

Study

When Paul wrote the Galatians, he made a particular argument about the promise given to Abraham concerning the Christ. “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16, ASV). One significant feature about this argument is in the tense of one particular word, implying that, in order to understand God, we must understand His **words**.

This may seem elementary to Bible students, but it is apparently not the case church-wide. The persistent use and continued defense of dynamic equivalent “translations” (NIV, TEV, NLT, etc.) as credible texts from which to understand God’s will speaks to the contrary. [The dynamic equivalent method of translation attempts to convey, not **the words** of original texts {as in formal equivalent translations}, but **the meanings** of the words.] Somewhere along the line, those who insist on keeping their dynamic equivalent perversions of the Bible fail to see the danger inherent in substituting human commentary for God’s words.

Words have meaning (1 Corinthians 14:10). Languages convey meaning with words. Ideas, in order to be understood, must be communicated in words. What a word means varies depending upon its context, the order in which it falls, and the setting (historical time-frame) in which it is used. Many, many factors impact a word’s meaning. Therefore, to attempt to convey what God **meant** as opposed to what God **said** is at opposite ends of the pole; one is commentary, one is translation.

When a Bible student opens up a Bible, what he or she needs to know is what God **said**. If words are difficult to understand because they have fallen out of modern usage (*i.e.*, propitiation, Romans 3:25) or have changed in meaning over the centuries (*i.e.*, simplicity, Romans 12:8), it is but a small hurdle for a serious disciple. No less is required of those who study dead languages (*i.e.*, Latin). How can the Word of God be less worthy of serious research?

The loyalty some have exhibited toward products of lesser reliability is usually argued from the “readability” perspective. Somehow, these easy-readers are attractive because they speak in a more contemporary vernacular and use current colloquialisms, making them more “relevant” to a modern readership. No reasonable person would argue that a hard-to-understand Bible is intrinsically superior, but by the same token, the Bible is not intended to be a Harlequin Romance or a Louis L’Amour Western. It contains depths that cannot be plumbed with a casual once-over; it is the mind of God, and to think that ease-of-reading should supplant the necessity of accuracy-in-translation undermines the transcendence of God’s revelation. It is more than just a book, notwithstanding the expected and absurd accusations of bibliolatry. A more accurate translation may be more difficult to read or understand but if it is God’s word it is worth every effort.

“*Study* earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, MKJV).