***The Analysis of Scripture, No. 2

Hermeneutics and Etymology - PH02-02***

In our study of the book of Philippians, we've been laying some preparatory groundwork which will stand you in good stead not only in reference to this book, but to every book that you will ever study in the Word of God. God has spoken to us, and His revelation is the Bible record. The only way that God's thoughts can come to us is through the statements of truths which we have in the Bible. God does not speak to us in dreams. He does not speak to us through voices that we hear. He speaks to us directly through the Word of God which He has recorded. His revelation has now ceased beyond that point.

Satan, however, because he does know this, is very active in confusing this fact, and in drawing Christians away from the real knowledge of the Word of truth. There is a great deal of misunderstanding concerning how a Christian enters into what God has recorded in His Word. This would be understandably the case. There is a great deal of confusion even among people who are sound in their theology and who should know better, but who reject what the Word of God has to teach on this subject. There are many substitute programs which are presented for the pastor-teacher ministry in the local church unfolding the Word of truth.

One lady this week told me, "I was in a group." It was one of those discussion groups that Christian education often loves to promote so fondly today, where people who don't know anything can get together and discuss what they don't know. She said, "They were talking about the local church and learning God's Word, and I presented the fact that God's Word has presented two communication gifts. Ephesians 4 tells us that it was originally four communication gifts, but two of them--the apostle and the prophet--no longer exist--they're out of operation today. Two are left--the evangelist and the pastor-teacher. These are so presented as to indicate that they are key features of the church age. They are the key channels of God's communication--of the message of the gospel, and of the full revelation of the Word of God. This lady presented (to her group) that this was God's method by which believers learn the Word of God. She said that the leader looked at her condescendingly and said, "My dear, we don't believe that anymore."

He was a leader in a strong theological institution of learning. This is what seminary students, by and large, are being taught today, that they are not being called to explain the Word of God to the people of God as God's channel of communication to them. As a matter of fact, one man said, "Don't ever present Greek words to people in the congregation. It'll make them think that they don't know anything about the Bible. It'll make them think that they shouldn't go and study the Word of God. So don't ever give them a Greek word in public. Just kind of slip around it."

One seminary student recently got up and had practice preaching class. After he got through, they analyzed his presentation. This was a communicator of the Word of God, and they're teaching him how to go out and lead churches. This is what you people are going to be stuck with in the future when people of the brilliant class of the early 1950s of Dallas Seminary are no longer on the scene. They told him, "Your hair was a little bit too far down on your left eyebrow. And your tie was too bright. It distracted people from what you were saying. You know what I think of that. That's the idiocy that people are to be trained to be so subjective in how they respond to the Word of God, as if the Word of God were not the powerful thing in itself, living and true to be received in itself, no matter who says it or how it is said.

Another student was given a bad grade when he got through preaching because he got up and he (in that practice class in seminary) actually mentioned some Greek words and explained them. They docked him and gave him a poor grade and said, "You weren't preaching. You were teaching." Those are the kind of inane distinctions that are trying to be made. This is why I'm taking the trouble, at the hazard of being a little laborious to you on this subject, to introduce you to what goes on behind the scenes as for God's arrangement before the Word of God ever comes to you in an intelligible understandable explained way. Consequently today, I'm sorry to say that most Christians are sadly disoriented as the result of the kind of instruction they are receiving, or as the result of their negative response to the good instruction they do receive.

The popular thing today is for churches to gather together, and for people to discuss with one another and to share with one another, and the theory is to minister to one another. This sounds very good on the surface, and I think there is a certain element of truth and a certain place where Christians can minister and share with one another their experiences in the Lord on the basis of sound instruction. These groups are called Body Life church. It's a pleasant idea, and it leaves people real heft in heart emotionally. It just pitches some high. And the result is personal devastation. Christians are always coming up with ways by which they're going to become realistic to one another in the Word.

This is why it is hard very frequently to have women's groups in church, especially prayer groups. We have to caution our women's prayer groups here. This is not because they do it, but just because we don't want them to fall into bad habits. We tell them that when they get into prayer groups, when we break up in our prayer meeting groups, they are to proceed to pray. One of the favorite stunts is for people to gather together in these groups and say, "Now tell me, what are your problems? Share your requests with me so that we can pray together." Usually if it's a women's group, they mean, "What has your husband been doing--that rat--this week, so that we can pray for you, dear. Tell us." Then this poor sucker of a woman says, "Well I'll tell you what this slob has done. You know, he came home the other night and this is what he said." And the others say, "No kidding! Oh my dear, we must pray for you. Oh, blessed is the Lord."

And they draw out from you all of your intimate private priesthood information. Don't ever fall for that. Anytime somebody tries probing into your personal life or in your personal business, you tell them off in a hurry. Anytime you get in a group of people who want to pray for you and for your problems, you be smart enough to see what they're looking for. Their old sin natures are just itching for a kick. I would suggest that you men keep some careful consideration as to what kind of groups you allow your wife to attend of that nature. It may not contribute at all to her spiritual advancement, and it may bring quite a bit of disaster to her spiritual well-being.

The Bible is our sacred heritage, and it is your heritage, dear believer, for every one of you everywhere. It is a self-destructive course to deviate from God's plan, and to reject that plan. You can go to any number of places. Most places you'll go in our day in local church operations, this plan of instruction is rejected. You won't have any trouble finding a place like that. But this is just as self-destructive as what the Pharisees were doing in their own smug rejection of the Word of God, and they thought they were standing right up on top of it.

**Keywords for the Transmission of God's Word**

The transmission of the Word of God has certain keywords that we ought to mention at this point:

1. **Revelation** is God the Holy Spirit revealing the contents of the Bible to the writer.
2. **Inspiration** is the guidance of God the Holy Spirit upon the author as he recorded what had been revealed to him.
3. **Interpretation** is the analyzing of the revealed text as to its meaning.
4. **Illumination** is the Holy Spirit giving understanding of the Scripture which has been recorded.
5. **Communication** is the teaching of the meaning of Scripture to others.

You should distinguish revelation from inspiration; inspiration from interpretation; interpretation from illumination; and, illumination from communication.

**Elements of Interpretation**

We have said that there are certain basic elements involved in the interpretation of Scripture. They are:

1. **Hermeneutics** constitutes the rules governing interpreting a written record.
2. **Isagogics** is the historical and cultural background of the book at the time in which it was written.
3. **Categories** are summaries of truth of all that the Bible has to teach upon a certain subject.
4. **Etymology** is the origin of a word; its basic meaning; and, its meanings as it has changed over time.
5. **Exegesis** is the consideration of the grammar and the syntax and the relationship of the words grammatically in order to determine what it says.

There is no way you can sit down and learn this with an English Bible. Don't let anybody tell you so. He is a deceiver if he tells you that our modern translations are so good that you can sit down with an English Bible, and you can come up with what it says in the original on your own. That is not true. We do have good translations, and you can go a long way once you have been trained in basics. Some of you like to remember these things by acronyms, and you will notice that H-I-C-E-E can be pronounced as HICEE ("High C"). "High C" is a significant term for our band members around here, particularly on the brass instruments, because if you can hit High C, you have a really great embouchure. This is quite an achievement, just as when the Word of God is rightly interpreted according to these principles, it is quite an outstanding achievement, and you have really produced something. So if you can hit High C on a brass instrument, you have produced something. Maybe that'll help you remember this series of elements that are involved in interpretation.

**Hermeneutics**

We have thus far examined isagogics. We have examined exegesis. Now we're going to examine, as far as we can, hopefully, our other three here--hermeneutics, categories, and etymology. We will begin first of all with the principles of interpretation. I just briefly want to mention what we mean by principles of interpretation. These are things that you can keep in mind as you read the English Bible. Certain things should be considered in determining what the text is saying. These are the rules to determine what an author meant. It is the science of interpreting the Bible. Here are some principles.

**Principles of Interpretation**

1. The true objective of writing is the impartation of thought. This is an important principle because people often assume that the Bible cannot be understood. This attitude is particularly taken toward the book of the Revelation. It is sometimes taken by people who have had ample opportunity to know that God does not ever record anything that He did not mean for us to understand. The book of Revelation is so staggering to the human imagination that it is rejected for that reason--not because we can't understand it, but because we can't believe what it says. Many have treated the words of Scripture as concealing more thought than they reveal. However, a true interpreter of Scripture understands that **any writer's words mean what they say.** They do not mean what they don't say. That's all this rule is saying. When a person makes a statement in Scripture, he means what those words say. He does not mean something that those words do not say.

If you violate this rule, you will slip off into spiritualizing Scripture. This is what the amillennialist does. He does not like the idea of Jesus Christ returning physically to this earth with the church, and setting up a kingdom out of the headquarter city of Jerusalem, and ruling this whole world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The amillennialist says, "I can't stand that kind of thought of an earthly kingdom," so he spiritualizes all of the references to the kingdom of David on this earth, and to the messianic promises. He is violating this principle of interpretation. A writer says what he means. His words do not mean what they do not say.

1. The true objective of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author. The interpreter is not to impose his own views on the words of the author. That's collaboration--not interpretation. The interpreter is not responsible for what the Scriptures say. You don't have to apologize for what the Bible says. I once had a seminary professor and we were studying a passage of Scripture in class. He said, "Now gentlemen, I would not read this passage in public in a mixed audience because of the content of the passage." He happened to be talking about Romans 1--the homosexuality and the lesbianism and all the things that are described there. Well, I don't know if he'd still say that today. Times have changed, but it was out of order even then.

Anything that's in the Word of God may shock you, but it is in there because God perhaps intended to shock you, and to alert you, and to wake you up. We don't apologize for explaining to you in explicit language that which the Word of God says. It is not our intention to cover up what the author says by saying it in such a way that it fools you, or that you cannot see yourself in the Scripture that is being presented. The interpreter's role is simply to **state what the author means**, be it good, or be it bad. The professional preacher will always try somehow to get around this principle of interpretation, and present it so that you will not be offended. This is in spite of the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself said, "I came to bring you the truth, and the truth is going divide people." When people flake off and divide, it is because somebody is in the truth, and somebody is out of the truth.

1. **Language is a reliable means of communicating thought.** This assumes grammatically correct use of the language with proper attention to the meaning of the words used. If this law is not true, then every legal paper that has ever been written could not stand in court. All the historical records we have would be absolutely worthless if language were not a reliable means of communication. Doubt as to a properly written document is due to the prejudice of the interpreter. When you have doubts concerning the biblical documents, it's because the interpreter is prejudice. Language is a reliable means of communicating the thoughts of God.
2. **Usage determines the meaning of words.** A dictionary will define a word according to the way people commonly use it. The word's original meaning may be modified in time so that its meaning at the time of the writing is what is important. We want to know what a certain word meant when Paul wrote the book of Philippians--not, perhaps, what it meant centuries before that. A word may have a specialized meaning which Paul uses in a certain book like Philippians, and we want to determine what that specialized meaning is. The word "ekklesia" (church) came into the vocabulary of Christians out of the common language of the Koine Greek. The word "ekklesia" received a specialized technical meaning at the hands of the authors of Scripture.

The meaning of a word depends on its association with other words in the sentence. A single word can have several meanings. For example, the word "top" can have several meanings. When we say, "The top of the mountain," we mean the summit. When we say, "Trees spreading roots near the top of the ground," we mean surface. When we say, "The vengeance of heaven falls on her ungrateful top," we mean the crown of the head. When we say, "He who is the top official," we mean the chief authority. When we say, "The boy spins the top," we're talking about his toy. When we say, "Put on the top of the house," we mean the roof. So the word "top" can mean any number of things.

This is what we have to do with the Greek language. What does this word mean in its variety of meanings, and what does it mean in this place? How in the world are you going to hope for that to be conveyed in a translation? The only way you come close to is through these expanded translations that use several words, and put other words in parentheses, to amplify the sense to try to convey all of the color and nuances of the Greek language. That makes it a little harder reading, but it is an attempt to be more accurate in what the Greek reflects.

So under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a Bible author will use qualifying words which change the meaning of the same word in a different context. This rule right here happens to be the most violated rule in the interpretation of the Bible. Words depend on their associations, and when people ignore the association of words, they come up with the wrong interpretation.

1. An author's purpose determines the character of his written product. **Purpose determines the content of a book.** Materials are read to produce the effect which the author intends in his writing. Why do we have four gospels? Because every gospel is written from a different slant to present a different facet of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore the content that the author selects from the life of Christ reflects his purpose in writing, and the people to whom he was writing. That's why the gospel of John is so distinctively different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John is distinctively the gospel written to the church and to the church age. So the words are selected according to the author's purpose. When you know his purpose, it does worlds for guiding to a correct interpretation.

When I was in Dallas Seminary on the doctorate program, they began writing a series of dissertations and of theses on the subject of the argument of a book. The point of that line of examination was to take one book of the Bible and say, "Here was the definitive purpose of this author," because that was invaluable in analyzing the book.

1. Each expression contains one thought and only one. There are not several interpretations for a single text of Scripture. Anytime somebody tells you that you can prove anything by the Bible, he is violating this rule of hermeneutics. There is only one meaning for every text. A passage does not have a literal meaning; a spiritual meaning; a mystical meaning; and, so on. There is no limit to the meanings which a fertile imagination can impose upon Scripture. However, when we draw the meanings from what the language is saying and from what the grammar indicates, **there is only one meaning for every passage of Scripture.** If a passage of Scripture does not have only one meaning, then it in effect has no meaning at all. Otherwise, it's everybody's field day to decide what he prefers that particular passage to mean. A single passage of Scripture, while meaning only one thing, can have many applications of the truth to varied situations. But it has only one interpretation.
2. One of two seemingly contradictory statements must be false unless corresponding terms have different meanings or applications. Genesis 6:6 and 1 Samuel 15:29 both use the word "repent," relative to God, but in a different sense. So they are not contradictory. One is saying God repented. The other says that God is not like man, and He does not repent. **You have to interpret the terms in their proper light when you seemingly have contradictory statements** of that nature. It is vital to determine the use of a word in terms of its own context. It is in this way that you will resolve contradictions.

Truth must accord with truth. Statements of truth which are apparently discrepant can be harmonized if the facts are known. Seeming discrepancies in the testimony of the Bible authors are harmonized when all the facts are available. Any court of law is aware of the fact that it may have two reliable responsible witnesses; they both may give testimonies that are true; and, yet they can be in conflict with one another. A court of law knows that some facts are missing, or those two testimonies would be compatible.

For example, we have the case of the genealogies of Jesus Christ given by Matthew and Luke. Matthew says that Jacob was the father of Joseph, and he lists 25 names in the line back to David. Luke says that Heli was the father of Joseph, any he lists 40 names in the line back to David. What's the difference? Is this a contradiction? Well, Luke is listing the lineage of Mary because he does not pretend to be giving Joseph's ancestry as being that of Jesus. Joseph is set aside by Luke as the father of Jesus. Jesus was a real descendant of Heli, but only a supposed descendant of Joseph. Luke lists and traces the bloodline of Jesus Christ back to David as per the prophetic Word. Matthew shows the line of Christ's title to the throne of David as per prophecy, but through the legal line being through Joseph. So both genealogies are true, but we lack the facts sometime to entirely harmonize all the individual names that are in that list.

1. An assertion of truth necessarily excludes that to which it is essentially opposed, and no more. In John 8:32, it says, "The truth shall make you free." However, this does not exclude John 8:36 which says, "The Son shall make you free." A statement of truth does not imply that all it does not contain is false. It says, "This is true," and that's all it's saying. That much is true. Now more than that may be true. So while it is true that the truth does make us free, it is also true that Jesus Christ is the truth who makes us free. Matthew 19:17 says, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments." Now it excludes the idea that one enters life by breaking the commandments. It does not exclude John 3:36 that says, "He that believes on the son has eternal life," because believing is not opposed to obeying. So this principle says that **what it says as being truth, that's all it says is truth. It does not exclude there being more truth than that.**
2. Every communication of thought, human and divine, given in the language of men is subject to the ordinary rules of interpretation. No language can be understood except in accordance with these rules. **God uses the language of men to record His revelation.** Otherwise, they could not receive His message.
3. **One cannot interpret without understanding that which he interprets.** We understand another's thoughts only when we can express them exactly to the minds of others without changing the thoughts. If you're having an argument with someone, it is always helpful for you to say, "Now I want you to tell me what you believe," and then for you to tell him back and say, "Now this is what you are saying." When you can do that, and he says, "Yes, that is what I am saying," then you can interpret what he is saying. Frequently people are going round and round debating things, and they're both talking about different things. No one has the right to change an author's intended meaning as if he knew better what the writer wanted to say. You cannot interpret him unless you understand what he's saying.
4. **The dispensational principle applies Scripture to its related areas of God's dealings with mankind.**  People who insist on saying that we must apply the Old Testament law to the age of grace are falling into the trap of worshiping on the Sabbath Day--on Saturday rather than on Sunday. They're falling into the trap of trying to secure some kind of legal righteousness over against the grace system of life. This is dispensational application error. This is a major violation also of principles of interpretation. More destruction is imposed upon Christian people because somebody is trying to pull the Old Testament law and impose it upon the Christian's grace system of life.
5. Then there is **the ethnic division principle.** Scripture deals with Jews, gentiles, Christians, and angels. You cannot take Scripture that applies to angels and apply it to Christians. You certainly cannot take Scripture that applies to Jews and attach it in its application to the Christian. This causes contradiction. The Word of God has to be rightly divided.
6. There is **the principle of the progress of revelation.** This is where we have later amplification of previous revelation. We start with a basic idea and then God builds upon it through the Scripture and amplifies it. You don't take just one verse and say, "Here's what God teaches on this subject." What you do is start with where you have information on that, and then you progress through Scripture and you build on it.
7. There is **the first-mentioned principle.** Generally it is to be observed that the first time a thing is mentioned in the Bible, that thing has the meaning that it will carry all the way through the Word of God. The first time a thing is mentioned, it will have that meaning consistently through the Word of God.
8. We have **the double-reference principle.** There is often a near application with a far future fulfillment. For example, God is talking in the book of Daniel concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, that monstrous ruler over the Jews in the time just before the arrival of Christ, when he took a sow and sacrificed it on the Jews' altar. He was a very blasphemous man. As you read through the Scripture, you can sit with a history book on the one side, and you can sit with the chapters in Daniel on the other side, and you can match them point for point. You read in the Bible, and you find it in the history book, and all of a sudden, there is a line like a curtain has dropped. The history book no longer follows what is recorded in the Scripture because Antiochus Epiphanes is being used as a picture of the antichrist who is to come. All of a sudden, God the Holy Spirit comes to a certain point in the actual history of Antiochus, and He leaps over the centuries and begins talking about the antichrist directly. You have this near application, and a fulfillment in the future. It is crucial that these be recognized if we're going to interpret what Daniel was saying. When this rule is violated, as it is by many, one does not see that Daniel is telling us something about a strong man of the future.

Alright. That's hermeneutics. There are other principles, but this briefly will at least introduce you to what we mean by that particular facet of interpreting the Scripture. You have to know a few of those rules to come up with the right answers in the Bible.

**Etymology**

Etymology is another segment of the HICEE technique. Etymology is the study of the derivation and the consequent meaning of words. An expository has to keep in mind the original meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words and their connotations as they result from common usage. The teachers of God's Word have to know the meaning of the words in which the Scripture is written. Otherwise, they cannot explain it. They also have to know the meaning of their own language that they're going to do the explaining in. Otherwise, they will not select words that reflect the meaning of the originals.

**Other Literature**

Now there are several types of problems involved with etymology. One is the use of a Bible word in other literature of the time. How was a Bible word used in the literature of the time? That gives us the basic background and clue of the way the word has to be understood in Scripture. For example, we have the word "parakletos." This is translated as "comforter" in John 14:16 where it is referring to God the Holy Spirit. It is translated as "advocate" of Jesus Christ in 1 John 2:1. However, when we look into Greek literature, we find that this word, in contemporary literature of New Testament times, had the meaning of "one called to the aid of another" in a judicial cause or in a court of law. It was one who came to the aid of another. Thus, the meaning that it carries in our day is a helper or an intercessor. So this word should be translated as "helper" or "intercessor" in referring to the Holy Spirit or to the Lord Jesus. We get this from the way the word was used in literature outside of the Bible at the time the Scriptures were written.

**Idioms**

Another matter that we have to consider in interpretation and etymology is idioms. What does the idiom mean when it says, "Let's have a drink on the house?" Does that mean that you're going to stop your workday at church, and you're going to break out a Coke, and everybody is going to climb up on the roof of the gym, and you're going to have a Coke break? That's literally what the word says. Let's have a drink on the house. However, that's an idiom, and everybody knows that means that somebody else is going to pay for your Coke. It's going to be the organization that's sponsoring the work day that's going to give it to you free. We have a Greek expression, for example, "megenoito." "Megenoito" is the negative "me" with the word "become" or "come into being." So, idiomatically this word means "God forbid" or "far be it." When the writer of Scripture says "megenoito," if you try to translate that literally, it won't make too much sense. However, if you understand the idiom of the New Testament Greek world, you know that "megenoito" means "God forbid" or "far be it."

**Rarely Used Words**

We have the problem of rarely used words. These are words which are used so rarely in Scripture that the only way we can find the meaning is by using associated languages. One type of word we have is called the "hapax legomena." The "hapax legomena" is plural. The singular is "hapax legomenon." "Hapax legomena" means "occurring only once." There's only one time the word occurs. For example, the word "epiousios" is used in Matthew 6:11 and it is translated as "daily" where it says, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now this is not found anywhere in the classical Greek writers. It isn't found in that Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. Consequently, we have to determine what this word means strictly by the background--the etymology--of this word.

Now it can come out with three meanings. You can, first of all, break it up into "epi," the preposition which means "toward," and the second part of the word can come from "epeimi" which means "to approach." Then it would be saying, "To approach toward bread," or "the bread for the coming day" ("tomorrow's bread"). It could have this derivation. Or, it could be the word "epi" (toward) and the word "ousia" which means "subsistence." Then it would mean, "Our toward subsistence bread," or "bread necessary for our existence;" that is, "our essential bread." Or it could mean just by the derivation of these words, again "epi" (toward) and "eimi" (the verb "to be"). Then we would have "the toward being bread," or "the bread today" ("our daily bread"). Now the question is what did the Lord say in that prayer? Did He say, "Give us this day our tomorrow's bread?" Did He say "Give us this day our essential bread?" Or, did He say, "Give us this day our daily bread?"

There is strong reason to believe by the context that what He was saying was, "Give us this day our essential bread." This would be the bread we really need. This comports with Scripture and doctrine in general that we concern ourselves with the problems of the day, and we leave the problems of tomorrow in the Lord's hands. We are not forever to be preparing for a security that many will never live to enter into. People will often discover that God has more than capably provided for them, and that they wasted their lives that could have been invested in the things that were in His plan for them. "Give us this day our essential bread." That's a "hapax legomena" that is found only once in Scripture, and not found anyplace else outside the Scripture.

**Synonyms**

Then we have synonyms. These are important. These are different words with the same, or essentially the same, meaning. There may be fine shades of distinction between two words. If you're going to interpret the Word of God, you have to know those distinctions. Here's a good one. You'll find seven different words for "prayer" in the Word of God:

1. "Proseuche" is prayer, but it means prayer to God only (Luke 6:12).
2. "Euche" is prayer as in the form of a vow (Acts 18:18).
3. "Deesis" is prayer in the form of fervent asking of God or of man as the result of a considerable need (Luke 1:13).
4. "Enteuxis" is prayer as a petition boldly approaching God to ask Him for what you need (1 Timothy 4:5).
5. "Eucharistia" is prayer as grateful thanksgiving (2 Corinthians 4:15).
6. "Aitema" is prayer simply as a request (Philippians 4:6).
7. "Hiketeria" is prayer as a suppliant who's carrying an olive branch in token of his attitude (Hebrews 5:7).

So here are all the different words for prayer. Now when you read your English Bible, what are you going to see? One word: prayer. That's all you're going to see. And what is behind that particular prayer? The fruitfulness--the depth of meaning of any passage is dependent upon your knowing which one of these seven words for prayer is being used. Now that's the business of somebody who can lay this out and explain this to God's people, so that when you read it, you have entered into what God prepared for you--not what some man is willing to stimulate you with at the moment that he thinks is interesting.

The word for "love" is one that you're well-acquainted. "Agapao" is a mental attitude love free of bitterness. "Phileo" is an emotional expression of love.

Here are some examples of the importance of word meanings:

In Mark 14:71, we have the statement, "But he, Peter, began to curse and swear. How many sermons have you heard about that terrible terrible sin of Peter? The Lord was on trial, and Peter is warming himself at this fire, and these people come along and say, "Hey, aren't you one of the comrades of Jesus?" How many sermons have you heard, as the preacher waxed eloquent, "Could you believe it? Peter began to curse and swear and use profanity in order to stress that he didn't know Jesus Christ." And maybe he'd even say, "You see, it's okay to use profanity. Here Peter did it. He cursed and swore." Well if you've been preaching that sermon, I suggest you stop it.

When you go to the Greek language, again, you discover that Peter did not use profanity at all. "Curse and swear" may mean profanity in English today, but that is not the idea of "curse and swear" as English words in 1611 when this translation was made, or even the use of that word today in representing the Greek text. The word "curse" is "anathematizo." "Anathematizo" means "to declare anathema or accursed," or "to devote to destruction." This is the same word that Paul uses in Galatians 1:8-9 about people who change the gospel. Peter is enforcing his claim. It is true that it was a false claim. However, he is trying to enforce his claim that he was not connected with Jesus who is now on trial by calling down a divine curse upon himself if what he was saying was not the truth. Now that is rather shocking in itself--that Peter would say, "Before almighty God, may I be cursed if I had anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth." Now that was indeed quite a violation on Peter's part, but it was not swearing. He was not using profanity.

The word "swear" is "omnuo." "Omnuo" means to affirm, or "to promise" with an oath--"to swear" as we use the words in terms of taking an oath. It's the same word used in Hebrew 6:13 where God says, "He takes an oath upon Himself that He has spoken the truth because there is no one greater by whom God can swear." So what was Peter doing? He swore with an oath to the effect that he was telling the truth about his having no connection to Jesus Christ. That was bad enough in itself. However, he was not using profanity.

Here is another example, with the use of the word "transform." We have this problem in the English translation. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, we have the word "transform." The word in Greek is "metaschematizo". Verse 13 says that Satan's false apostles transformed themselves into apostles of Christ. Verse 14 says that Satan transformed himself into an angel of light. Verse 15 says that Satan's ministers transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness. Now what does this word mean? The etymology of the Greek is this: It means "to transform oneself to assume an outward expression which does not represent one's inner nature." This preposition "meta" when added to a verb signifies a change. So what this word "metaschematizo" says is that you're projecting a false front that does not reflect what you really are on the inside--your true nature.

This is what Satan does about himself. The ministers of Satan do this. They are one thing on the inside, but you listen to them on the outside, and you think they are the people of God speaking in the most glorious truth that God has to deliver. You look upon the tongues crowd, and you've got a "metaschematizo" crowd. Outwardly you think they are just the most devoted; they are the most sincere; and, they are the most in line with the Lord. Yet, internally they're emotionally dominated and they are way out of line with the Word of God. There is no change in one's true nature. It is an outward front. It is not reflecting inner qualities. So what Satan and his agents do is that they disguise themselves. That's what this word is indicating--a disguise.

However, we come to Romans 12:2, and you're reading along in your Bible, and here you come again to the word "transform." However, this time it's a totally different Greek word. It's "metamorphoomai." This one is also translated as "transform," but it means exactly the opposite of the verse in 2 Corinthians 11. This word means a transformation into an outward expression which reflects what you are on the inside. This is the word which is used about the Lord Jesus in Matthew 17:2 about His transfiguration. His outward appearance was changed to conform to His inner glory as God. On the mount of transfiguration, outwardly He was transformed to show what He was really like on the inside; that is, His deity. So, we as Christians here in Romans 12:2 are told that we are not to conform outwardly to the ways of the world, but that we are to reflect the regeneration which we possess within our souls. This is a direct contrast to what Satan is doing who presents a false front.

However, you can't tell this from the word "transform" in English. Yet, this is the significance of what God is saying in both these places. You can't understand these Scriptures without that. In the one case, it is presenting a front outwardly that is false; and, in the other case presenting a front that is exactly what you are as a transformed child of God. For a Christian to be conformed to this evil age would be to present something that is not true of him internally. How are you to reflect this, incidentally? Do you notice that it says, "By the renewing of your mind?" How is your mind renewed? By the taking in of the Word of God and the learning of Bible doctrine. This renewed mentality results in our being able to function on that which is good and acceptable and perfect in the will of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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