

Emmaus Chapter 1 – Mike Baran

Grasping God's Word – Chapter 1

Assignment 1-1

Review of Romans 10:3-4

1. New International Version (NIV)

³Since they did not know the **righteousness of God** and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to **God's righteousness**. ⁴**Christ is the culmination of the law** so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Here the “righteousness of God” and “God's righteousness” should be understood as being the “righteousness *from* God” – the righteousness that God grants or credits to those who exhibit faith in God and in what Jesus has done for all of humanity. In this instance, the Greek grammar can be either genitive case (“of God”) or ablative case (“from God”) since both cases have the same spelling (tou theou). Therefore, translators need to interpret from the broader context whether to translate the Greek as being “of God” or “from God.” In any case, it makes no sense to compare the “righteousness of God” (God's own righteousness) with “establishing their own righteousness” (what people may want to achieve on their own). How can these be compared and logically understood, since there can be no relationship between God's own righteousness and any so-called righteousness that humans can conjure up for themselves. On the other hand, it makes total sense to compare the “righteousness from God” (the righteousness that God attributes or graciously grants to believers) with the righteousness that people try to establish for themselves and apart from God.

Also, to say that “Christ is the culmination of the law” suggests that Jesus somehow ended the need to observe the law – possibly by keeping it on our behalf and so obviating our need to keep it for ourselves, contrary to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-19. The RSV (Revised Standard Version), like the NIV, says that “Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified.” Jesus did not end the law (the Torah law) that is represented by the Ten Commandments. What he did end for gentile Christians was the Old Testament “law for righteousness” that included Abrahamic descent and circumcision. These were replaced for gentile Christians by baptism into the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5; Col 2:11-15) and our faith in the work of God and Jesus on our behalf.

2. New Living Translation (NLT)

³For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, **they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law**. ⁴**For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given**. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

The NLT gives the correct sense of the scripture when saying, “God's way of making people right with himself” (correctly interpreting the “righteousness from God”). However, it incorrectly interprets the remainder of verse 3 by suggesting that “trying to keep the law” (obviously meaning the commandments of God) would somehow ingratiate the person to God who would then, supposedly, be obligated to credit them with righteousness, even though we all know that perfect obedience for humans is an impossibility and so the argument (the implied meaning of the translation, which is actually just a paraphrase) is a nonsense.

Here what is assumed to be the meaning of the word “law” is problematical. If the NLT assumes that we are to understand “a law” to be something like circumcision (as the Greek texts suggests) rather than it being “the law” (the commandments of God) then the NLT paraphrase would be OK, except that Christianity generally seems to suggest, as the RSV explicitly also says, that Jesus did away with our need to keep the law – that we can be righteous and saved by simply professing faith in Jesus without any obligation to keep God's law.

It is unclear in verse 4 what it means that “Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given.” This statement needs to be explained to make any sense. However, the

latter part of verse 4 suggests that Jesus came to end the time in which obedience to the law of God (the Torah) was obligated for the Jews (Mt 19:17). As with the related NIV comment, this is an erroneous implication. The problem with a More Functional translation or even a Paraphrase, whether by a committee or an individual, is that erroneous doctrinal assumptions may be introduced (consciously or unconsciously) into the translated text.

3. English Standard Version (ESV)

³For, being ignorant of the **righteousness of God**, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to **God's righteousness**. ⁴For Christ is the end of **the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Here the “righteousness of God” and “God’s righteousness” should be understood as referring to the “righteousness *from* God.”

Verse 4 is correctly translated from the Greek, although a More Formal translation would have said “a law” rather than “the law.”

4. King James Bible (KJV)

³For they being ignorant of **God's righteousness**, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the **righteousness of God**. ⁴For Christ is the end of **the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The same comments as for the ESV apply here in the KJV.

5. New King James Version (NKJV)

³For they being ignorant of **God's righteousness**, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the **righteousness of God**. ⁴For Christ is the end of **the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The same comments as for the ESV apply here in the NKJV.

Concluding Remark to Assignment 1-1:

It is obvious from these five translations that it is true, as the text in Grasping God’s Word says, that “In a paraphrase [or even in a More Functional translation] the “translator” makes far too many of the interpretive decisions for you. The result is that paraphrases [as well as More Functional translations may] add many things that are simply not in the Bible.” This is particularly evident in the New Living Translation. It is also evident that the More Functional the translation the more appropriate it is for serious Bible study in that it may better and more accurately reveal the true meaning of the text.

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Assignment 1-2

Question 1.

I agree that the Bible is a divine-human book. I accept that there were eye-witnesses of the life and death of Jesus who all attested to the historical accuracy of Scripture and its spiritually inspired content. Jesus himself also witnessed to the God-inspired contents of the Law (Torah) and the Prophets (Nevi'im) in the Old Testament (Mt 5:17-19). Those foolish people who say that there is no God (Ps 14:1) are especially unlikely to be convinced about the divine-human content of the Bible. Paul addresses such people and their disbelief in God’s inspiration of Scripture when saying: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us [who believe and] who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Paul had met Jesus and was a passionate witness to Jesus and what God was doing through Jesus and so we can have confidence that what Paul (and other eye-witnesses) are telling us about the “God-breathed” nature of Scripture is

absolutely true: “*All* Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible is God’s Torah, his instruction or teaching, which was inspired by God but written down by men who were led by the Holy Spirit in their work.

Question 2.

The Oxford Dictionary defines Textual Criticism as being “the process of attempting to ascertain the original wording of a text.” The process relies on objective historical evidence, not on any subjective opinions, and so can be used with a level of confidence that we can reasonably ascertain the original wording of a text, especially if we have a large number of variant texts to work with. Given that we have a vast number: more than 5700 Greek manuscripts of the NT available to us, we are able to work through whatever variants there are in the texts of these manuscripts to better ascertain the accuracy of the original autograph, an original document that no longer exists. Nevertheless, if we review the range of variants that we do find in the various NT Greek manuscripts then it becomes obvious that there are no doctrinal issues or problems of substance that we can find in the different manuscripts. The range of variant problems that we do find are all related to minor issues of mostly spelling, word order, and minor grammatical issues, all of which do not impact, in any substantial way, on the meaning of the text. Consequently, we can have the utmost confidence that any objective so-called Textual Criticism of the Bible will not disprove the inspired nature of the Bible – be it the Old Testament scriptures or the New Testament scriptures.

Question 3.

Any work of translation attempts to help people of one language understand what was written in another language. Parts of the whole Bible were written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and so for someone who speaks English, but is not fluent in any of the languages in which the Bible was written, will need an English translation to understand the original biblical text.

There are two fundamental approaches to translating biblical text: The **formal** approach (otherwise also described as being *formal equivalence, literal translation, or word-for-word translation*) and the **functional** approach (otherwise also described as being *functional equivalence, dynamic equivalence, idiomatic translation, or thought-for-thought translation*).

A more *literal or formal* translation is one that is best used for serious Bible study, since it tries to express the text in a way that is as close as possible to the original. It attempts to keep words, sentence structure and figures of speech as close to the original as possible. The *functional or idiomatic* approach, however, can generally be more readable than a more *literal* translation. Nevertheless, the problem with a *functional or dynamic* translation is that the translator has to first interpret the meaning of the original text. Should he or she misunderstand what the original text was saying then the reader will also be led to misunderstand what the Bible is saying. This same thought-for-thought approach to translation may also be guilty of either adding to or subtracting from the Word of God or may even be guilty of introducing a particular doctrinal bias. An example of some such likely problems can be seen in the above translations of Romans 10:3-4 in the NIV and NLT Bibles.

It is for such reasons that I prefer the more literal translation (the more *formal approach* to translation) and so I use the ESV in my day-to-day Bible reading and Bible study.

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