you—mere man that you are—to talk back to God? Can an object that was molded say to the one who molded it, "Why did you make me like this?"¹⁸ ²¹A potter has the right to do what he wants to with his clay, doesn't he? He can make something for a special occasion or something for ordinary use from the same lump.¹⁹ ISV

19 ^aYou will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For ^cwho resists His will?" ²⁰On the contrary, who are you, ^aO man, who ^banswers back to God? ^cThe thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel ¹for honorable use and another ²for common use? NASB95

¹⁹So one of you will ask me: "Then why does God blame us for our sins? Who can fight his will?" ²⁰You are only human, and human beings have no right to question God. An object should not ask the person who made it, "Why did you make me like this?"²¹ The potter can make anything he wants to make. He can use the same clay to make one thing for special use and another thing for daily use. NCV

¹⁹One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" ²⁰But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"^h ²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? NIV

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For ^bwho has resisted His will?" ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? ^cWill the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Does not the ^dpotter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make ^eone vessel for honor and another for dishonor? NKJV

Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not listening? Haven't they simply done what he made them do?" ²⁰No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to criticize God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? NLT

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? NRSV

¹⁹But one of you will say to me, "If this is so, how can God find fault with anyone? Who can resist God's will?" ²⁰But who are you, my friend, to answer God back? A clay pot does not ask the man who made it, "Why did you make me like this?" ²¹After all, the man who makes the pots has the right to use the clay as he wishes, and to make two pots from the same lump of clay, one for special occasions and the other for ordinary use. GNB

2.8. Compare for yourself

By now, you may be wondering how different translations handle your favorite verse(s). Spend a few moments comparing them and see what you can find. How will you be able to tell which is the best translation?

3. Conclusions

- We have very many English Bibles to choose from
- They tend to reflect the doctrinal preferences of the translators
- The methods of translation can significantly affect the meaning of the resulting passage
- Even the translation of prepositions can add or subtract richness of understanding from the text
- Some are much better than others in almost every passage
- We have some useful tools to help us arrive at an understanding of which translations are better
- Paraphrases should generally be avoided. Can you think how paraphrases seem to fly in the face of the doctrine of verbal inspiration?