

I Know It's There Hand to Plow

There are several ways to get into a situation where you know something is written in scripture but cannot find it when needed. Also, there are times when what we think is there, in fact, is not.

For some of us, the difficulty is that we memorized verses in the King James Bible and now use a version with up-to-date English. Indeed, the words we learned are not in the NKJV, NASB, ESV, and many others available today. Even among modern translations, the editing process of choosing words for those new editions often uses a Thesaurus to pick the words rather than the contextual meaning of the words. Depending on the context, simple words like "offering" can mean a gift or a sacrifice. As we study, we can resolve this difference by using a good Hebrew or Greek dictionary to view the literal and contextual meanings of the original language. It helps to get familiar with the different words used in different Bible versions as we study a verse. Seeing other words used in the same passage helps us better understand the passage. At times, we need to ask why did translators use one word over another. Unfortunately, they may have a worldly doctrine they wish to force into the scripture (Colossians 2:8).

One example of changing words to suit false doctrine is the NIV's version of (Romans 7:18). The translation of σάρξ (sarx) as "sinful nature" changes the verse to imply the Calvinistic false doctrine on original sin rather than Paul's intended self-committed sin. The NASB correctly translates it as "my flesh." The accurate translation is, *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not"* (Romans 7:18). The lesson for us is to study the scripture, not just read what the translators or paraphrasers have printed.

Another problem occurs when we search through the Bible, use various concordances, and look for a specific phrase, but we become frustrated when we fail to find it. This problem occurs after we have heard sayings repeated over the years, and some have accepted them as scripture.

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness" may be a good rationale for taking a bath, but it is not in the Bible. There may be principles in the Law of Moses about clean and unclean conditions, but they refer to the spirit within the person, not the outer body.

"God helps those who help themselves" may encourage people to work, but it gained popularity when Benjamin Franklin included it in "Poor Richard's Almanac" in 1736.

"Spare the rod spoil the child" is an English Proverb. But *"He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently"* (Proverbs 13:24) provides the opposite advice.

"This too shall pass" is used to change perspective in times of difficulty but falls short of *"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

What hurts most is when we talk to someone and need a passage to back us up but cannot find it. I have known that (James 2:14-26) reads *"faith without works is dead"* for most of my life. But one night in Thailand, using a borrowed Bible, I could not find it. The good that had been progressing well came to an embarrassing halt. I lost the opportunity that seemed to be producing fruit, and I did not have the opportunity to study with those people again.

When we start talking about this subject, we should remember Paul's words to Timothy. *"Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent (study - KJV) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness"* (2 Timothy 2:14-16 NASB). The idea expressed by study, and be diligent, is given in (1 Thessalonians 2:17) as *"all the more eager with great desire"* and in (Galatians 2:10) as *"I also was eager to do."* These verses describe three characteristics. First is the driving desire and eagerness to know and spread God's Word. Second is the effort given to learn God's Word, know it intimately, and make it part of self. And Third is the proper use of God's word to spread the Gospel.

Do we have an overpowering desire to know and spread the Gospel of Christ?