

Sunday, May 14, 2017— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 56 Concluding Thoughts on Preservation

Introduction

- This morning we are going to conclude our nine month study of the doctrine/promise of preservation. In order to accomplish this task I would like to review the highlights of our study together as well as offer some concluding thoughts before we take a break for the summer.
- Please note that any [bracketed] text was added by me.

Summative Thoughts on Preservation

- Our job as believers is not to **reconstruct the text** as though it has been lost. Rather our job is to allow the scriptures to be our guide in identifying the text God has preserved from generation to generation.
- In Lesson 2, I set forth the following list of Biblical presuppositions that would govern this study.
 - God exists. (Psalm 14:1)
 - God has magnified His word above His own name. (Psalms 138:2)
 - God's word is eternally settled in heaven. (Psalms 119:89)
 - God, through the process of inspiration, has communicated His word to mankind. (II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21)
 - God's words were written down so that they could be made eternally available to men. (Isaiah 30:8 and I Peter 1:23)
 - God promised to preserve that which He inspired. (Psalms 12:6-7)
- The entire second term of this course has been about establishing the validity of the sixth presupposition that "God promised to preserve that which He inspired." In order to accomplish this task we considered the following:
 - *Introduction* to Preservation (Lessons 28-29)
 - *Views* of Preservation (Lesson 30)
 - *Promise* of Preservation (Lessons 31-39)
 - *Importance* of Preservation (Lesson 40)
 - *Extent* of Preservation (Lessons 41-46)

- *Method* of Preservation (Lesson 47)
- *Process* of Preservation (Lessons 48-56)
- The following thoughts regarding why preservation matters are taken from Dr. Jim Taylor's 2016 book *In Defense of the Textus Receptus: God's Preserved Word to Every Generation*.

- "If all we had were the principles of inspiration, we would not have enough information to make a sound choice concerning the Greek (or Hebrew for that matter) texts. Thankfully, the doctrine of inspiration does not stand alone for it has as its companion several other important and relevant truths by which we can make logical, biblically based choices concerning which text is to be preferred above others. Depending on your understanding and application of these two important doctrines, you will be led to definite conclusions concerning the Greek and Hebrew texts.

The whole issue concerning Bible texts, and by extension, translations, hinges on the doctrine of preservation. Either God preserved his word or he did not. If he did not, then it does not matter which textual family you prefer and we cannot be sure if we have the uncorrupted Word of God. If he did not, then God did not keep his promises to preserve his word.

But since we believe that God **most certainly did** preserve his word, then we must now define what exactly we mean by preservation. Did God preserve the exact words that he gave? Or did he merely preserve the ideas or main gist of what he gave? Since we have already clearly stated our belief in verbal-plenary inspiration, we can logically assume that God would preserve his exact words. [I agree with Taylor that God did preserve His words not merely the idea or the gist. As we have seen throughout this term this did not mean "verbatim identity" of wording.] Beyond this, there is ample Scriptural evidence pointing to this very fact!

So how we define "preservation" will determine, in a large part, how we will respond to the subject of textual criticism. This will in turn define our position on the texts themselves which will then also greatly affect how we view translations.

The subject of textual criticism itself is really nothing more than a determination of "if" or "how" to apply the principles of preservation to the extant manuscripts. This is why it is so crucial to have a biblical understanding of this doctrine." (Taylor, 43)

- In the next section Dr. Taylor offers a very common sense approach to why a "faith-based approach" (fideistic approach) is a necessary Biblical prerequisite to textual criticism.
 - "Many, if not most, modern textual critics have approached the issue of textual criticism from a purely historical or academic perspective. This makes the foundation of their

decisions either personal education or logic. Therefore, many have come to conclusions which may appear to be rational or academically sound, but are not really balanced because, in order to correctly approach any issue concerning the word of God, we must begin with the foundation of faith—what we believe about what the Bible says concerning itself. If there is a contradiction between our belief and the scriptures, then we are to conclude that the biblical principles are right and all other opinions are wrong. Biblical principles always take precedence over human logic and understanding.

Why must this be our approach? This **MUST** be our approach because the Bible is not like any other book. It claims to be the message from God and therefore is a book to be approached from the aspect of faith. It saddens me to see how some Bible teachers ridicule others for taking a faith-based approach to the textual issue. In one case, a certain textual critic who even supports the Textus Receptus from a logical and academic standpoint somewhat ridicules another because his approach is faith-based. But in reality, a faith-based approach does not negate the other. Provided that the academic and logical approach does not violate scripture, it is a valid argument and should be used in stating our case. However, it cannot be the main argument.

Any approach that either rules out or contradicts a faith-based approach to the textual issue must be rejected on the grounds that it is humanistic. . . Let's stop and think about this for moment. Our faith is the whole reason why we discuss the manuscripts at all! If the Bible were simply an ancient book of stories and anecdotes, then word-for-word transmission would cease to be so important.

If the Bible is just another book, then who really cares whether there are differences? Who cares if something was added or something was mistakenly edited out as long as the general ideas of the writer is kept intact? What makes one man's opinions any better than another man's opinions? But if the Bible is truly from God, then it really matters! And we better make sure we have it right!

Much of the disagreement today, tends to be more semantic than concrete. Where two people can both agree in the end result, how they arrived at their conclusions could be, and in many cases are, very different. For example, some refer to the King James Version as "the inspired Word of God," while others would rather say "The Preserved Word of God." Others would simply say that the King James is a faithful and accurate translation. Then there are yet others who would argue that all three statements are simultaneously true.

There are also many different arguments concerning the nature of preservation. Does God preserve his word? Does God preserve his Word in only one manuscript? Does God preserve every word or just the main ideas? Does preservation demand accessibility to what God has given? These questions, and many others boggle our minds day-in and day-out! But these questions have been answered by God himself in his Word.

Additionally, theologians and scholarly men have written abundantly (especially in recent years) upon this very issue.

But we do not follow Dr. So-and-So. We must base our beliefs concerning God's Word on the Word itself. This is a faith-based approach. In the course of this book, history and science will be used to support our conclusions. But ultimately, these are merely supporting evidences that what the Bible says about itself is true. So it all comes down to an issue of faith. Do we believe that God can do and did do what he promised? As we shall see, God has amply promised to preserve his Word and clearly did just that!

As we speak of preservation, what we are really speaking of is the divine safeguarding of the manuscripts, and manuscript evidence. As we study preservation, we are unavoidably drawn into a discussion of the thousands of extant documents, where they came from, who wrote them, how old they are, how readable or trustworthy they are, and so on.

And if you will think about it for a few minutes, the answers to many of these questions will ultimately fall upon decisions of "textual critics." Most of us don't know enough about history, geography, or biblical languages to enter into a discussion of such magnitude. Does this mean my faith in God's Word must now rest in the hands of other men? No, because the promises of preservation are placed in the hands of all men to believe. God keeps his promises. All we need to determine is exactly what God promised, to what does his promise apply, and whether or not we are willing to believe Him!

Bible preservation refers to the biblical doctrine and historical process by which God has kept his word pure from corruption after he gave it by inspiration to man. Therefore, if we are to truly understand the extent of preservation, we must also consider doctrinal and historical principles." (Taylor, 43-45)

Summative Observations Regarding Preservation

- Whatever one believes about preservation must take into account the following FACTS:
 - Fact 1—the original autographs are not extant i.e., they no longer exist.
 - Fact 2—no two Greek manuscripts are exactly the same.
 - Fact 3—no two printed editions of the Greek New Testament are exactly the same.
 - Fact 4—no two editions of the King James Bible are exactly the same.
 - Fact 5—the King James differs from modern versions.
 - Fact 6—no two modern versions read exactly the same.

- Summary Statement:
 - “If the preservation of the Word of God depends upon **exact** preservation of the words of the original documents, then the situation is dire. No two manuscripts contain exactly the same words. No two editions of the Masoretic Text contain exactly the same words. No two editions of the Textus Receptus contain exactly the same words. No two modifications of the King James Version contain exactly the same words and the Bible nowhere tells us which edition, if any, does contain the exact words of the originals. These are not speculations, these are plain facts.” (Bauder, 155)
- Given the Biblical data as well as the historical and textual FACTS, the following points are inescapable:
 - God promised to preserve His word.
 - Psalms 12:6-7; 105:5; 119:89, 111, 152, 160; Isaiah 30:8; 40:8; Matthew 24:35; I Peter 1:23-25
 - God did not see fit to preserve His word by preserving the original autographs.
 - This is self-evident because the originals no longer exist.
 - God did not supernaturally over-take the pen of every scribe, copyist, or typesetter who ever handled the text to ensure that no differences of any kind entered the text.
 - Differences exist at every level of this discussion.
 - If the standard for preservation is “plenary,” “pristine,” or “verbatim” identity why did God not just preserve the originals and thereby remove all doubt.
 - The reason is that God wants people to walk by faith in their view of the Biblical text.
- I believe in “perfect preservation” if, by perfect, one means the existence of a pure text **that does not report information about God, His nature or character, His doctrine, His dispensational dealings with mankind, history, archeology, or science that is FALSE. In short, God’s promise to preserve His word assures the existence of a text that has not been altered in its “character” or “doctrinal content” despite not being preserved in a state of “verbatim identity.”**
- Once again, our job as believers is not to **reconstruct the text** as though it has been lost. Rather our job is to allow the scriptures to be our guide in identifying the text God has preserved from generation to generation.

- The following scriptural principles will assist the believer in identifying the preserved text:
 - *Multiplicity of Copies*—God’s design was to preserve His word in a multiplicity of accurate reliable copies that were just as authoritative as the originals. Therefore, we ought to be able to observe in history a collection of manuscripts that are plenteous and in substantive agreement with each other regarding doctrinal content despite not possessing “verbatim” wording.
 - *Available/Accessible*—the Preserved Text would not only exist in a multiplicity of copies but these copies would be available to God’s people to possess, study, believe, and preach from. They would not be hidden under a rock, in the sand, or in an inaccessible library.
 - *In Use*—a third Biblical mark of the Preserved Text would be use by God’s people for generations. God’s word was preserved through the dynamic of people handling it, not in one copy sitting on a bookshelf for 500 or 1000 years. That is not the way God preserves His word. He preserves His word by it being in the hands of Bible believing people, and those people are charged with the responsibility to execute God’s purpose.
- When these three Biblical principles are applied to the historical and textual FACTS, they point toward the *Textus Receptus (TR)*, the text of the Protestant Reformation, as being the printed form of the Preserved Text. The *TR* is supported by the vast majority of extant Greek manuscripts (*multiplicity of copies*). Moreover, it represents a text that was clearly available, assessable, and in use by Bible believing people throughout the history of the dispensation of grace.
- In stark contrast the Critical Text supporting Modern Versions fails on all three counts to pass the tests of scripture: 1) it has few manuscript witnesses that substantively disagree with each other, 2) its principle manuscripts were not accessible or available to believers throughout the dispensation of grace, and 3) given their lack of availability, they certainly were not used by Bible believing people during the church age.
- “Now, the crux of the matter is based upon the premise that God has divinely preserved every word that he gave. If we do not believe this, then any discussion concerning the two texts becomes a matter of personal preference based upon man’s intellect or will. But since we firmly believe that God has preserved, not just the basic truths, not just the general ideas, not just the basic thoughts, but even the very words themselves, we must conclude that one text or the other has been corrupted.” (Taylor, 56)

Implications of Preservation

- Consider the following implications of preservation outlined by Dr. Taylor:
 - “. . . along with the doctrine of inspiration, the doctrine of preservation becomes an important key to choosing the right text. It is unfortunate that so many good people

misunderstand the doctrine of preservation. And because of this, the terms “preservation,” “preserved,” etc. are often misapplied or simply misused. It is not uncommon to hear good men speak of translations being “preserved.” But in a strict biblical sense, preservation only applies to what God has given by inspiration, and not what has been accomplished by translation. The past 2,000 years have seen many translations come and go—some translations were good, some not so good. But the fact is, none of them were preserved.

Some would argue that the King James Version is over 400 years old so it **MUST** be preserved. I would simply make two observations on this thought. First, the fact that the King James Version is over 400 years old is a testimony to its beauty, accuracy, and influence. No one can take away from that. God’s people would not have used it for so long if they felt it was not trustworthy. So its age becomes a great witness to its superiority as a translation. . .

But let’s not lose sight of the fact that languages are “containers” of that which has been eternally settled in heaven. It does not matter whether the “container” is in the form of a faithful translation, or the original languages themselves—the truth has not lost its identity or power in any way. Insofar as a translation is a faithful and accurate representation of the exact message God gave, it can be called God’s inspired and preserved word.

Yet we must understand that as we make this statement, we are not referring to the containers themselves but to the truth of God within the containers, as revealed to man. What we are discussing is how we choose the container. Or, to put it another way, we are discussing the condition of the container and whether or not it has effectively preserved its contents (the truth) [Daniel 10:21 affirms this notation. The scriptures by definition do not report information that is false.]. Personally, I want to drink my spiritual drink from the container that has **ALL** the truth and **ONLY** the truth. Thus, I stand upon the *Textus Receptus*, and by extension of its faithfulness and accuracy to the *Textus Receptus*, the King James Version.

[Recall from Lesson 40 the words of Louis Gaussen’s seminal 1840 work *Theopneustia (The Divine Inspiration of the Bible)* about the word being incarnated in human language through inspiration and translation changing its dress.].

Some would argue that the King James Version has not “come and gone” like so many other translations, which proves it has been inspired or preserved. Although this is true, we should at least be honest enough to admit that if Jesus tarries his coming, English like the Greek language spoken by the whole Roman Empire in the first century could become a dead language. . .

[Therefore] Let’s be reminded of what the biblical definition of preservation is. We define preservation as the act of God whereby He protects His text from any possible

corruption from its very inception forevermore. . . So when we speak of preservation, we are not referring to a translation but to the Greek and Hebrew texts.

[Taylor seems to make contradictory statements in this section of his book. On the one hand he states, “preservation only applies to what God has given by inspiration, and not what has been accomplished by translation.” Later he writes, “insofar as a translation is a faithful and accurate representation of the exact message God gave, it can be called God’s inspired and preserved word.” Then he says, “when we speak of preservation, we are not referring to a translation but to the Greek and Hebrew texts.” While I appreciate Taylor very much for his evenhanded tone, these comments are not helpful and are confusing. I believe that the Process of Preservation includes both original language texts as well as translations thereof. This is the only way that access to God’s word can be assured to every generation. Given the fact that early translations are vital to the Textus Receptus position, it seems strange that Dr. Taylor would make seemingly contradictory statements on this matter.]

Biblically, we must limit preservation in the strictest sense to the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts because those were the languages and words that God chose to deliver his message to man. As we apply the doctrine of preservation to the Greek manuscripts, several questions must logically and biblically be answered. Namely, “if a text had fallen out of use, does it still meet the criteria of “preservation?” Can we reasonably claim to have the pure Word of God if we do not know what the originals looked like? These questions and others should be answered.

As we seek to keep a balanced view, we should objectively examine both the Textus Receptus and the Critical Text with the same criteria.” (Taylor, 57-59)

- In the next term we will turn our attention to these considerations.

Works Cited

Bauder, Kevin T. “An Appeal to Scripture” in *One Bible Only? Examining the Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001.

Taylor, Jim. *In Defense of the Textus Receptus*. Cleveland, GA: Old Path Publications, 2016.