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Psa. 51:5 TEV: Translation or Commentary?

By Albert Gardner

That the original copies of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit so the writers made no mistakes is believed by all who accept the verbal inspiration of the Bible. (I Cor. 2:11-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) It is by the providence of God we do not have any original manuscripts for no doubt men would be going to worship them rather than study them. We do have copies of the original manuscripts therefore, we have a reliable Bible.

Because a Bible in Hebrew or Greek would be of little value to most of us, translations of the Bible from one language to another is essential. To be a true translation, it must say in English what was said in Greek originally. It is admitted this is not ready since it is not always possible to have a word for word change from one language to another.

For one who does not read Hebrew and Greek, how can he know a true translation? It would be fine if all could read the manuscripts, then all that would be necessary would be to get a true text. But we cannot live in a dream world on this matter since not too much study in the common language is being done much less the toil of another language.

Some translations take liberties which amount to commentary rather than translation. Some of them tell you that you are reading only a paraphrase. What we want in a translation is a true statement of what the Bible writer actually said. We can spend the rest of our days trying to learn the meaning after we get a true statement of what was stated by the Bible writer.

In a translation we do not want to know what someone thinks Paul meant in a given passage but we want to know in English what he said in Greek. Until we have that, it will be useless to try to learn the meaning of that passage.

How can we be sure we are reading a true translation of a given passage? Is the Bible only for the highly educated? Can the common man be sure? We have always taught that the Bible can be understood without the approval and explanation

of hierarchy. Have we been wrong in this? There are at least four ways we can determine a true text. Usually, we use a combination of these ways.

1. READ THE ORIGINAL TEXT. If we could read Hebrew and Greek it would be helpful but many cannot do this and do not now have the time or access to learn these languages.

2. DEPEND ON THOSE WHO DO UNDERSTAND HEBREW AND GREEK. If someone objects that he is putting his salvation on the scholarship of another, it must be pointed out that we depend on others even to determine the correct text of the original. We depend not so much on man but upon God who will not permit his word to fail. (II Peter 1:25).

The use of good representative commentaries are helpful to learn all sides of a difficult passage. When we read the works of men we will be able to see which is right. It is not the nature of truth to be bound up in a language which one cannot read himself, if someone else has written on the subject. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (Jn. 7:17).

3. COMPARE WITH OLDER TESTED TRANSLATIONS. To discard something because it is old is foolish. Have you ever heard of a man discarding a worn piece of money because it is old? Do men throw away the deeds to their property because they are old? They might replace it if it were faulty but to discard it because it is old is senseless.

Though we have no perfect translations, we do have some that have been read, studied, tried and are found to be true. When a new translation arrives we would do well to compare it with the older ones.

4. COMPARE A CERTAIN VERSE WITH OTHER PASSAGES ON THE SAME SUBJECT. One does not need to know Hebrew and Greek to understand when one verse is in conflict with clear teaching in other

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My Help

On the sixth day of creation God in his finishing touches to the world, made in His image. However, man was alone and God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." (Gen. 2:18)

God brought before Adam every creature but a mate for him was not found. God, therefore, made woman, a help for man that was worthy of the being that he was as created by God.

Since the first man and woman God has left it to man to choose which woman will be his help and to woman which man she will assist.

In the book of Proverbs we find words of wisdom that will help in the choice we make. First, may it be pointed out that, "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." (Prov. 18:22). However, the warning is given, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." It seems that the thought we should get from these words is that extreme caution should be taken in choosing one's mate.

Several years ago, my father gave me some advice quite similar to the ones given in Proverbs. He said, "Son, choose your mate well because a woman will either pull you up to her level or drag you down to her level." In every case this may not be true but for the most part it will be.

In every aspect of life if we look to the word of God we will find help in making life happier.

Young people, in choosing your mate for life look to the word of God. Young man, you will profit by trying to find a woman that meets the standards of Proverbs 31 as closely as possible. You will find that she will help you in every endeavor of your life. She will make you successful and happy. Young woman, you should look for a man that meets as closely as possible the standards of godliness set in the Bible.

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The Fulton County Gospel News

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and James E. Henley.

Notice!!

There will be a Gospel meeting at the Mammoth Spring Church of Christ July 30th through August 5th. Brother Hubert Plumle will be the speaker. Services will be at 7:30 each evening.

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My Help (Con't.)

If you do this, you will find a man that is worthy of your help.

The home that God has instituted will be what He intended if people would look to these standards.

My help, though not infallible, tries to live the life described in Proverbs 31 the best she possibly can. Although I have never accomplished any outstanding feats, what I have done is because she has given me encouragement and has always been by my side. It has been stated over and over again that behind every great man there is a woman. Let me change this statement to tell you of my help. Behind this simple man there is a GREAT woman.

Terry S. Frizzell
Monett, Missouri

The Future of the Church

By Ruby Shelly

In the course of this series of studies on "Liberalism's Threat to the Faith," various topics of doctrinal dispute have been treated. Problems facing the church have been set forth and examined in the light of Scripture. Departures from the faith have been pointed out and a constant appeal has been made for Christians to stand fast in the truth and oppose error. It is hoped that such studies have been helpful in equipping children of God for the great struggle which is before us with regard to theological liberalism.

At the same time, it is realized that one result of such a series of lessons could be to discourage Christians about the future of the church. With so many problems to be faced, is there any hope for the future of the church? With so many departures from the faith in evidence, is there any reason to believe that the church will even exist in another few generations?

The creation of pessimism among Christians has not been a goal of these studies. To the contrary, it has been hoped that the careful examination of these issues would serve to clear away confusion in the minds of Christians and give them confidence to face and overcome the threat of liberalism. Let us therefore close this series of studies with a consideration of the future of the church.

Confidence in The Promise of Christ
There are a number of reasons why Christians should face the future with confidence regarding the church. For one thing, we have the sure word of Christ for the fact that his church will never go into total apostasy or be depopulated by the death of all its members. Jesus promised that his church would remain in existence from its founding until his return. He did not promise that it would be the largest movement in the world or that its every member would remain faithful or that no segment of it would go into apostasy, but he did guarantee the indestructibility of his church.

Jesus made this promise to his apostles and it is recorded in the book of Matthew. "Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the

prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:13-18).

Notice that Jesus made two promises concerning the church in this text. First, he said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Second, he also said, "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Did he fulfill the first promise? Did he actually build his church? Indeed, he did fulfill his word on the first Pentecost following his resurrection from the dead. By his authority and with the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached the gospel in Jerusalem on that day and obedient hearers were added to the church (Cf. Acts 2:41,47). If he fulfilled his promise to establish the church, why should anyone doubt that he will also make good his word about preserving it?

Jesus clearly anticipated and announced the fact that attempts would be made to destroy the church. Here he pictured the church as an armed camp or fortress and the forces of hades (i.e., Satan, demons and death) as its opposition. He assured his followers that the combined powers of evil would never prevail against his church! That promise is as sure as any other he ever made! The Son of God cannot lie, therefore we may be confident of the future of the church. Although evils such as theological liberalism war against the church, and although certain individuals or even whole congregations may be overcome by those evils, Christ will always have a faithful people on the earth.

Paul predicted a great apostasy from the true faith. He said that after his death false teachers would work to overthrow the faith of many. (Acts 20:29-30; I Tim. 4:1-3). This great apostasy, in the form of Roman Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism, did come. So great was the apostasy that secular history completely lost sight of the true

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The Future (Con't.)

church. But, by virtue of the promise of Christ to preserve it, we know that it existed all during this period of darkness, ignorance and superstition. It exists today and its growth has been phenomenal in the last few decades. Some fear, however, that another great apostasy is in the offing. Perhaps this horrible thought has foundation. It may be that a failure to ground a generation in the fundamentals of the faith, coupled with increasing pressures from the world and false philosophies, has set the stage for another period of departure from the faith. It just may be that such is the case! But not every child of God or every congregation of the Lord's people will be caught up in such an apostasy! The Lord will have a faithful people at his return! It is an individual choice for each Christian to make as to whether he will be numbered among this remnant! In the time of Noah a small minority rode to safety in the ark. It may well be that the antitype of Noah's group, the church, will be also a tiny minority at the second coming of our Lord. (Cf. I Pet. 3:18-21).

CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Furthermore, we may take courage with regard to the future of the church because of the power which is inherent in the gospel. The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16). If all its professed evangelists should be bound in chains, or if they should all abandon the simple truth of the Word of God for the false philosophies of men, the gospel will still have its power to save! Wherever men learn, believe and obey the Word of God, there will be Christians. These will constitute the Lord's one church in any generation of men.

Will the gospel ever be destroyed? Will the enemies of Christ ever succeed in their efforts to nullify the power of the Word of God? Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35). The apostle Peter declared, "All flesh is as grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth forever." (I Peter 1:24-25). The power of the gospel to save men will never pass away, therefore the church will not pass away! If one has faith in the power of the gospel, he must have faith in the future of the church!

Confidence in Faithful Saints

Another reason for optimism regarding the future of the church is knowledge of and acquaintance with faithful Christians who love God and the truth of his Word too much to allow error to go unchallenged.

There are a number of liberals among us who have espoused false views about the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the deity of Christ, creation and other vital truths. And there are also a number of brethren who are simply confused over some important doctrinal and practical matters. These brethren are weak and do not have the knowledge of the Scripture or the wisdom of mature years. But, thank God, there are many faithful members of the Lord's body who have had the opportunity to be thoroughly rooted and grounded in the faith and who can be counted on to stand for what is true and right! They are not tossed about by every wind of false doctrine that blows, but stand fast in the truth!

We are commanded to "prove all things" and to "hold fast that which is good." (I Thess. 5:21). We are told: "Beloved, believe not every spirit (teacher), but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I John 4:1). Again, the Word of God counsels: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love." (I Cor. 16:13-14).

There are still many, many brethren who take these admonitions of Scripture seriously. They are not "moss-backed traditionalists" or "arrogant and unloving legalists." They are persons who, out of sincere love for God and men, insist on loyalty to Christ and allegiance to his teaching. They are persons of knowledge, understanding and compassion who want to be used of God in the struggle against sin and error. The presence of these God-fearing and Bible-believing people in the church today give us great confidence for the future!

A Final Appeal For Faithfulness

The church must be on her guard against the encroachments, both bold and subtle, of liberalism. Liberalism must be called what it is—damnable heresy designed to overthrow the faith. Those professing liberal views must be challenged and come under the discipline of the church. To be sure, such discipline must come as a result of careful adherence to truth and not as a carnal vindetta and act of the flesh. It must be administered with love for the offender and with a

sincere desire for his repentance and restoration. But false teachers must be exposed for both their own sakes and for the sake of the church at large. Faithful preachers, teachers and elders in the church must be taught to recognize liberalism and must react to it in all boldness. Memberships of local churches must stand behind such action.

An author who is not a member of the church of Christ has written of the "phenomenal growth" of the church within the last generation. One reason for this growth, in his judgment, is this: "Its people have stood like the Rock of Gibraltar for 'the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,' amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a 'peculiar' people teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life." (James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only*, p. 313).

But now it seems that there is a "new breed" of preachers who can show only contempt and disdain for what faithful brethren have said and done in the past. These men are speaking and writing in such ways as to create doubt and confusion in the minds of brethren. We must not be silent while this is going on around us.

CONCLUSION

Churches of Christ, free of the institutionalism and divisive creeds of denominational bodies, are now in a unique position with regard to the matter of religious unity. The appeal for a return to the Bible alone as our authority in religion is both sound and appealing. More and more people are willing to hear this positive approach to the problem of division than ever before. More and more people who are members of denominational bodies whose leadership has accepted the liberal position are listening to the authoritative preaching of the Bible that is being done by faithful men among us.

Just as surely as we preach and contend for "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," we will have God's blessing. With his blessing, the church will grow and accomplish the spiritual tasks that are assigned to it.

But if we compromise with the liberal heresy, may our mouths refuse to speak and may all men turn their backs on us with one contempt. For in such a day as liberalism is allowed to infiltrate our ranks, God will surely abandon us to our own human

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Psa. 51:5 TEV (Con't.)

verses. A correct translation will harmonize with other verses on the same subject.

PSA. 51:5

TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

"I have been evil from the time I was born; from the day of my birth I have been sinful." (TEV) The King James reads: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Revised Standard: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Just a quick reading of this verse in the TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION reveals it is far different from the other translations. It affirms that David was a sinner from his birth. Those who have taught the doctrine of "original sin" have misapplied this verse for years in support of their doctrine. The TEV is not a true translation.

The doctrine of babies being born in sin is not a Bible doctrine. We are told in Zech. 12:1 that God 'forms the spirit within us.' Does God form a sinful spirit within us? We do not get our spirits from our parents but we get our physical likenesses from them. On Mars Hill Paul stated we are the "offspring of God." (Acts 17:29). Are we the offspring of an evil spirit? Is God the author of our sins?

Sins is the transgression of the law. (I Jn. 3:4). It is an act and not something we can inherit. We can and do inherit the consequences of sin but we cannot inherit the guilt of sin. We have the guilt of sin when we commit the sin. One cannot inherit the guilt of a sin which he did not commit. David could not inherit sin or even begin to sin at his birth.

The teaching of Psa. 51:5 is not about the condition of David at his birth but about the condition of the world into which he was born. The world was sinful. His mother was a sinner. The verse does not say anything about David being a sinner. Since the doctrine of "original sin" is not taught by other verses that deal with the subject, we must conclude the TEV is not accurate.

devices and, thus, to our destruction!

Sinners still need salvation and the gospel of Christ still offers salvation. We do not need what the liberal has to offer. We simply need to preach the gospel, to a confused and evil generation. At the same time, we must expose error. We must challenge the basic errors of liberalism and call men back to the simple truth that is in Christ.

A Symbol That Works

Steve Williams

We are often told by our religious friends that baptism is JUST symbol. We must agree that it is a symbol. This is taught in Romans 6:3-6 and in I Peter 3:20-21. However, it is not a symbol alone, but a symbol that works. We are often told that baptism does not have anything to do with forgiveness of sins. We are told that it is a symbol of our cleansing which has already occurred in the past. I Peter 3:21 in the KJV begins, "The like figure whereunto even baptism..." Only a person who is attempting to force his own personal interpretation upon this verse could conclude that baptism, here, is a figure of our inward cleaning in the past. If one would read verse 20 they would see that baptism is a like figure with Noah, the ark, and the waters of the flood. Just as the waters of the flood separated Noah and his family from a sinful generation of people, the waters of baptism (the like figure) separate penitent believers from their sins by having them forgiven in the sight of God.

We must agree that baptism is also a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-6). However, it is not a symbol alone. As I Peter 3:21 says, "baptism doth also now save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This is not a salvation that is dependant upon water. It is a salvation that is dependant upon the cross and upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus included baptism in the scheme of redemption as the act by which we finally obtain the benefits of the cross and the resurrection. We do not "contact" the blood of Jesus in a literal way, but we do obtain the cleansing benefits of the blood in baptism.

The early church followed these ideas in their writings. We do not regard their writings as an authority, but they are useful in the role of a commentary upon the Bible. They did not see baptism as JUST a symbol, but they saw it as a symbol that worked. Ambrose said, "You see the water, you see the wood (of the ark), you see the dove, and do you hesitate as to the mystery? The water, then, is that in which the flesh is dipped, that all carnal sin may be washed away. All wickedness is there buried." (On The Mysteries 10-11) In another place he wrote "in the flood, also, a figure of baptism had preceded... Is not this a flood, which baptism is, in

which all sins are washed away." (Ambrose On The Sacraments 2.1) Also he wrote "Thus, then, even in baptism, since it is a likeness of death, undoubtedly, when you dip and rise again, it becomes a likeness of the resurrection. Thus, according to the interpretation of the Apostle, just as that resurrection was a regeneration, so that resurrection from the font is a regeneration." (Ambrose On The Sacraments 3. 1-2) Just as in the Dialogue With Trypho 138 wrote the following: "Now, since Christ was the First-born of every creature, He founded a new race which is regenerated by Him through water and founded a new race which is regenerated by Him through water and faith and wood, which held the mystery of the cross (just as the wood saved Noah and His family, when it held them safely on the waters)." Jerome said, "Noah's ark was a type of the Church," and then he quoted from I Peter 3:20-21. (Dialogue Against the Luciferians 22) Cyril of Jerusalem compared the dove with the spirit which comes down at baptism and the wood of the ark with the wood of the cross. (Catechetical Lectures 17. 10) In like manner Tertullian wrote, "For just as, after the waters of the deluge, by which the old iniquity was purged—a dove was the herald which announced to the earth the assuagement of celestial wrath... by the self-same law of heavenly effect, to earth—that is, to our flesh—as it emerges from the font, after its old sins, flies the dove of the Holy Spirit, bringing us the Peace of God." (On Baptism 8) Two other references upon this are Ambrose Duties of the Clergy 3. 108, and Jerome Letters 10. 1; 69. 6. More information upon related subjects may be found in Everett Ferguson, Early Christians Speak and Jack P. Lewis, A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature.

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