

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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SO YOU WANT TO BE A PREACHER?

There is no more noble aspiration than to be a servant of the Most High God in seeking the lost and encouraging the saved. After more than 50 years of engaging in this labor of love, please allow me to share some perspectives from my viewpoint. With my father and grandfather having been preachers (beginning in 1881), perhaps I can offer some worthwhile thoughts.

--Jefferson David Tant

Preaching is not a way to get rich

If you are looking to preaching as a way to line your pockets with silver, you have made a poor choice. While it is certain that in general preachers are supported better than they were in times past, preaching is not a path to wealth. I suppose there have always been those who looked upon it as a way of gain, as Paul had to deal with such attitudes in his day. *“And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingers not, and their destruction slumbers not”* (II Pet. 2:3). In Romans 16:18 he wrote of those who *“serve their own belly,”* and then in I Timothy 6:5 he warned about those *“who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”*

We are encouraged to trust in the Lord. *“Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee”* (Heb. 13:5). One man said that preachers are to be humble and poor, and that we should depend on the Lord to make us humble, and the brethren to keep us poor! Paul said he had learned to be content with much or with little (Phil. 4:11-13). It would do well for every young man wanting to preach to read the book, *J. D. Tant, Texas Preacher*, and see how it was 100 years ago when most preachers had to farm and do hard labor in order to feed their families while they preached.

In my first work among the Choctaw Indians in Pushmataha County, Oklahoma, I believe I was paid \$25 a week (1959). We lived in a little unfinished 4-room house in this community of 600. We drove about 25 miles to Talihina to do our laundry, and 37 miles to Antlers for doctor visits when we were expecting our first child. Gasoline was eating us up. The Castleberry church down in Ft. Worth increased my wages by another \$25. It was still tight, but we were making it. After being there a year with increasing attendance and contributions, I approached the congregation for a slight raise. “What are you doing with the \$25 we are already giving you?” (I had previously told them of the \$25 from Ft. Worth, but I guess they had forgotten it.) After

their question I dropped the subject and never brought it up again. In fact, in 53 years of preaching, I think I asked for a raise only one other time, and I believe that was for \$5 a week.

At times I have supplemented my income with part-time work when we had high medical bills, but we never went hungry. I can remember when my father had to sell our car to pay the bills when the church could have easily increased his income, but a power struggle among the elders prevented a raise. But I never heard my father complain or contemplate giving up preaching. I certainly believe the Scriptures teach a preacher should be supported, and adequately, but “money-seekers” should seek elsewhere.

Preachers should be prudent in preparing for old age. Not many churches provide any sort of retirement package, and too many preachers become the object of charity because they have not been wise in preparing for the future. Solomon urges us to “Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest” (Prov. 6:6-8). –*Jefferson David Tant, 11550 Strickland Rd. Roswell, GA 30076, U.S.A. Email-- jdtant3@juno.com*

The NASB and the ESV

Every preacher of the gospel must be a diligent Bible student. The one who reads English will want the best English translations, and he will want to study from more than one translation. In this article I want to examine two modern translations—the *New American Standard Bible* (first published in 1960 and updated in 1995), and the *English Standard Version* (2001).

I have been studying and preaching from the NASB since the 1970’s. In comparing it with other translations I have found it to be clear and reliable. It is a very accurate translation. Usually it is easy to understand. It is careful to translate rather than to bend the meaning to a particular view which is not clearly stated in the text. It indicates which words the translators have inserted to complete the meaning of a passage by putting the words in italics. It has notes which show alternative translations of certain words and phrases. It is always my first choice for determining the meaning of a passage.

The drawback to the NASB is that it is rather expensive, and it is not easily available overseas. I have imported New American Standard Bibles for sale to brethren in South Africa, and I think I will have to continue doing this. It is available on the e-Sword computer program but you have to pay a fee (\$20, I think) in order to use it. It is worth it.

Recently a new translation, the English Standard Version, has burst on the scene and is selling quite well. My friend, Mark Roberts, is particularly enthusiastic about this translation. It can be downloaded to e-Sword free, and I am finding it available at religious book stores in South Africa.

I like it, but it has a couple of drawbacks. The reason I like it is that it is a very readable, vigorous translation. I am using it for my daily Bible reading because it seems to put new life into the familiar passages. It is generally very accurate. It is not a paraphrase.

However, I have found that its translation changes the meaning of some passages, sometimes in a radical way. Compare: Malachi 2:16. NASB: “*For I hate divorce,*” says the Lord, and him

who covers his garment with wrong,” says the Lord of hosts. ESV: “*For the man who hates and divorces, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence,*” says the Lord of hosts.

Compare also Hebrews 4:2: NASB: “*For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.*” ESV: “*For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*” There is a note in the NASB: “Two early manuscripts read *they were . . . faith with those who heard.*” It appears that the ESV decided to follow those two early manuscripts.

In 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 the NASB translation shows that the passage tells the father of the virgin girl what to do about letting her get married. The ESV changes the meaning so that the passage is addressed to the man who wants to marry the girl, not to the father. In order to get this meaning, the ESV has (mis)translated the words in verse 36 “*he who does not give her in*

marriage” (NASB) by rendering them “*he who refrains from marriage*”. I am very disappointed in the way the ESV has translated this whole passage. There are two Greek words used. One means “to marry” and the other means “to give in marriage.” The ESV has mistranslated in this case.

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In 1 Corinthians 11 the ESV has translated the word “woman” as “wife” in verses 3, 5 and 6, but then changes back to “woman” in verses 7-12, reverting to “wife” in verse 13, then back to “woman” in verse 15. But the Greek word is the same in every case. Whether it means “wife” has to be determined by how it is used, and the reader should be left to determine that. The ESV translators have imposed their interpretation on the text.

There are good translation notes in the ESV, but there are no italics indicating words which have been inserted to complete the meaning.

Therefore I am using the NASB as the translation to rely on for accuracy, while reading the ESV for its clearness and vigour.



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The NET Bible

There is a recent translation of the Bible that is different in a lot of ways from other translations. The difference is found in the wording but also in the way that it was translated.

“The NET Bible (New English Translation) is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It is being completed by more than twenty biblical scholars who are working

directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.” (bible.org: *The Making of the NET Bible*, http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=10)

This translation of the Bible was put on the internet while it was being translated to be reviewed by anyone who wanted to, including scholars and non-scholars. This led to many suggestions being made to improve it before the final release. A major goal in this translation was to make it clearly readable to the average English reader. (bible.org: *An Open Letter Regarding the NET Bible*, http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=11)

What it ended up being is a translation that is easy to read, but not always accurate to the original text. For instance, when God cursed woman in the garden:

To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase⁴⁶ your labor pains;⁴⁷ with pain you will give birth to children. You will want to control your husband,⁴⁸ but he will dominate⁴⁹ you." (Genesis 3:16)

“You will want to control your husband” is more commentary than translation of the phrase “and toward your husband [will be] your desire.” Also there is often an obvious Calvinistic influence in the translation. But do you notice the numbers scattered throughout this verse? Those are the numbers to the translator’s notes. The translator’s notes are the really useful part of this translation. They give some insight into the translation of the Bible to those of us who are ignorant of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

These notes help in places like 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 where there is a disagreement between major translations of how to translate it. It explains both positions and the arguments for both in the notes. There are some places where they should have made notes but did not, such as 1 Corinthians 7:39, “A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies,³⁰ she is free to marry anyone she wishes (only someone in the Lord).” To make such a statement as “only someone in the Lord” instead of “only in the Lord,” one would hope that they would give some textual basis for their choice of wording, but they do not.

All in all, the NET Bible is not good enough for use as one’s primary translation, but it does provide some excellent study helps. You can access it online at bible.org where you can download it as a collection of Microsoft Word documents, an e-Sword module (although you have to pay \$20 if you want all the notes in e-Sword), or use it online at <http://www.nextbible.org> which is a decent study tool itself. When you click on a verse in the NetBible, you get a comparison of 9 different English translations along with the Greek and the study notes for that verse.

The website at <http://www.bible.org> has many other scholarly articles and study helps that may or may not be useful, but it is definitely worth a look.

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