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Revisiting Biblical Translation

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Revisiting Biblical Translation

An Honors College Project Thesis

Presented to

The Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for

Honors Scholar

by

Dominique Rideout

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This Project Thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee,
has been accepted by the Honors College of Abilene Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the distinction

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ABSTRACT

Since the Reformation, translation into the vernacular has been a significant part of interpretation of biblical texts. In modern English, it seems as though new translations are created all the time, and Christians often take for granted this valuable tool of the faith. However, there are many ways in which translation can—and should—be done better. This project discusses the theory and methodology of translation, with particular attention to formal and functional equivalence translations. Additionally, it looks at key issues in translation such as semantic range and contextualization of the text. Then, it reviews new research in translation relating to discourse analysis and the role of the reader in interpretation. The ultimate purpose of the project is to propose another method of translation that looks at these key issues and works to move beyond simple grammatical and syntactical analysis to viewing the text as a whole. As a result, it includes a translation case-study of Romans 3 with a discourse analysis, translation for personal devotion, and a translation for congregational reading. Finally, it includes a comparison of key differences between the proposed translation and three modern translations at various ends of the translation spectrum—the NRSV as a formal equivalence translation, the NLT as a functional equivalence translation, and the NIV as a mediating translation.

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Translation Theory and Methodology

Introduction

Translation is one of the most important—and yet most overlooked—aspects of biblical studies. Translation is the primary means by which we can understand the text, without learning the original languages. Still, it seems as though new translations are created all the time, each one both similar to and distinct from what has already been written. If we already have plenty of translations in English, what is the point of continuing in making new translations? As languages change over time, it is important to revisit past translations and translation theories and consider ways which translation can be done better.

Guiding Thoughts on Translation

At its most basic form, translation is a means of transferring meaning from one language to another. In biblical translation, the primary role is to “put a Hebrew or Greek sentence into meaningful English that is equivalent to its meaning in Hebrew or Greek.”¹ A good translator will take into account the contexts of both the source language and the receptor language and create a translation which preserves in the receptor language the same meaning and effect of the source language.² In this way, the ultimate purpose of

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Mark L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

² This is a hotly debated topic in translation theory. For discussion on the benefits of this method, see Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *From One Language to Another* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986). For discussion on the failings, see D.A. Carson, “The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible,” Translation—and Other Limits, Too,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (eds. Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 65-114.

translation is to overcome all barriers to communication—language, culture, time, and space.³

A good translation should be clear to the intended reader. The translation must be understandable, avoiding awkward language and grammar. Furthermore, it should attempt to express in the translation meaning that is implicit in the original context.⁴ Therefore, a translation should be natural, favoring contemporary idioms and styles of speech over words or phrases that hold little meaning for today’s reader.⁵ Though preserving the form of the original when translating from one language to another is helpful, it is far more important to translate the meaning of the text in a natural, understandable way.⁶

In many ways, translation itself is a means of interpretation. The words in a text only bear meaning within the context of other words.⁷ Thus, simply choosing one word in translation rather than another is an interpretive choice on the part of the translator.⁸ Additionally, translations must be faithful to the meaning of the source language, drawing readers into the world of the Bible.⁹ For biblical translation in particular, knowing the intended context of the reader and the purpose in reading is necessary for producing a faithful translation.¹⁰ Therefore, a translation must not only be faithful to the source but

³ Y.C. Whang, “To Whom Is a Translator Responsible—Reader or Author?” in *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Richard S. Hess; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 55.

⁴ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 38-9.

⁵ *Ibid*, 39.

⁶ Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1969), 12.

⁷ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 30.

⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, “Bible Translation Philosophies with Special Reference to the New International Version,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (eds. Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 52.

⁹ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 36.

¹⁰ Whang, “To Whom is a Translator Responsible,” 59.

also appropriate to the context of its target audience.¹¹ A good translation should ask what the meaning of a text is in its original context, then transmit that meaning into the receptor language.¹²

Methodology of Translation

Historically, two primary forms of translation have fought for prominence among biblical scholars. The first, formal equivalence, focuses primarily on the source language, while the second, functional equivalence, focuses on the receptor language.¹³ Each has its own benefits when it comes to translation and each has issues that translators must deal with in order to produce a faithful translation. A third type—mediating translation—attempts to make the best of both kinds of translation.

Formal equivalence focuses more directly on words and phrases over larger units of meaning. It seeks to preserve both the words and the grammar of the source language.¹⁴ In this way, formal equivalence translations attempt to reflect the sentence structure, verbal nuances, and idioms of the source language.¹⁵ This method of translation attempts to create consistency in translation of word choice, phrase and clause order, sentence length, and grammatical class—nouns as nouns and verbs as verbs.¹⁶

Formal equivalence is effective in creating what many believe is a “literal” translation. In the matter of consistency in translation of individual words, formal equivalence is undoubtedly a success. However, through these same means, much meaning is lost unless the reader has studied the text in its original language as well.

¹¹ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 40.

¹² Ibid, 30-1.

¹³ Barker, “Bible Translation Philosophies, 53.

¹⁴ This is often referred to as the “form” of the source language. cf. Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 26.

¹⁵ Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 400.

¹⁶ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 21-2.

While potentially helpful for the person who wants to use a translation for in-depth study of the text, formal equivalence is not recommended for the average casual reader of the Bible. Because of differences in context between the original writing and the readers, a “word-for-word” translation is lacking when compared to the “meaning-for-meaning” translation of functional equivalence.

Functional equivalence¹⁷ translations aim to represent the translated text as naturally in the receptor language as it would have sounded to the original readers.¹⁸ This method of translation seeks to preserve the meaning of the source language over the specific forms—that is, to make the translation understandable rather than being tied down to the specific form of the original language.¹⁹ The effectiveness of a functional equivalence translation is the “degree of equivalence of response” between the original receptors in the source and the modern receptors in the translation.²⁰ In this method of translation, the emphasis is on the target language rather than the source language, and how to convey the equivalent of the source language as closely as possible without changing the context of the writings.²¹ In this way, the context of words matters just as much as their lexical meaning.²² Furthermore, these translations believe in using the style, structure, and idioms of the receptor language.²³

¹⁷ Functional equivalence and dynamic equivalence are phrases that are used almost interchangeably in translation studies. For the purposes of this paper and to promote clarity, “functional equivalence” is the term that will be used for his kind of translation.

¹⁸ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 26.

¹⁹ *ibid*, 26.

²⁰ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 24.

²¹ Stanley E. Porter, “Assessing Translation Theory: Beyond Literal and Dynamic Equivalence,” in *Translating the New Testament* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 131.

²² Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose*, 27.

²³ Wegner, *The Journey*, 400.

The primary question in functional equivalence is how translators can know whether the response of the receptors is the same as the original audience and where the meaning itself lies.²⁴ While this is a noble goal, functional equivalence translations still focus primarily on smaller units of meaning—words, phrases, clauses, and sentences—without looking so much at the discourse as a whole in context. Since the goal is to produce the same response in the modern reader as in the original reader, some contextualization occurs, but larger amounts of contextualization are often perceived as inauthentic.

The mediating translation—also referred to as a combination translation—attempts to balance formal and functional equivalences, deciding based on context which theory works best.²⁵ This methodology acknowledges that one set of assumptions regarding translation sometimes trumps another. Still, while this translation theory is more flexible and adjusts based on the form and genre of the text, it still focuses too narrowly on the grammar and syntax of the text instead of broader questions of discourse.

Key Issues in Translation

The first issue in translation is how to keep the text clear and understandable. Since the text was written to be understood by its original readers, the job of the translator is to clearly transmit this message.²⁶ However, in cases of multiple interpretations, some believe that translators should intentionally keep ambiguity.²⁷

²⁴ Whang, "To Whom is a Translator Responsible," 52-53.

²⁵ Wegner, *The Journey*, 400.

²⁶ Some believe that the Bible should intentionally be kept ambiguous, arguing that we cannot fully understand the text. However, according to Nida, the Bible would have been understandable by its original audience and thus should be understandable in translation. This is the assumption this paper works under. cf. Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 19ff and De Waard and Nida, *From One Language*, 10ff.

²⁷ Whang, "To Whom is a Translator Responsible," 56-7.

However, De Waard and Nida assert that it is more efficient to provide a meaningful translation in the text itself and alternate “literal” translations in notes.²⁸ Furthermore, translations must avoid using words or phrases that are not easily understood by the average reader—especially unfamiliar vocabulary and grammatical structures.²⁹ Thus, in order to provide a translation which is understandable and not awkward in the receptor language, the audience and style of the translation must be considered at an early stage in the translation.³⁰

Additionally, when considering how to translate a word in a given context, translators must understand the semantic range of words—the variety of ways they can be used in different contexts. However, semantic range is not only important in discussing the source language. Rather, understanding the semantic range of words in the receptor language is also necessary so that the translator can avoid ambiguity where the author did not intend.³¹ Thus, to properly translate the semantics of one language into another, translators must understand “the speakers, their environment, their society, and their beliefs.”³² This form of contextualization helps translators to understand the assumptions that a language and culture makes and then transfer meaning more fully into the source language. This helps to promote clarity, as obscurity in the Bible is often not the original author’s intent, but readers’ lack of historical and cultural information.³³

²⁸ The idea here is that the text itself should have meaning. While some would prefer to put the “literal” translation in the text and an interpretation in the notes, in order to promote a smooth reading experience, it is far better to make the text understandable and provide resources for curious readers. One translation that does this well is the New Living Translation. cf. De Waard and Nida, *From One Language*, 34.

²⁹ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 2.

³⁰ *ibid.* 103

³¹ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 19-21.

³² Whang, “To Whom is a Translator Responsible,” 49.

³³ De Waard and Nida, *From One Language*, 10.

The last important factor in preparing a translation is identifying the intended audience. This identification is vital to translation as it dictates the decisions a translator can make.³⁴ In fact, the authority in interpretation lies in the community of which readers are part.³⁵ Since interpretation lies in community, translators must consider the circumstance of the reading of the text—specifically whether it will be read or heard and whether it will be communal or individual. These factors contribute to choices the translator must make involving issues of homophony and ambiguity.³⁶ Furthermore, audience context is essential because if the Bible is to be understood as an instrument of evangelism, it is necessary that it be intelligible not only to Christian insiders, but also to the outsiders who do not have previous encounters with the text.³⁷

More important than whether a translation is accurate in form, however, is whether the translation is intelligible. This includes how the message impacts the receptor as well as how understandable the vocabulary and semantics are.³⁸ Translators must use language as the average reader does, otherwise there is the risk of misunderstanding.³⁹ Furthermore, translators must be wary of assuming that poor translations will be further explained by religious authorities. Many times, readers do not have access to adequate religious teachers and put more weight in the written word than in what is preached in a church service.⁴⁰

³⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *We Still Don't Get It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 35.

³⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Reader in New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 311.

³⁶ De Waard and Nida, *From One Language*, 16.

³⁷ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 31.

³⁸ *ibid*, 22.

³⁹ Moo, *We Still Don't Get It*, 4-5.

⁴⁰ De Waard and Nida, *From One Language*, 40.

However, a "good translation" must go beyond simply moving the readers to understanding. In addition to providing information, translations must also have relevance to the modern context and move the reader to action. The text of the Bible is not meant to be read as a disconnected, intellectual task. The words were written with the intent that they would make the readers feel and act in a certain way. This assumption is the theory behind dynamic equivalence translations—that the translation must promote right understanding, right feeling, and right action.⁴¹

New Research in Translation

Two primary areas of research in translation involve discourse analysis and the role of the reader in interpretation. The topic of the reader's role includes subcategories such as literary criticism, reader-response criticism, and the development of reader-friendly versions of the Bible. These various forms consider the text as a work to be read as a whole. Instead of considering the smaller units of meaning in a text, they consider where meaning lies in relation to the reader and how to translate this meaning into the receptor language. Similarly, discourse analysis looks at the relationship of various parts of the text to one another. Instead of stopping translation at the sentence level, it goes on to see the influence of argument and rhetorical devices on the meaning.

A newer form of biblical criticism, literary criticism, analyzes the text with special reference to the artistic and aesthetic qualities, genre, features of the form and their functions, and the text as a whole unit instead of a "patchwork collection."⁴² In this way, the biblical text is analyzed as a piece of literary work with a specific purpose rather

⁴¹ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 24-26.

⁴² Jeffrey A.D. Weima, "Literary Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Eds. David Alan Black & David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 151.

than as a text disconnected from its context. In forms of criticism such as textual or source criticism, the text is analyzed as sub-units put together by a later editor. However, for literary criticism, the text does not hold meaning outside of the whole. In this way, this method invites translators to consider large units of text—which is vital for a good translation as we have already seen and will see again in a discussion on Discourse Analysis.⁴³

The primary question in determining methods for literary criticism is whether meaning lies in the author's intent, the text itself, or in the reader's response to the text. These three perspectives influence the interpretation of the text. If the meaning of the text lies in the author's original purpose, then the role of the translator is to find the author's meaning and put that into plain language for the modern reader. However, since the "author" in these contexts often becomes an idealized person who does not exist in our modern time and place, translators often disagree on what this "intent" was. If the meaning lies in the text itself, then the translator's only job is to put the words into the receptor language exactly as they appear in the source. However, this often leads to ambiguous and unintelligible translations—a common issue with formal equivalence translations that operate under this assumption.⁴⁴

If the meaning lies in the reader's interpretation of and response to the text, then the translator's role is discovering what the original reader's response would have been and transmitting it into a new context. This method makes the most sense as we can determine what the goals of a text for its reader were based on its original context. Thus, the new focus of translation is on the response of the reader rather than on the precise

⁴³ *ibid*, 151.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 151-2.

form of the message.⁴⁵ In this type of translation and interpretation, the reader comes to the forefront as the person who receives the text and makes meaning of it. This idea is significant as translators consider who a translation is for. In analyzing reader response, the intended audience helps to make decisions of contextualization—what makes sense to one reader in one context would be considered incomprehensible to another.⁴⁶

Discourse analysis is the most up-to-date method of analyzing the text which helps translators in conveying the message of the Bible to modern readers. As we have already seen, an important aspect of Discourse Analysis is the assumption that meaning lies in sentences and paragraphs rather than in phrases and clauses.⁴⁷ Rather than merely considering the grammatical and syntactical features of a text, discourse analysis focuses on “language in use.”⁴⁸ In this way, it allows that the texts studied are not independent from the larger work, nor is it proper to analyze the parts so deeply that the whole is lost.⁴⁹ Furthermore, discourse analysis understands that communication happens in “ongoing social interaction[s]” and thus, words cannot be taken out of their situation.⁵⁰ To be fully understood, texts must be looked at in context and then re-contextualized to the modern reader.

In this way, discourse analysis goes beyond simply looking at words, clauses, or sentences, to analyzing the “communicative dimensions of translation”—the relationships between these smaller units in a discourse.⁵¹ Discourse analysis consists of breaking up a

⁴⁵ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice*, 1.

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer, “The Reader,” 301.

⁴⁷ George H. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Eds. David Alan Black & David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 256-7.

⁴⁸ Joel B. Green, “The Practice of Reading the New Testament,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 175

⁴⁹ Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 258.

⁵⁰ Green, “The Practice of Reading,” 180.

⁵¹ Porter, “Assessing Translation Theory,” 132.

text into “kernel sentences” and then distinguishing layers of importance and how two phrases, clauses, sentences, or even sections relate to and build off of one another. In this way, when using discourse analysis a translator should alternate between "micro- and macro-levels of discourse."⁵² Through this method, the translator can almost simultaneously study the impact and direction of the entire text while still being faithful to the individual words.

Conclusion

The Bible is a text meant to be read and understood—which is where the role of the translator comes in. Though modern translations are often viewed as superfluous when considering translation needs in other languages, putting the text into modern language through translation is vital. While research in translation theory has increased, fewer texts actually use this research in creating translations. With the fluidity of language, translation theory must continually be analyzed and new translations presented to make the text of the Bible more fully known.

⁵² cf. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 258. Here, he suggests the following method of analyzing the text at these two layers: (micro-) Basic translation and grammatical analysis, (macro-) identification of unit boundaries, (micro-) analysis of internal structure and detailed study of unit material, (macro-) analysis of interrelationship between various units and identification of progression, (micro-) interpretation of elements within the discourse unit

About the Translations

Discourse Analysis:

This section analyzes the argument of Romans 3. The chapter was first broken into kernel sentences in Greek.⁵³ Next, the argument was broken into 9 major sections. These major sections were analyzed for their relationship to one another. Following this, the kernel sentences were analyzed for their relationship within the section each was a part. These relationships have been listed on the right hand side of each line, with the appropriate line number referenced.⁵⁴ Some kernel sentences served merely as transitions between major sections and have been denoted with “Transition” and the kind of transition presented in parenthesis.

Two levels of hierarchy are presented in this analysis. The first is a syntactical hierarchy shown through the indentation of kernel sentences. In this hierarchy, more significant phrases and clauses are farthest left, with supporting phrases and clauses indented more. The second is an argumentative hierarchy shown through the relationships on the right hand side of each line. In these, the primary member of each relationship is denoted by all caps.

This analysis is significant in translation because it shows the flow of Paul’s argument. This analysis helped in determining which arguments were Paul’s and which he was responding to. This difference is shown through the translation for Congregational Reading discussed later. Furthermore, it shows what parts of the argument are most

⁵³ A kernel sentence is a phrase or a clause which holds meaning. The majority have their own verbs—finite or non-finite—but some are significant phrases connected to a more primary clause. This analysis is presented in Greek because the syntax of the translation is modified for clarity.

⁵⁴ For further explanation on the kinds of relationships presented, see Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1989).

significant to the text as a whole, with the conclusion bolded to emphasize that the entire chapter has been building towards this argument.

Preliminary Translation and Questions:

This translation is the first draft of my translation of Romans 3. It is a formal equivalence translation, with attempts to preserve the original syntax and consistency with regard to translation of individual words. In particular, it keeps the general sentence structure of the Greek text, with minor adjustments for readability. Furthermore, in the translation of one of the most common words in section—πιστευω and its derivatives—the word “faith” was consistently chosen in order to highlight the importance. Also in this translation are notes or questions that are significant to consider in revising the translation. These have to do with particular Greek syntax or vocabulary, the context of the text, or how to clearly contextualize into English. Especially difficult words or phrases have been bolded for further analysis.

This translation is designed for readers at approximately 9th-10th grade reading levels. While the vocabulary is mostly familiar, the sentence structure is what really makes this translation more difficult than others. Many sentences in this section are long with multiple clauses and supporting structures, and this translation does little in order to make those clear. However, each of these has been addressed in the comments in hopes that a different translation can better render them in readable English.

Personal Devotion:

This translation was created for personal devotion. It is not intended for in-depth study or for congregational reading. Rather, it is designed to promote meditation on the text through a seamless reading experience. It is a far more functional translation than the

preliminary translation and attempts to take the questions provided and answer them through translation while still preserving some aspects of the form of the text. Specifically, this translation makes use of the discourse analysis in order to determine hierarchies and to recreate understandable sentence structure in English. Many of the longer sentences have still been preserved in this translation, however, in order to keep the tone of the original Greek text.

Because of the mediating nature of this translation, some contextualization has occurred. Most significantly are transitions and emphatic negative answers. Negative answers have been rendered, “No way!” and transitions have been rendered “So what?” where applicable. Additionally, certain interpretive choices have been made. In two places in particular (“These statements deserve judgment” and “because of Jesus’ faithfulness”), the exact meaning was ambiguous. However, after discourse analysis and comparison of potential translations, choices were made that seemed to follow the argument best. The result is a translation that is approximately a 6th-8th grade reading level—corresponding with the average adult reading level in America—and balances modern and “original” styles.

Congregational Reading:

This translation takes the discourse analysis and personal devotional reading to create a version specifically designed for Congregational Reading. Since this type of reading provides more flexibility in regards to extra-textual cues, the chosen form for this translation is a script for 4 speakers. The two primary speakers—Questioner and Paul—provide the hearer with a more accurate understanding of where Paul himself is speaking versus the arguments he is responding to. This is particularly significant in the beginning

and end, where Paul makes use of multiple rhetorical questions that are likely quotes from those at the church trying to understand the concepts.

Another stylistic choice in this translation was the move to an almost entirely functional equivalence translation. To promote intelligibility in the heard form, most uncommon words were eliminated. In addition, when quoting Old Testament references, the introductory phrases were changed to correlate more with modern language choices regarding using the scriptures as supporting information. Lastly, longer sentences were broken into multiple ones to allow hearers to follow the argument better. Especially significant is Paul's discussion of the righteousness of God being revealed. This section was one long sentence in previous versions of the translation, but has been broken into 5 sentences, separated by their relation to the independent clause in the Greek sentence—how those who believe are made righteous and what God's final purpose was in making them righteous.

Comparison with Modern Translations:

The last section of the translation portion of this project is a comparison of the personal devotion translation and 3 popular modern translations—the NRSV, NIV, and NLT. The NRSV represents the traditional formal equivalence translations, the NIV represents a mediating translation, and the NLT represents a functional equivalence translation. The personal devotion translation was chosen as it balances contextualization, translation consistency, and the argument outlined through the discourse analysis. The comparison highlights important differences in word choice and sentence structure and then explains the significance of each of these differences to reading and interpretation.

Discourse Analysis

A:	Intro to chapter; Transition from previous	
Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου		Conjoined 2; Orienter 3
ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς;		Conjoined 2; Orienter 3
πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον.		CONTENT 1 / 2; CONCLUSION 4
πρῶτον μὲν [γάρ] ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ.		Grounds 3
τί γάρ;		Transition (RESULT)
B:	CONTENT to A; Generic to C	
εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες,		Condition / Reason 7
μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ;		CONSEQUENCE / RESULT 6; Concession 8
μὴ γένοιτο·		CONTRAEXPECTATION 7; Intro 9 / 11
γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής,		CONTENT 8; Conjoined 10
πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης,		Conjoined 10
καθὼς γέγραπται·		CONTENT 8; Orienter 12
ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου		CONTENT 11; Conjoined 13
καὶ νικήσῃς ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε.		Conjoined 12
C:	SPECIFIC to B; Equivalent to D	
εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν,		Condition 15
τί ἐροῦμεν;		CONSEQUENCE ₁ 14; Orienter 16
μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν;		CONSEQUENCE ₂ 14; CONTENT 15; Concession 18
κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω.		[Aside] Qualifier 16
μὴ γένοιτο·		CONTRAEXPECTATION 16; CONCLUSION 19
ἐπεὶ πῶς κρινεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον;		Grounds 18
D:	Equivalent to C; Generic to E	

εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,	Condition 21
τί ἔτι κἀγὼ ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι;	CONSEQUENCE 20; Generic 22
καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασὶν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν	SPECIFIC 21; Orienter 23
ὅτι ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά,	CONTENT 22; Means 24; Amplification 21
ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ;	RESULT 23; Grounds 25
ὧν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν.	CONCLUSION 24
Τί οὖν;	Transition (PURPOSE)
E:	SPECIFIC to D; Result to F
προεχόμεθα;	Concession 28
οὐ πάντως·	CONTRAEXPECTATION 27; RESULT 29
προητιασάμεθα γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας πάντας ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι,	Reason 28; RESULT 30
καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι	Means 29; Orienter 31-44
οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς,	Conjoined 32 / 33
οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ συνίων,	Conjoined 31 / 33; AMPLIFICATION 31
οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν.	Conjoined 31 / 32; AMPLIFICATION 31 / 32; Generic 34
πάντες ἐξέκλιναν ἅμα ἠχρεώθησαν·	SPECIFIC 33; Conjoined 35 / 36
οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα,	Conjoined 34 / 36; AMPLIFICATION 34
[οὐκ ἔστιν] ἕως ἐνός.	Conjoined 34 / 35; AMPLIFICATION 35; Orienter 37-44
τάφος ἀνεωγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν,	Conjoined 37-40; Alternating 41
ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν ἐδολιοῦσαν,	Conjoined 37-40
ἰὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χεῖλη αὐτῶν·	Conjoined 37-40
ὧν τὸ στόμα ἀρᾶς καὶ πικρίας γέμει,	Conjoined 37-40

	ὄξεις οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέαι αἷμα,	Alternating 37; Conjoined 41-44
	σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν,	Conjoined 41-44
	καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν.	Conjoined 41-44
	οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.	Conjoined 41-44
F:		REASON to E; Concession to G
	οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει	Conjoined 46
	τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ,	Conjoined 45; Means 47
	ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ	RESULT 46; Alternating 48
	καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ.	Alternating 47; Reason 49
	διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ,	RESULT 48; Means 50
	διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας.	RESULT 49
Νυνὶ δὲ		Transition (CONTRAEXPECTATION)
G:		CONTRAEXPECTATION to F; Grounds to H
	χωρὶς νόμου	MANNER 53
	δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται	Head 52 / 54-57; Means 58
	μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν,	MANNER 53
	δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ	SPECIFIC 53
	διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	MANNER
53		
	εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας.	MANNER 53
	οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν διαστολή,	RESULT 53; CONCLUSION 59
	πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ	Grounds 58; Concession 60
	δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι	CONTRAEXPECTATION 59
	διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.	MANNER 60; Result 62
	ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἰλαστήριον	MEANS 61; Means 64

διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι	MANNER 62
εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ	RESULT 62; PURPOSE 65
διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων	Means 64
ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ,	MANNER 65
πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ,	PURPOSE 60; Generic 68
εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ	SPECIFIC 67; Conjoined 69
δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.	Conjoined 68
H:	CONCLUSION to G; Concession to I
Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις;	Concession 71
ἐξεκλείσθη.	CONTRAEXPECTATION 70; RESULT 72
διὰ ποίου νόμου;	Means 71; Conjoined 73
τῶν ἔργων;	Conjoined 72
οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως.	ALTERNATING 72 / 73; CONCLUSION 75 / 77
λογιζόμεθα γὰρ	Grounds 74; Orienter 76
δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.	CONTENT 75
ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον;	Grounds 74; Equivalence 78 / 79
οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν;	Equivalence 77 / 79
ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν,	Equivalence 77 / 78; CONCLUSION 80
εἴπερ εἶς ὁ θεὸς	Grounds 79; Generic 81
ὃς δικαιώσει περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως	SPECIFIC 80; Alternating 82
καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.	Alternating 81
I:	CONTRAEXPECTATION to H (CONCLUSION to chapter)
νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως;	Concession 85
μὴ γένοιτο·	Contrast 83
ἀλλὰ νόμον ἰσχύνομεν.	CONTRAEXPECTATION 83

Preliminary Translation and Questions

Therefore what is the advantage of the Jew or the benefit of circumcision⁵⁵? Great in every way.⁵⁶ First because they were entrusted with the message of God. Then what? If some were unfaithful, will their faithlessness abolish the faithfulness⁵⁷ of God? Of course not⁵⁸! May God be true and all humans liars, just as it is written,

That you may be justified in your word
and you will conquer in your judgement.⁵⁹

But if our unrighteousness recommends God's righteousness⁶⁰, what do we say? Is God unjust⁶¹ in bringing wrath? (I speak in a human way)⁶² Of course not!⁶³ How, then, would God judge the world? If the truthfulness of God abounds to his glory by my lying⁶⁴, why am I still judged as a sinner? And why not, as we are blasphemously charged and some affirm that we say⁶⁵, "Let us do evil, so that good might come"? **Their judgement is just.**⁶⁶

Then what? Are we⁶⁷ better? Not at all! For we have previously stated that all, both Jews and Gentiles⁶⁸, are sinners⁶⁹, just as it is written,

⁵⁵ In this context, what is the meaning of "advantage" and "benefit"? Maybe something like "What good is it to be a Jew?"

⁵⁶ Does this need to be more emphatic?

⁵⁷ What is meant by the language of "faithfulness" and "unfaithfulness" or "truth" and "lies"?

⁵⁸ What phrase here would hold the same emphasis today as *μη γεινοιτο* did for the original audience?

⁵⁹ How might this be worded or denoted in a congregational reading?

⁶⁰ The idea is something like "makes known" or "confirms" or "sheds light on" God's righteousness.

⁶¹ Is "unjust" Christianese?

⁶² What is the best way to put in asides?

⁶³ Emphasis? (See footnote 2)

⁶⁴ How can this be syntactically arranged to be the clearest?

⁶⁵ Are *βλασφημουμεθα* ("Blasphemously charged") and *φασιν* in synonymous parallelism?

⁶⁶ What judgment is referred to here? The judgment by the "slanderers" about the fictional argument? The judgement from God onto the slanderers?

⁶⁷ Who are "we"?

⁶⁸ How is *Ιουδαιους τε και Ελληνας παντας* related to the first person verb *προητιασαμεθα*?

⁶⁹ What is the use of the preposition *υφ'* with regard to *αμαρτιαν*?

No one is righteous, not one
There is no one who understands
No one who seeks God
All turned away and became perverse
There is no one who does good⁷⁰
There is not even one.
Their throats have been opened as a grave
Their tongues deceive
The venom of vipers is on their lips⁷¹
Their mouths are⁷² full of curses and bitterness
Their feet are quick to shed blood
Destruction and hardship are their ways
They do not know the way of peace
There is no fear of God before their eyes.

We know that whatever the law says speaks to those in the law⁷³ so that all mouths might cease and all the world be under judgment.⁷⁴ Because no flesh⁷⁵ will be made righteous before him by works of the law,⁷⁶ for through the law sin is known.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ How can “does good” be put into better English? The idea being “does good deeds” or “practices good”

⁷¹ Is “on” in the semantic range of *υπο* in this context?

⁷² Collective noun with a singular verb.

⁷³ Can *εν τω νομω* mean “under the law”?

⁷⁴ What is the “judgment” being referred to?

⁷⁵ Is *σαρξ* referring to “sinful nature” or “humanity”?

⁷⁶ *εργων νομου* is used often. What is it referring to in the context of Romans 3?

⁷⁷ What is the relationship between *επιγνωσις* and *αμαρτιας*?

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness⁷⁸ has been revealed, being witnessed to by⁷⁹ the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through **faith of Jesus**⁸⁰ to all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all sin and lack⁸¹ the glory of God, being made righteous as a gift by his grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus⁸² who God brought as a means of forgiveness⁸³ through faith in his blood⁸⁴ in proof of his righteousness through the disregard of the previous sins by the patience of God, to the proof of his righteousness in the present, that he might be righteous and make righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.⁸⁵

Then where is [room to] boast? It is excluded. Is it through doing the law? By works?⁸⁶ No, but through the **law of faith**⁸⁷. We consider that a person is righteous by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles⁸⁸? Yes, also of the Gentiles. For there is one God who justifies the circumcised from faith and the uncircumcised through faith.⁸⁹ Therefore, do we abolish the law through faith? Of course not!⁹⁰ **But we uphold the law.**⁹¹

⁷⁸ What kind of genitive construction is *δικαιοσύνη*?

⁷⁹ How can this phrase be put in clearer English?

⁸⁰ What kind of genitive construction? Faith from Jesus, Faith in Jesus, Jesus' faith, Jesus' faithfulness, etc.? (I think in the context, I lean towards "Jesus' faithfulness" because Paul immediately begins speaking about God's grace and sending Jesus and his sacrifice. It seems that this sending and sacrifice bears the weight, not our faith in Jesus.) Discourse analysis of this chapter could help here.

⁸¹ "Fall short". What does this word mean in this context?

⁸² *δικαιουμενοι δωρεαν τη αυτου χαριτι δια της απολυτρωσεως της εν Χριστι Ιησου* is a really long phrase. Is there any way to break it up or reword it to be clear?

⁸³ *λασθηριον* is traditionally translated as "propitiation" or "sacrifice of atonement". What can be done to make the force / movement of the idea (and relationship to the mercy seat of the ark) evident?

⁸⁴ What does the phrase *δια πιστεως εν τω αυτου αιματι* mean here?

⁸⁵ This entire paragraph is one long sentence. Are there places it can be broken either syntactically (not really; no finite verbs) or visually?

⁸⁶ What role do these two short questions *δια ποιου νομου; τιν εργαων*; play?

⁸⁷ What is "the law of faith"? What kind of genitive construction? (law that is faith?)

⁸⁸ How can the word "Gentiles" be translated so that it is not "Christianese"?

⁸⁹ Is there a significance of *εκ* in one place and *δια* in the other?

⁹⁰ Emphasis? See footnote 2

⁹¹ What is meant by "uphold"?

Translation for Personal Devotion

Therefore, what is good is it to be a Jew? What's the point of being circumcised? It's great in many ways! Primarily, they were to be entrusted with the message of God.

So what?

If some were unfaithful with this message, does that mean their disobedience made God less faithful? No way! May God be true even when all humans are liars. Just as it is written,

That you, God, may be justified in your word
and you will conquer in your judgement.

But if our unrighteousness lets others know that God is righteous, what can we say? Is it injustice when God destroys the unfaithful in wrath? (This is a human argument) No way! How, then, could God judge the world?

But if when I lie, it increases the glory of God's truthfulness, why am I still judged as a sinner? And why not say (as some slander us and claim that we say) "Let us do evil, so that good might come"? These statements deserve judgment.

So what?

Are we any better? Not at all! We already said that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are sinners. Just as it is written,

No one is righteous, not one
There is no one who understands
No one who seeks God
All turned away and became perverse

There is no one who does good things

Not even one.

Their throats have been opened as a grave

Their tongues deceive

Their lips are poisonous like snake venom

Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness

Their feet are quick to shed blood

Destruction and misery are the paths they follow

They do not know the way of peace

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

We know that whatever the law says is for those who are under the law so that no one can say anything and all the world be judged by God. Because no person will be made righteous before God merely by following the law, for law only makes sin known.

But now, without the law, God's righteousness has been shown to the world with the witness of the law and the prophets—the righteousness of God that comes to all who believe because of Jesus' faithfulness. There is no difference based on race; everyone sins, and no one can compare to the glory of God; rather, we are made righteous as a gift by God's grace that comes through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who God brought into the world to be the sacrifice for our sins because of our faith in his blood to prove God's righteousness through the disregard of the previous sins by the patience of God, to prove his righteousness in the present, that he might be righteous and make those who have faith in Jesus righteous.

Then where is room to boast? There is none. Is it through obeying the law? By doing good works? No, but through faith. We are made righteous by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is also God of the Gentles. There is only one God who justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised by faith.

Therefore, do we forget about the law because of faith? No way! Instead, we fulfill the law.

Translation for Congregational Reading

Questioner: So what good is it to be a Jew? What's the use of being circumcised? Is there any point?

Paul: Yes, there is! It's great in every way. They were entrusted with the message of God.

Questioner: So what? If some were unfaithful, does that make God less faithful?

Paul: No way! May God's word be true even when ours are false. You know that it's written that God will be justified in his word and will conquer in his judgment.

Questioner: But if through our unrighteousness others come to know God, then what? Is God unjust in bringing wrath on us?

Paul: Of course not! That's a human argument! If that were true, how would God judge the world?

Questioner: Okay, but if my lying increases God's glory and shows his truth, then why am I judged as a sinner? And why not say (as people accuse us), "Let us do evil, so that good might come"?

Paul: That wouldn't work. Such statements **deserve** judgment.

Questioner: Then what? Are we who obey the law any better?

Paul: Not at all! We've already said that Jews and Gentiles are both sinners. Remember the scriptures.

Reader 1: No one is righteous, not one. There is no one who understands. No one who seeks God.

Reader 2: All have turned away and become perverse. There is no one who does good. Not even one.

Reader 1: Their throats have been opened as a grave. Their tongues deceive. The venom of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness

Reader 2: Their feet are quick to shed blood. Destruction and hardship are the paths they follow. They do not know the way of peace.

Reader 1: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Paul: And we know that whatever the law says is for those under the law. That way, no one has any real argument and all the world can be judged by God. Because no one will be made righteous before God simply by following the law. The law only serves to make sin known.

But now, without the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—the righteousness the law and the prophets bear witness to. This is the righteousness of God to all who believe because of Jesus' faithfulness. There is no difference among us. All have sinned, and no one can compare to God's glory. But we are made righteous by the gift of God's grace that comes through our faith in Jesus' blood and the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus, who God brought into the world to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. God gave this grace to prove his righteousness right now, that he might be righteous and make righteous those who have faith in Jesus.

Questioner: Then where is there room to boast?

Paul: There is none.

Questioner: But then how are we saved? By obeying the law? By doing good works?

Paul: No. We are saved through the new covenant of faith. We believe that we are made righteous by faith apart from works of the law. For God is the god of both the Jews and

the Gentiles. There is one God who justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised through their faith in him.

Questioner: So does our faith allow us to forget about and ignore the law?

Paul: No way! Our faith allows us to fulfill the law.

Comparison with Modern Translations

Verse 3

If some were *unfaithful* with this message, does that mean their *disobedience* made God *less faithful*?

NLT: True, some of them were *unfaithful*; but just because they were *unfaithful*, does that mean God will be *unfaithful*?

NIV: What if some were *unfaithful*? Will their *unfaithfulness* nullify God's *faithfulness*?

NRSV: What if some were *unfaithful*? Will their *faithlessness* nullify the *faithfulness* of God?

While these verses look familiar, the language used in each makes for a different reading experience. The NLT uses “unfaithful” for each of these words. The consistency here is good, because it shows the parallelism between these words. However, it does not explain what “being unfaithful” means. Both the NIV and the NRSV have the same problem with their translations of “unfaithfulness” and “faithlessness.” This unfaithfulness is in relation to Israel’s disobedience to the covenant of God, so it is accurate to translate it “disobedience” instead of “unfaithfulness.” Furthermore, the NIV and NRSV use words that are not in common use today. Specifically, the word “nullify” is not common outside of legal circles. While that may be accurate language regarding the “legal transaction” theme behind righteousness, it is clearer to say “makes God less faithful.” Still, in a Study Bible, it would be important to point out the legal nature of God’s faithfulness and righteousness.

Verse 4

May God be true even when all humans are liars

NLT: Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true.

NIV: Let God be true, and every human being a liar.

NRSV: Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true,

In this verse, the important distinctions are the chosen verbal mood and the relationship between the two parts of the sentence. The Greek functions as a type of prayer in response to the idea of God's faithfulness being impacted by human disobedience. The idea is not just that God is true even when humans are liars, but the request that he remain true as scriptures say—an idea that is preserved in every translation except the NLT. Additionally, the relationship between the two parts of the sentences is that of a concession and contraexpectation. Human beings are liars, but God is still true to his word. Thus, there needs to be some connector of “although” or “even though” or “even if”. The only two translations that fit both of these criteria are the NRSV and the translation proposed in this project. However, the word order of the NRSV is less clear and concise than the proposed translation.

Verse 8

These statements deserve judgment.

NLT: Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

NIV: Their condemnation is just!

NRSV: Their condemnation is deserved!

This verse is very ambiguous, even in the Greek text. The primary problem with the NIV and NRSV translations is that they are still vague and do not specify whether the “just condemnation” is the people who are slandering or the idea being suggested. The NLT does pick a side, but it is not the same as the one chosen in this translation. The

section leading up to this statement is discussing multiple inadequate views on sin and our relationship to God. Thus, it only makes sense that Paul would state that the ideas deserve judgement. While the immediate context may refer to the slanderers, it does not seem to make sense with the rest of the chapter that Paul would pause to condemn his opponents. Rather, he would clarify once again that the idea that we should do evil so that good might come is completely false.

Verse 19

So that no one can say anything and all the world be judged by God.

NLT: For its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.

NIV: So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

NRSV: So that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

In this verse, the Greek reads “that every mouth may cease.” This phrase is interesting because it is unclear in its context. According to Paul, the law was given to the Jews for this purpose. However, in that context, the purpose of the mouths being silenced is not given. The NIV and NRSV do not address this issue, but the NLT might go a bit too far in defining it. While the idea does seem to be that no one would have any excuses, such a phrase interrupts the flow of the text and makes the sentence confusing. In this case, a simpler translation is required, stating that no one would be able to say anything and instead the world would be judged.

Verse 22

The righteousness of God that comes to all who believe because of Jesus’ faithfulness.

NLT: We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

NIV: This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

NRSV The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Here, the issue is the genitive construction “faith of Jesus” and the question of clear sentence structure in relation to the phrase “to all who believe.” The genitive “faith of Jesus” has traditionally been translated “faith in Jesus,” as the NLT, NIV, and NRSV all render it. However, in the context “Jesus’ faithfulness” makes more sense. The context is that God sent Jesus as a sacrifice and it is through his faithfulness in completing this task that righteousness is offered to those who believe. Furthermore, it is necessary to put the phrase “to/for all who believe” in a place where it is clear that it is righteousness given to all who believe. In this way, the clearest would be the NLT; however, this translation is slightly too free, adding a second sentence based on a prepositional phrase. Thus, the placement of “to all who believe” before “because of Jesus’ faithfulness” specifies who receives righteousness, keeping clear that this phrase goes with the coming of righteousness, not faith in Jesus.

Verse 27

Is it through obeying the law? By doing good works? No, but through faith.

NLT: For our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith.

NIV: Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith.

NRSV: By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith

Here, the translation “the law of faith” is confusing, as Paul has just stated that it is not through the law. While the Greek text does use the phrase “law of faith,” the idea is more of the covenant of faith. Still, this language has the potential to be confusing, so it can be shortened to “through faith.” While the NLT does specify this, it does not preserve the rhetorical questions posed in the first part of the verse, which are necessary for the flow of the argument. The proposed translation preserves these questions in parallelism while still being clear that the point is righteousness comes through faith only.

Verse 31

Therefore, do we forget about the law because of faith? No way! Instead, we fulfill the law.

NLT: Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law?

Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

NIV: Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

NRSV: Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

In this verse, the primary question is what “upholding the law” truly means. In the context of this verse, the idea is that through faith, the law is fulfilled. Since neither the NIV nor the NRSV specifies this, both translations are unclear. Similarly, the NLT has the potential to be wordy and thus the point is not as clear and concise as it could be. The proposed translation, on the other hand, clarifies both what “upholding the law” is and what “nullifying” or “overthrowing” the law would be. It is clear that we do not merely forget about the law because of forgiveness through faith, but that faith allows Christians to fulfill the true purpose of the law—the final and most important point in this chapter.

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