

# Principles of Faithful Bible Translation

by John Nelson Darby

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*The Elberfeld Version aims to present a faithful and exact rendering of the Word of God, making it accessible to the unlearned and preserving the original meaning and message.*

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "Divine Revelation", "Faithful Translation"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the critical importance of faithful Bible translation as a means to understand God's divine will, especially in the last days. He acknowledges the challenges faced by translators in conveying the richness of the original Greek text while ensuring accessibility for the unlearned. Darby asserts that while no translation can be perfect, the goal is to provide a clear and faithful rendering of Scripture that honors God's Word. He believes that the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in revealing the deeper meanings of Scripture, which can be lost in less precise translations. Ultimately, Darby encourages a commitment to accuracy in translation to help readers grasp the infinite wisdom of God as expressed in the Scriptures.

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## Transcript

(Extract from the Introduction to J N Darby's German translation of the New Testament, known as the Elberfeld version, dated 1855 - translated from the German by A. Hardy Estam of Dorchester MA, now with the Lord. Supplied by R Gorgas.)

The Holy Spirit Himself draws our attention to the need of an understanding of the divine will, as a means of our safety in the last days; and the esteem for the Holy Scriptures in these last days is a proof that God is being honoured. The efforts of the enemy, too, are mainly directed against His Word. While the scholar can examine it in the original text, the way for it is closed to the unlearned and to the one who does not know the language of the original text. It was therefore our endeavour and our purpose to come to the aid of the latter and to present to them, with little expense, an as faithful and exact rendering of the Word of God, in their own language, as possible.

Any translation will, indeed, be more or less imperfect, and how great the difficulties are to transfer the expressions of a language, especially those of the rich Greek language, into another language, will only those recognize who have attempted to execute a translation.

We can claim, however, with a good conscience that we have worked with all care in order to render the Word of God as faithfully as possible, and we entertain the hope that even the unskilled reader will find our translation simple and understandable.

It is certainly possible that we could have clothed some passage into a more beautiful German; only, without being slaves of the words, the thought always guided us that an as faithful rendering of the original text as possible outweighed any other consideration, so much the more as we believe with a perfect conviction in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures as the revelation of the infinite wisdom of God and the expression of His gracious character in Christ Jesus.

Seeing, however, that no one is able to grasp the whole extent of this revelation and that there is often a meaning hidden within a sentence that transcends the comprehension of the translator, which is lost in a free translation, but could be discovered in a more exact one through a deeper instruction of the Holy Spirit, it is thus an imperative necessity to reproduce the Word of the original text as it were in a mirror.

It goes without saying that the limit of this exactness cannot be drawn so closely that the sentence which has been translated into another language would thereby lose all intelligibility and consequently remain meaningless.

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