

Our Statement of Faith on the Preservation of God's Word

(The Life B-P Church Board of Elders, 8th November 2005)

Overview:

- We hold to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible in the original texts (autographs) which are perfect in every way.
- We uphold the use of the KJV Bible, which is the best English translation of the Scriptures made by godly translators from the best Greek and Hebrew texts, which are the closest to the original texts.
- Our doctrinal position is expressed in our Church Constitution, Doctrinal Positional Statement and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Much has been said, rightly or wrongly, by many people concerning our position on the preservation of Scripture. Contrary to unfounded allegations and baseless claims, we hold to an INERRANT and INFALLIBLE Bible and the FULL preservation of God's holy Word. According to G.I. Williamson,

Strictly speaking there is only one Bible. We commonly, but incorrectly speak as though there were many. We speak of "the Protestant Bible" and "Roman Catholic Bible." We speak of "the King James Bible" and "the New Bible". The truth is that there are many versions (or translations) of the Bible. But there is only one Bible. It is that body of words which were written down in ink upon parchments or vellum by those persons whom the Holy Spirit employed as instruments through which to impart His revealed truth.

The only Bible which is properly in view when we speak of "The Bible" is this original text deposited in the autographa of the inspired writers. This divine text was originally contained in the written form in those documents (pieces of materials with Hebrew and Greek letters, words, and sentences inscribed on them). This text, was in its entirety and in every least part thereof, absolutely infallible and perfect in every way

We see that God determined that early copies of the original would be made. True, each erred in a slight degree, but they did not err in the same points..... And so, while the true (or perfect) original text would not be entirely reproduced in a single copy, yet it would not be lost or inaccessible because by the majority testimony of several copies, error would always be witnessed against. The true text would be perfectly preserved within the body of witnesses.(G.I. Williamson, The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes, pp14-17, emphasis added).

We will continue to uphold the use of the KJV Bible, which is the best English translation of the Scriptures made by godly translators from the best Greek and Hebrew texts. Our doctrinal position with regards to the Word of God and the KJV Bible is reproduced below:-

"We believe in the divine, verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life;" (Article 4.2.1, Constitution Of The Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, emphasis added).

"We do believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that were used for the King James Version of the English Bible (KJV) were providentially preserved by God and are therefore closest to the original autographs of the Bible." (In the Golden Jubilee magazine, October 2000, 50 Years Building His Kingdom, p.64, emphasis added).

“The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chp I, Art 8, emphasis added).

This view of Scripture, which is also shared by various B-P Churches, has always been understood all these years to mean that the original writings of the Scriptures (called the Autographs) were given by inspiration of God and have been providentially preserved for us. Since our KJV Bible was translated from the texts that are closest to the original, and is the best English translation of these texts, we have no doubt that it is the very Word of God, and is fully reliable. This position that we have been holding all this time is the same position held by the Westminster divines, the Reformers, the KJV Translators, and even Dean John Burgon who was the champion of the Textus Receptus in the 19th Century against Westcott and Hort.

Let us be clear that the "(100%) Perfect Bible" Debate is NOT about the original writings (or the autographs) of the biblical writers (such as Moses, Peter or Paul). These original writings, written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, are directly inspired of God (verbal and plenary). It is, therefore, inerrant, infallible (and obviously perfect). And we believe that God has fully preserved His Word in the body of manuscripts (or texts or copies) after the original autographs were lost.

Rather, the "(100%) Perfect Bible" debate is all about the Hebrew and Greek texts (or copies) immediately underlying the KJV of the English Bible. We do not ascribe perfection to them (i.e. 100% exact replica of the autographs) or say that they are THE preserved texts to the exclusion of other manuscripts within the family of Received Texts. But we believe that they were providentially preserved by God and therefore closest to the original autographs.

However, for the sake of brotherly love and harmony, we do not want to discriminate against any persons who, on grounds of their own personal conviction, would choose to believe that the texts or copies underlying the KJV are an exact replica of the original autographs. We believe "there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. And in all these, we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other." (Article 5.5, Constitution of the Life Bible-Presbyterian Church).

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