Translations of the Bible
• Background
• The sixty-six books of the Bible we use today (“Protestant Bible”) were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek
• **The O.T.** – most books written in Hebrew, Daniel and two places in Ezra used Aramaic

• **The N.T.** – all written in Greek
Translation

• A translation is simply the rendering of the original biblical text (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into a different language.
• Since most people in America do not read the original languages of the Bible, we need a good English translation or perhaps several good English translations.
• To read a good translation is not a bad thing – if we want to know what the Scriptures teach we have to read it in our own language.
• Methods of translation
But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God...
Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
There are two basic approaches to translating the Bible:

- **Formal Equivalence**
- **Dynamic Equivalence**
1. Formal equivalence or Literal translation

• “This method of translation involves translating the Greek text word for word into the English language.”

• This method assumes the word is the basic unit of meaning.
Examples of this kind of translation are:

- **KJV** (1611 with many revisions)
- Revised Version or English Revised Version (late 1800’s) (Not to be confused with the RSV)
• American Standard Version (1901)

• “...Also the New American Standard Bible to a certain extent.” (Wayne Jackson)
• These are the most useful Bibles for those who wish to be as close to the original text as possible, but who read only English
2. Dynamic Equivalence

- In the 1950’s a new method of translation was developed by Eugene Nida
- “Nida said that translators should focus upon the sentence as the basic unit of meaning instead of the word.” (Kevin Cauley)
3 Steps of this method:

1. You must read the original language
2. Then translate the original word for word
3. “You must then translate the resulting sentence into a ‘meaningful’ English sentence.” (Cauley)
• This last step is where so many disagree with this translation method.

• The last step puts the translators interpretation of what he thinks the basic translation means into the text.
• Examples of this method of translation are:
  • New International Version (NIV)
  • Easy To Read Version (ERV)
  • Todays New International Version (TNIV)
• New Living Translation – NLT
• Good News Bible (GBN) – formerly called Todays English Version (TEV)
Paraphrase ("free translation")

• These are not true translations
Paraphrases

• The Living Bible Paraphrased
• The Message
Formal equivalence (Literal) Dynamic E. (Free)

ASV, KJV/NKJV, NASB

RSV, NIV

Message - LB

LB = Living Bible Paraphrased
Some brethren recommend you choose a literal version or versions for basic study Bible, and then use the other translations to check out the differences – especially in difficult passages.
• Translation Difficulties
• It is impossible to have an absolutely literal word-for-word translation:

• A. The word order of the Greek N.T. is different from English
1 Cor. 16:8-9 as read literally in the Greek

• I shall remain but in Ephesus until the Pentecost. Door for to me has been opened great and effective and opponents many
1 Cor. 16:8-9 - KJV

• But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.
1 Cor. 16:8-9 - ASV

• But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.
B. Sometimes the literal translation of a Greek word would make no sense to an English reader
Acts 17:18 - KJV

- Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.
The word babbler was translated from the Greek word Spermologos which literally means – “A seed-picker” (Young’s Concordance)
Acts 17:18

• And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this seed-picker say? others, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.
In our text in Acts 17:18 the word is best rendered, “babbler, gossiper,” since seed-picker does not reveal the actual meaning of their sarcastic remark.
c. It is not always possible to translate the same Greek word uniformly or the same way in all of the verses it may appear in.
Example:

• The Greek word *splanchnon* means “entrails” or “intestines”
Acts 1:18

• Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his (splanchnon) bowels gushed out.
The Greeks also used the word *splanchnon* to refer to the emotions.
Phil. 1:8

• “For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the **bowels** of Jesus Christ.” (KJV)

• “For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the **tender mercies** of Christ Jesus.” (ASV)
Phil. 1:8

• “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” (NKJV)
“A good translation, therefore, will strive for balance, staying as close to the original text as possible while conveying clearness of meaning to the reader.” Wayne Jackson