

The Book of Ephesians

Preparing to Study Ephesians 2

Session Twelve: The Construction of Paul's Epistles

We are about to start chapter two of Ephesians. As we do, I want us to think about a couple of things: 1) the words and phrases the bible uses, and 2) the chapter and verse divisions in your bible.

The important thing in preaching and teaching, the important thing in Bible study, is to understand the words and phrases being used in God's word. Sometimes I think we do a disservice by replacing words in our bible with modern words. I don't mean to say it is a sin or anything like that. It is better to integrate the bible words back into our vocabulary and that means we need to know what the existing words in our bible actually mean.

For example, when the bible uses the word "charity," we almost always replace it with the word "love." When the translators of the KJB came to the Greek word "agape," they translated it as "love" 114 times but 28 times they translated it as "charity."

I have taught you that charity is not so much a feeling (although you may or may not have that), but a decision; that at the core of "charity" is to "value and esteem." The official definition: "a love or dearness for something because of placing a high value on it." Thus, charity is "a very caring-affection because of a very high value placed upon the object of affection."

Since the translators of the KJB recognized this from the Wycliffe Bible and the Latin Vulgate (which used: dilecto = caring affection (love), and caritas= caring affection including a high value (charity) to translate the Greek), they rightly recognized the shade of meaning difference, and used "charity" instead of "love." As Stephen White so aptly put it: "Charity results in godly actions such as edification (1 Corinthians 8:1) and Christ-likeness (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)."

Imagine that you are living in the first century at Ephesus. In talking with someone in your church, you learn that your assembly has just received a letter from the apostle Paul. Not only that, but the prophets in your church have identified this letter as divinely inspired writing (theopneustia), and, at the next assembly this letter is going to be read! How excited would you be to listen to these words the next time you assembled?

The day has come and you are listening to Paul's letter to the Ephesians being read. As you listen, you notice that Paul often quotes from the OT Hebrew Scriptures, and you say to

yourself, "I would really like to see the text he is quoting from." But that would not have been easy. Why?

Consider what the manuscripts of "the holy writings" that were available in Paul's day looked like.

Sometimes scripture was written on Papyrus: cheap paper.

This is probably what most of the NT was written on.

Vellum: fancy leather with writing on it. Some of the vellum is wrapped up like a window shade (scroll) and some are laid out in pages like a book (codex).

Some of the pages are folio style which is a single page folded in half or written in two columns side by side. It could be a scroll or a roll.



Take a look at this portion of the book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls. What do you see? Solid blocks of text! No punctuation; and none of the numbered chapters and verses that we use today.

Let's take a few minutes and talk about how we got our English Bible.

The original manuscripts were written in Greek. Here is a sample of the book of Ephesians written in Greek.

The Roman Empire became divided into two halves, the western and eastern. Latin dominated the western half.

Within a generation of the apostle Paul, the seeds of doctrinal corruption were already bearing fruit.

In 382, the Pope commissioned a renowned scholar named Jerome to translate the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT into Latin. This work became known as the Latin Vulgate.

As the years went by, religious tyranny swept across the empire. Corruptions to Jerome's text became widespread. Doctrines contrary to Paul's would manifest within the church.

For 250 years (600 A.D. – 850 A.D.) the light of God's word and justification by faith would thrive only in Christian outposts like Iona (an island of Scotland), for in Iona would be a great Bible College from which the doctrines of the apostle Paul were being preserved. Iona is a small island (1 ½ mi. x 3 mi.) situated just off the Ross Mull on the western coast of Scotland. It is generally referred to as the cradle of Christianity in Scotland mainly because of the work accomplished by the Training Center set up on the Island by the renowned Celtic missionary, Columba.

The Celtic Church was one of the few bastions of truth that held in check the advances of Catholicism in the British Isles, providing the inhabitants of the Heptarchy with an alternative to both Paganism and the Papacy.

Bible writers did not divide their message into chapters or verses. They just wrote down the whole message God gave them.

The lack of chapters or verses, however, did pose a problem. Paul could only identify his quotations with such words as "as it is written." It would have been difficult to find those quotations unless you were very familiar with all of the OT writings.

So, who put those chapter and verse numbers in the Bible and when did they do it?

So, at this point, I would like to give us a brief history of how we got our English Bible.

English cleric Stephen Langton, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, is credited with adding the chapter divisions to the Bible. He did this early in **1227** A.D., when he was a teacher at the University of Paris in France.

Before Langton's day, scholars had experimented with different ways of dividing the Bible into smaller sections or chapters, mainly, for reference purposes. You can imagine how much easier it would have been for them to find a passage if they had to search through only one chapter rather than a whole book, such as the book of Isaiah with its 66 chapters.

All of that, however, created a problem. The scholars produced many different and incompatible systems. In one of them, Mark's Gospel was divided into almost 50 chapters, not the 16 we have now. In Paris in Langton's day, there were students from many countries, and they brought with them Bibles from their native lands. However, lecturers and students could not share references. Why? Because the chapter divisions in their manuscripts simply did not match.

In response to this problem, Langton developed new chapter divisions. His system spread rapidly across Europe. He gave us the chapter numbering we find in most Bibles today.

It soon became apparent that people needed even more than just chapter divisions. Jewish copyists divided the whole Hebrew OT into chapters, but not into verses. But again, there was no uniform system.

By **1350**, the Jerome's Latin Vulgate had been so changed, that it no longer resembled the original text. Mariology, penance, transubstantiation, mysticism, auricular confession, worship of saints and relics, purgatory and indulgences had come to be validated in the Latin scriptures.

By 1316, the Roman church circulated a License for committing sins, where you could pay in advance to be forgiven for something you were going to do.

A man named John Wycliffe came on the scene and he intended to restore the word of God to its true form and to give the people of England the Bible in their own language; English. The church was very much opposed to this, as using only Latin gave them control over the masses who could not read or write it. The church alone could say what God's word was and there was no way for the people to know if it was true or not.

Knowing that the scriptures had been corrupted, Wycliffe translated Jerome's Latin Bible into English in 1380. Without a printing press, it took from 10-18 months to write by hand and could only be afforded by the super-rich.

John Wycliffe became the champion of the people. Though the Roman church hated him, he was too powerful to muzzle. In 1384, John Wycliffe had a stroke while preaching. He died just days later.

With their enemy out of the way, the church moved quickly to make a law prohibiting the Bible to be preached, quoted, studied, written or read in any language other than Latin.

John Gutenberg's press was invented in the 1450s and it would help the spread of God's word.

In 1496, John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the son of the Mayor of London (2nd only in power to King Henry VII), returned to England from Italy and started doing something no one had done before. From his studies in Italy, Colet knew Greek. And he was returning to England to teach God's word, which, for 150 years could only be done in Latin.

On the Oxford campus, John Colet stood in front of his classes and read from a Greek Text of Romans and then translated it into English. His family was of such power the faculty would not stop him or fire him.

A church that held 20,000 had about 200 on a Sunday. But when Colet began doing in church what he did in his classes, within six months, over 20,000 people were showing up every Sunday to hear the words of Paul the apostle in English. Colet was not preaching, he was only reading Paul's words!

The License for sin was produced first by Pope John XXII. Pope Leo X had it printed and published again in 1514. From an English translation we have the following:

- Perjury, forgery or lying.....\$ 2.00
- Robbery.....3.00
- Burning a house.....2.75
- Killing a layman.....1.75
- Striking a priest.....2.75
- Ravish a virgin.....2.00
- Murder of parents or siblings.....2.50
- Absolution of all crimes.....12.00

In 1516, a brilliant scholar named Erasmus put together a Latin/Greek Text of the NT. Nine years later, in 1525, William Tyndale who had fled to Hamburg, Germany, translated Erasmus' work into English. The first Bible translated from the Greek into English! Tyndale moved to Worms, and had several thousand copies of the English NT printed. They began to be smuggled into England. Priests confiscated, threatened and bought the copies to keep it out of England. Today, of the thousands printed at Worms, only 3 remain.

At this point, I would refer you to The Forbidden Book by Dr. Craig Lampe.

Martin Luther would publish his "Justification by Faith" in 1520. And in 1522, Luther translated the NT into German.

In 1526 – William Tyndale's NT and about ½ of the OT – Captured, strangled and burned at the stake.

In 1535 – Coverdale Bible – Myles Coverdale

Coverdale combined Tyndale's NT and as much of the OT as he did before he was put to death (about half). Coverdale translated the balance of the OT, from German and Latin, making this the first complete English bible published.

In 1537 Matthew's Bible – Thomas Matthew (John Rogers). Tyndale, Coverdale and Rogers knew each other well. They collaborated and did their own translation work. Some within the church harbored such hatred for Tyndale, that, thinking it was different from Tyndale's they embraced the Matthew's Bible not knowing it was John Rogers' pseudonym. This became the basis of the Great Bible.

No longer illegal to translate the Bible into English, this was dedicated to the king of England.

1539 – The Great Bible (Cranmer's Bible)

In 1555, renowned French printer-scholar Robert Estienne wanted to make Bible study easy. He realized how valuable it would be to have a uniform system of both numbered chapters *and* numbered verses.

Estienne divided the Christian Greek Scriptures or what is called the New Testament, into a new set of numbered verses and combined them with those already in the Hebrew Bible. In 1553, he published the first complete Bible (an edition in French) with basically the same chapters and verses that most Bibles use today.

The chapter and verse divisions are not inspired by God, but they make it easier for us to pinpoint specific places in every book of the Bible.

1560 – The Geneva Bible (the people's bible – lots of notes)

This is the first English Bible with both chapter and verse divisions.

1568 – The Bishop's Bible

In the early 1560's the Church of England had a dilemma on its hands. Many of its parishioners anxious to read the Scriptures for themselves in English had purchased a copy of the Geneva Translation of the Bible. The Geneva Translation was the best English version of the Bible up to that time -- and the Church of England knew it. They had little problem with its text; but they *did* object to the Notes that were printed in the margins. Most of these Notes were written by English Protestants who had to flee England to escape the persecution of the Church. Some of these Protestant-oriented notes were highly critical of both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

As soon as it was released, the Bishops' Bible became the official Bible of the Church of England, and began replacing copies of the Great Bible in churches. In **1571** it was decreed that "every archbishop and bishop should have at his house a copy of the holy Bible of the largest volume as lately printed in London. ...and that it should be placed in the hall of the large dining room, that it might be useful to their servants or to strangers."

1611 – King James Bible

Why have we talked about this? We are talking about this because we are about to begin Ephesians chapter 2. As we do so, we need to keep some things in mind, such as: when Paul wrote Ephesians, there were no chapter divisions. We will look at these things in our next session.