



*February 18, 2024*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

*News:*

Wednesday Evening Classes at 6:30

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### **Acts 3:1–9 ~**

“Silver and Gold”

1) The less Christians and the church need to rely on Christ for daily necessities, the less we see His miraculous provision...

The “ninth hour,” is a normal time of prayer for Jews.

2) Legalistic religiosity produces other habits, patterns, traditions, and practices that are more magical superstition than sensible worship...

Peter and John were once again together.

3) We must love all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we will naturally gravitate towards the people who fit us better relationally...

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Every day this lame man was placed at the gate in order to beg for charity.

4) Peter didn't simply decide that it was time to help this man.

The magnitude of the thing.

The public nature of the thing.

The remarkable confidence of Peter.

The way God reveals what He's going to do.

What hinders that?

Peter forcefully said to the man, "Look at us!"

5) Bible translation philosophy...

Money.

6) Is poverty the thing?

"Love of money."

The resistance to thinking about God in more concrete terms...

Do your job and don't worry about how everyone else is doing their job...

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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# Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



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# Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Acts 3:1–9, 1Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2And a man who had been unable to walk from birth was being carried, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order for him to beg for charitable gifts from those entering the temple grounds. 3When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple grounds, he began asking to receive a charitable gift. 4But Peter, along with John, looked at him intently and said, “Look at us!” 5And he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6But Peter said, “I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!” 7And

grasping him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9And all the people saw him walking and praising God;”

Pretty cool stuff... There's a legend that in about 1250 A.D. Pope Innocent IV met with the young nobleman Thomas Aquinas in order to appoint him Abbot of Monte Cassino.



During their time together the Pope showed Thomas the treasury and said to him, “Thomas, as you can see, the church can no longer say, ‘Silver and gold have I

none.” To which Thomas said, “and neither can the church say to the lame man, ‘Rise up and walk.’”

1) There’s something to be said about that legendary exchange. It seems axiomatic that the less Christians and the church need to rely on Christ for daily necessities, the less we see His miraculous provision.

That makes sense. It’s very difficult for a person to see God’s hand in providing their next meal, as an example, when the cupboards, pantry, fridge, freezer, wallet, purse, bank account, and 401k are all full. Yet, what I want to tell you is that it is a perspective issue, not a reality issue.

For us, the recognition of God’s providence must be a little more abstract and a little more reasoned and a little more intentional. In other words, we need to make a perspective adjustment. Because the reality is that God’s supernatural, miraculous provision in our case, is actually far more abundant, than the case of Him providing just a single meal to a hungry person.



This is precisely why saying “Grace” when you are about to eat something is an excellent habit. It’s a reminder that while obtaining the food in that instance, was never in doubt considering your resources, the resources themselves are the supernatural miraculous and overabundant gift from God.

If you don’t get that, you are not a student of history. In our society we tell ourselves that we have such abundance because we are hard workers, smart investors, careful budgeters, and all-around superior people. It’s a pompous delusion. Nearly everyone in human history has barely scraped by living hand-to-mouth and the vast majority of them were just as

superior, just as careful, just as smart, and far harder working than any of us.



I could give examples all morning long. Let's take Poland on August 31, 1939. Everything was fine. Poles went about their business with confidence in their future. The next day, the Germans invaded without warning, and quickly seized the entire country. In short order, nearly 6 million Polish people, half of them Jews, were brutally murdered by the Nazis.

The Poles who survived lost everything overnight and suffered through years of German occupation only to be rescued by Russia and then forced into decades of Soviet occupation. "In the blink of an eye," everything



can change, so thank God for what you have every day.



The “ninth hour,” is 3:00 pm and it was a normal time of prayer for Jews back then, as it is today. Jews are supposed to pray three times daily, in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.

2) You probably know that Muslims are supposed to pray 5 times per day, but did you know that Christians were taught to pray 7 times a day? Hippolytus in about 200 A.D., wrote that Christians should pray every 3 hours from rising at 6 am until going to bed at 9 pm (that’s only 6 times), so you need to wake up at

midnight to pray again (no worries, you can skip the 3 am slot).

It was a practice based on misunderstanding Psalm 119:164, where King David wrote, “Seven times a day I praise thee, for thy righteous ordinances.” Seven in that context means “always,” or “constantly,” or “fully.” The actual number of times that a Christian should pray daily is, as David knew, and as Paul declared in I Thessalonians 5:17, “without ceasing.”



For the Jews and really for all the various religions and sects that pray at set times their required prayers are mostly rote, repetitive, recitations of formulaic prayers, much like the Roman Catholic prayers connected with

the Rosary. This is the little prince Jesus with His mother the Queen of Heaven holding out a Rosary – it's one "Our Father" for every 10 "Hail Mary" recitations.

Such legalistic religiosity produces other habits, patterns, traditions, and practices that are more magical superstition than sensible worship. Catholic Rosaries that have touched the Preparation Stone in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher have more power in connecting to God, Muslims must pray facing Mecca in order to be better heard, the Jews, similarly, are to face the Temple Mount when they pray, but what was best was to face east while in the Temple. Today the best that a Jew can do is to face east at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount (as in the first picture today). These things are thought to make a person's prayers harder for God to ignore.



It happens in our own church and other churches like ours where people in very dire circumstances want the pastor to pray for them as though His prayers carry more weight with. Trust me, they don't. If I had the chance to be prayed for by an amazing pastor or by my friends, I'd choose my friends. The idea that a pastor's prayers have more juice than the prayers of others is pure superstition. It is a reversion to the universal human goal, albeit dressed up with Christian slant, of trying to get your will done in Heaven, rather than yielding to God's Will done on earth.

Please remember that prayer is for getting you onboard with what God is doing, not getting God onboard with what you want done.



Besides 3 pm being a normal time of prayer, we know from historical and archeological sources that 2,000 years ago 3 pm was the specific time when the priests would offer the second תָּמִיד (tä-mēd) or burnt offering sacrifice of the day.

The first sacrifice came at daybreak and so this was a far easier time to attend a sacrifice. It was a big deal and so every day at that time the Temple courts would be packed with observant Jews, which provided an

excellent opportunity for Jewish Christians to interact in an evangelistic fashion with them.

Very specifically, Luke uses language indicating that Peter and John were likely participating in prayer, but not in the sacrifice itself. They knew the final sacrifice had already been made. The word choice makes their level of involvement clear. It would have been very easy and very natural to describe them as participating in the whole proceeding. Luke did not do that. He was careful to say that they were there to pray, and we can surmise that they wanted to do that there at that crowded time of day to look for ministry opportunities. They put themselves in a target rich environment.

It was smart. It would be like a Mormon who was newly converted to Christianity going back to her former ward (church) during the Sacrament Service (church service) and while not participating directly in the cultic ritual, being present and actually praying, in hopes of sharing the Gospel with someone willing to listen.

Anyway, Peter and John were once again together and were going up to the Temple at three in the afternoon.

ΣΙΜΩΝ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΔΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟ  
 ΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΤΟΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΜΟΤΕΡΟΙΣ

Papyrus 72, c. 250 A.D. (Simon Peter, slave and Apostle of Jesus Christ to the same as our...)

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ  
 ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ  
 ΕΝ ΑΡΧΗ ΗΝ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣΤΕΤΗ  
 ΜΕΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΡΧΗΝ

Papyrus 75, c. 175 A.D. (Good News according to John, in beginning was the Word and the Word was with...)

So, just a quick word about their relationship. It is almost certain that Peter was the oldest of the Apostles and that John was the youngest. There was likely ten years between them, but they had worked closely together for a long time, first as fishermen and then as Apostles.

Based on the evidence, John was probably a very likeable guy who was easy to have around. Peter was probably the opposite of that. For John, Peter would have been a bit of a mentor and a cool big brother figure and for Peter, John would have been effortless. Their relationship worked for both of them.



3) That's kind of important. In Christianity we must love all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we will naturally gravitate towards the people who fit us better relationally. It's perfectly acceptable to enjoy the company of some people over the company of other people. That's nothing to feel guilty about as long as we are also careful not to make anyone else feel unloved.

It can be a tricky balancing act. My advice is to recharge by chilling with the people who make you more comfortable and then go expend some of your energy in purposely trying to enjoy the company of those whom you find more challenging. A secret aid is



related to the Florence Nightingale Effect... If you pray very intentionally and very specifically and very earnestly for such people, your attitude about them will change, and you will find it easier to enjoy their company.



This is the southwest cornerstone where the trumpeter would blow the shofar as a call to worship. The way this is told we can assume that going up to the Temple courts had become standard practice for those two Apostles and probably for many of the, now thousands, of Christians living in the city. Every day, day after day, Holy Spirit filled Christian Apostles and other disciples, most of whom knew Jesus personally, passed through that particular gate into the Temple area for prayer and

fellowship together as well as for teaching and ministering opportunities to others.

The beggar was unable to walk from birth. Luke uses medical language in describing the man's condition. That doesn't prove that the author was a medical doctor, but it does prove that he was well educated, had an extensive vocabulary that included medical terms, and had an interest in the medical details of the man's case. Sounds sort of like a physician to me.

Every day this lame, probably paraplegic, man was placed at the gate in order to beg for charity. People passing by were already in a self-sacrificing sort of mood and were far more likely to be generous in that scenario than say, when they were at the local market complaining about the rising cost of groceries.



4) My point in belaboring this background information is that Peter and John, as well as hundreds, perhaps even thousands of Jesus' followers had passed by that crippled dude. Over and over and over again, for days, likely weeks, maybe months, vibrant, enthusiastic, Spirit-filled, first-generation Christians had passed by that particular guy and heard him beg for help and as far as we know, had never once helped him.

Our problem is that we read about miracles in the Bible and particularly in the Book of Acts and we assume that dramatic supernatural miracles were happening all the time. Worse than that, many people assume that Christians back then wielded the Holy Spirit like a

magician wields a wand performing miracles at their own discretion. That they were using their Holy Spirit bestowed Gift as they saw fit and their faith allowed. It is so wrong. So incredibly wrong.

Peter didn't simply decide that the time was ripe to finally help this lame man. There is something subtle and yet so obvious happening here if we take the time to look closely and think it through. Peter's words and actions demonstrate that there was no doubt in his mind whatsoever that the man would be completely and immediately made whole.

That's a tall order if you think about it. The first thing we need to do is get a handle on the magnitude of the thing. To heal a person who has a hangnail, or a sniffle, or even to heal a person who has become lame and can no longer walk is one thing... Even though we might think that the scale and so required power of such healings is different, they all entail restoration. It is the restoring of a person back to the way they already were previously. There is an outrageously higher degree of difficulty in accomplishing what happened here. It is exceedingly, we could say exponentially, more astounding to completely remake a person into someone that they never were before.

We talked about this when Jesus healed the man who born blind back in John chapter 6. It is a fundamental act of recreation. In the blind man's case, a recreation of his eyes, optic nerves, and associated processes of actually seeing visually and making sense of it neurologically. In this man's case, it is the recreation of his legs, joints, sinews, muscles, nerves, and the associated physical ability to stand, walk, leap, run, and dance all without stumbling and falling down.

This guy wasn't without the ability to walk for a few weeks, or months. We will find in the next chapter that he was over 40 years old! In over 40 years, for his entire life he had never once used his legs – he didn't know how – his brain had never made those neural pathways of synaptic connectivity. His leg muscles had never been exercised; they would have been atrophied into near non-existence. Even if such a person regained the ability to walk, they would have required months of physical therapy to strengthen their legs, ankles, and feet, as well as to learn balance and movement – the ability to stand, walk, and leap for joy.

Please get the enormity of the miracle. Luke records that the man's feet and ankles were instantly

strengthened and that as Peter pulled him up the man took over and leapt to his feet on his own. To have never had the use of your legs and to be given full mobility in a moment is utterly insane!

Peter wasn't dumb – he knew the situation with the man, but with the crowd as well. He had an audience. He made a clear, direct, public, and matter-of-fact demand along with physically pulling on the guy's right hand.



My point is that Peter already knew that God was going to heal the man in that instant and further that God had chosen to do it through Peter's willing participation as a human vessel. Peter didn't try to heal the guy – he

didn't decide that he would pray about it – he didn't lay hands on the dude and ask God, or tell God, to heal the man. Peter knew with certainty that God was going to heal him on the spot because Peter was in-tune with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That's why there was such confidence. God told Peter and Peter believed God and stepped out in tremendous faith and did what he was told to do. At that point in history, I doubt that John would have had the same boldness. God chose Peter for a reason. Being a more cautious fellow, John would get there eventually, but Peter was there from the start.

We will get to Peter's second public sermon next week, Lord willing, and you'll see that the very first thing Peter says in response to the crowd's shock and awe, is don't look at us! It wasn't our faith, or our power, or our righteousness, or even our choice, this was 100% God's doing.

God reveals what He's going to do through a particular Christian to that person and then they step out in faith believing what the Holy Spirit has revealed to them.

The exercise of Holy Spirit Gifts as well as

prayer and Christianity itself, are all about us getting onboard with what God has sovereignly decided to do, not with us trying to get Him to do what we think is best. If you are in attentive communion with the Holy Spirit inside, you will be amazed at the things He will show you.

What hinders that? Sin, and distraction, selfishness, and unbelief. The Bible tells us plainly that when we are actively engaged in sin our prayers are ineffectual. That means that our communion with the Holy Spirit is blocked.

If you want to operate like the Apostle Peter and fulfill your true purpose in life and build a legacy for the ages you must first “Fear God.”

What that means is that you must take your Christianity far, far, far, more seriously than most people do. That means knowing Jesus through His Holy Word as illuminated by the Holy Spirit and being conformed to His Life and in so doing being one with the Holy Father, engaged in the family business of building His Kingdom.



What most Christians do because of a failure to take God seriously is spend their whole life building their own kingdom. The work that they do for God's Kingdom, whether paid in money, or time, or effort, is done as a sort of appeasement. I hope God will stay off my back if I do this much for His program, so that I can refocus on my own. As I have said, the first Christians were Christians who did some things in this world to enable them to be Christians. Today, most Christians are individuals who do some things in the church to enable them to be individuals. A shift of perspective is needed.



On this occasion the beggar asked for charity directly from Peter and John, but by the time the two stopped

and fixed their gaze on the man, he was already looking to others asking them for help.

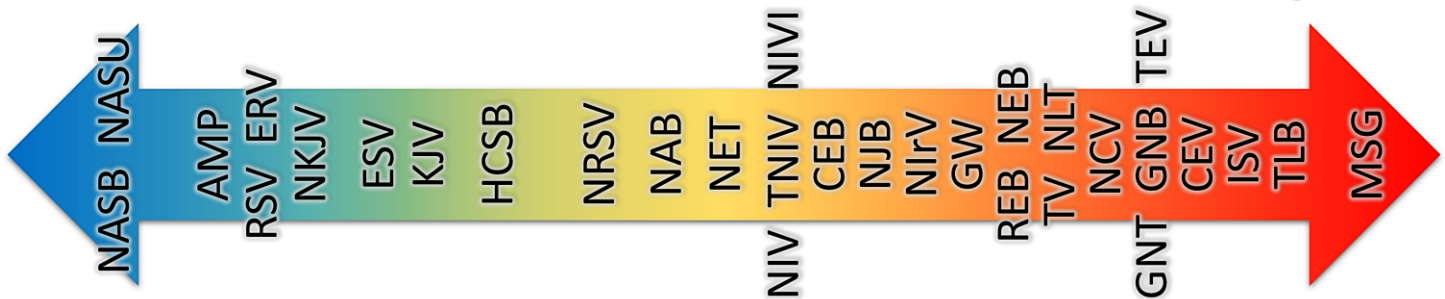
In his situation, there was a sense of urgency to appeal to as many people as possible, hoping to connect with someone before the opportunity passed. The potential donors were all quickly moving by as they made their way towards the Altar. The man was already looking to, and pleading with, others as Peter and John stopped beside him.

Peter forcefully said to the man, “Look at us!” That’s a command in the imperative mood. We don’t have anything like that in English. To make it clear in our language we would need to add helping words.

**Word for Word**  
**Formal Equivalent**  
**Literal**  
**Form Based**

**Thought for Thought**  
**Dynamic Equivalent**

**Paraphrase**  
**Functional Equivalent**  
**Paraphrase**  
**Meaning Based**



AMP - Amplified Bible (12)  
 CEB<sup>^</sup> - Common English Bible (7)  
 CEV<sup>^</sup> - Contemporary English Version (5)  
 ERV<sup>^</sup> - Easy to Read Version (3.5)  
 ESV<sup>\*</sup> - English Standard Version (9.5)  
 GNB<sup>\*</sup> - Good News Bible (6)  
 GNT - Good New Translation (6)  
 GW - Gods Word (4.5)  
 HCSB - Holman Christian Standard (8)  
 ISV<sup>^</sup> - International Standard Version (8.5)  
 KJV<sup>\*</sup> - King James Version (13)  
 MSG - The Message (4.5)  
 NAB<sup>\*</sup> - New American Bible (7)

NASB - New American Standard Bible (11)  
 NASU - New American Standard Update 1995 (11)  
 NCV<sup>^</sup> - New Century Version (5)  
 NEB<sup>^</sup> - New English Bible (7)  
 NET<sup>^</sup> - New English Translation (7)  
 NIRV - New International Readers Version (3.5)  
 NIV - New International Version (8)  
 NIV2011<sup>^</sup> - New International Version 2011 (8)  
 NIVI<sup>^</sup> - New International Version Inclusive (8)  
 NJB<sup>\*</sup> - New Jerusalem Bible (7.5)  
 NKJV - New King James Version (9)  
 NLT<sup>^</sup> - New Living Translation (6.5)  
 NRSV<sup>^</sup> - New Revised Standard Version (10.5)

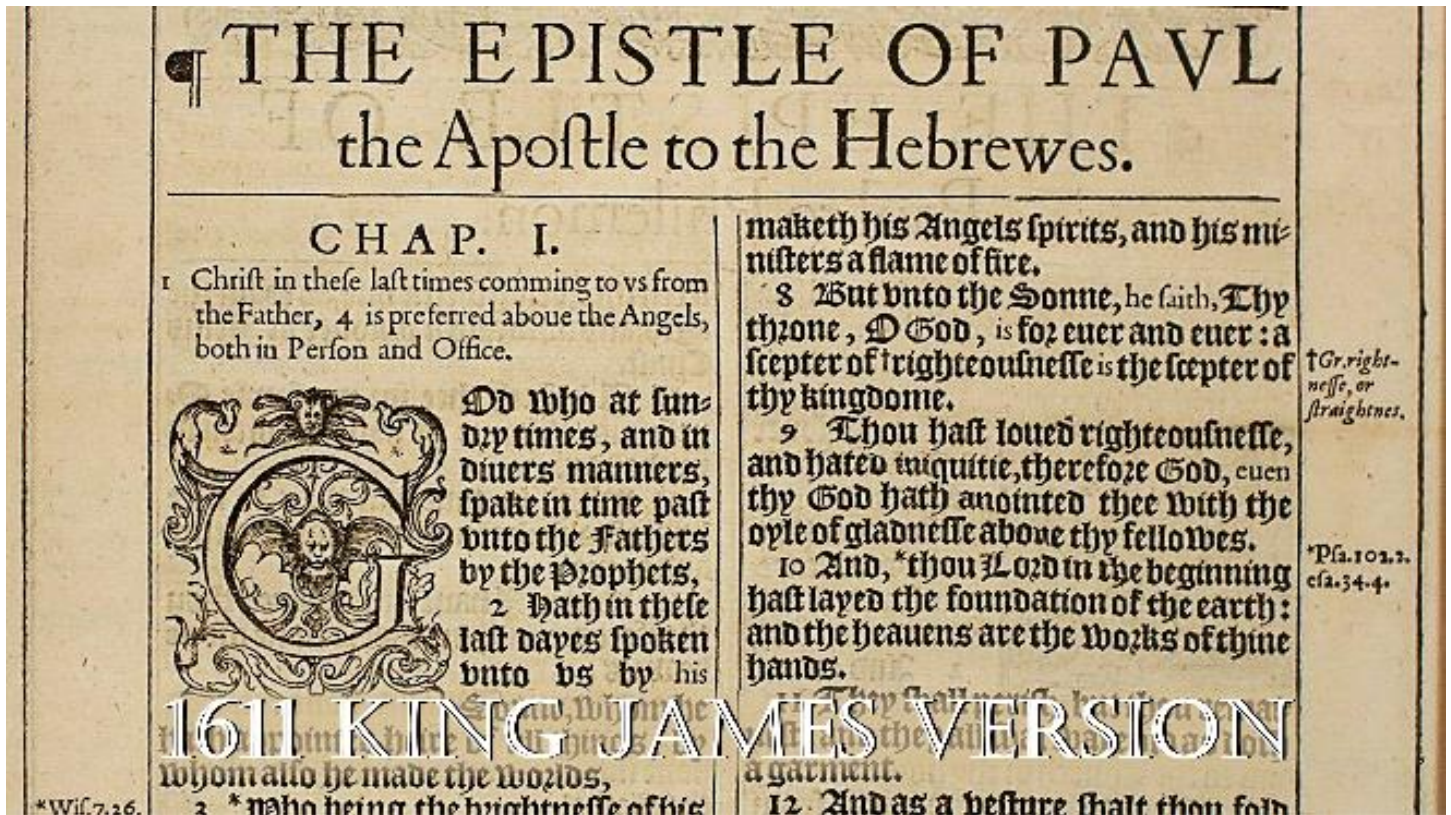
REB - Revised English Bible (7)  
 RSV<sup>\*</sup> - Revised Standard Version (11)  
 TEV<sup>\*</sup> - Today's English Version (6)  
 TLB - The Living Bible (8.5)  
 TNIV<sup>^</sup> - Today's New International Version (7.5)  
 TV - The Voice (7)

<sup>^</sup> No gender neutral language for God, moderate inclusive language for man.  
<sup>^</sup> Gender neutral language  
<sup>\*</sup> Apocrypha available or included  
<sup>#</sup> Grade reading level

5) I bring it up to give you a mini blurb on translation philosophy. The Greek is three words, which many translations simply have as “Look at us,” either with or without an exclamation point. That’s an accurate translation of the words, but not of the meaning. I could read that as Peter making a simple request, or as begging the beggar to give him his attention, or just shouting to be heard over the din of the crowd. To translate it accurately we would need to write, “Peter ordered the man, ‘Look at us!’” Well, now we’ve added more than double the words found in the original Scripture. See the problem?

That's the difference between trying to remain faithful to the words in a more word-for-word translation and trying to convey what those words would have meant in English in a thought-for-thought translation, or a paraphrase.

What's the best Bible translation? The one you'll read – better yet, the one you'll obey. But, really, any of the popular Evangelical translations are quite excellent. Bible paraphrases like the Message can be a nice supplement. Some translations require more vigilance, like the Complete Jewish Bible. There are of course Bibles that should be avoided like the plague such as the New, New, Testament, the NRSV updated edition, the Joseph Smith Translation, the New World Translation, the Passion Translation, the Tree of Life, and the Mirror Bible to name a few. Finally, there are Bibles that just require more work, like the KJV.



The 1611 KJV is a misnomer – the KJV that we use today was last revised almost 150 years after it was first published by still about 250 years ago in 1769. Before America was America. As such, many of the words are archaic and unfamiliar to a lot of people today. Words such as “verily,” “unction,” and “bullock,” but worse, there are some words that are called “false friends.” Words that we think we know but had a different meaning back then.

Take I Kings 18:21, “Elijah came unto all the people, and said, ‘How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.’” The word “halt” is found several times in the KJV.

For us it means “stop,” so the verse is saying how long will you remain stuck in the middle without deciding one way or another. Back then though, “halt” meant “to walk with a limp.” In Shakespeare’s Richard the III there’s a famous speech that starts off with, “Now is the winter of our discontent.” It has in the middle of the speech, “dogs bark at me as I halt by them.” Limp by...

In Elijah’s question the context is “How long will you stumble, or limp, back and forth between the two options?” It means that the people were worshipping both God and Baal, not refusing to worship either. I completely agree with what one Biblical scholar said, “If the translators of the KJV were brought forward in time to the present, they would all say, ‘Please, update our Bible so that the common people can easily understand it – that was our whole goal 400 years ago.’”

Fortunately, since we are so unbelievably blessed with nearly limitless resources, we don’t need to do that... with so many translations available at our fingertips today, you can keep your old KJV and enjoy the language of it and just Google anything you don’t understand... It’s cool, as we heard Barry read last week from Psalm 2, “4bThe Lord shall have them in

derision. 5Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,  
And vex them in his sore displeasure.” I mean, that  
sounds pretty great.

The lame man complied with Peter’s command  
because he thought that they were going to give him  
some money. His obedient response is magnified by  
Luke, so we can imagine that in addition to looking at  
Peter and John he held out his cup, or basket, or  
whatever towards them to make it easier for them to  
give him his handout.

Peter clarified for the guy, look, I’m not going to give  
you money, because essentially God has directed me  
to give you something far greater. Peter wasn’t saying,  
contrary to popular opinion, that he was so poor that he  
had no money at all.

The phrase “silver and gold” simply means money. All  
money in those days was in the form of minted coins.  
Coins came in various sizes and shapes and were  
made of various substances in order to equal the value  
on the face of the coin – ergo face value.

## Roman Denominations



6) Coins of bronze, copper, silver, an alloy similar to brass, and pure gold were the most common metals used. Peter and John were not destitute. They likely had some coins because there were costs associated with going to the Temple.

Certainly, the church wasn't so impoverished that they couldn't give the dude some change. We'll see very shortly that the church appointed Deacons whose first order of business was ensuring that all the widows in the church were given a daily distribution. That support has a cost.



This incident has absolutely nothing to do with the Apostle's financial wherewithal. Never are we told that physical, monetary, poverty is a better thing, let alone the best thing. Love of money is a huge problem, but having money is not. In fact, having resources makes you less of a burden on others and allows you to worry less about pleasing man at the expense of pleasing God.

So, it's a focus or "Love of money" that is a huge problem. According to the Bible it is "a root of all kinds of evil" (I Timothy 6:10). Why is that true? People love money for a few reasons like having money in order to feel secure, which is to say, to feel like they have some control in this chaotic life. Another reason is to spend it in order to satiate desires including the desire to shop. Still another reason is to flaunt it thereby boosting their ego, or power, or prestige. All of those reasons as well as any others that you can think of reduce the feeling of dependance upon God.

It's merely a feeling of course – an illusion really. We are all of us completely dependent upon God for our next breath. As I said before whether you have a full larder or an empty one, it is God Who provides

everything. It's true though, that people in general hate feeling so helpless, living so dependently.



It's one of the primary reasons that people refuse to think about God. The vast majority of people believe in God as some sort of absentee father. The guy who wound up the world and let it go. They will not consider and so, will not talk about God in more concrete terms.

They reason they don't want to consider God in more concrete terms is that they might find that He actually wants something. Whether a person is an outright atheist (rare) or a cop-out agnostic (the have your cake and eat it too, people) or a nominal believer in a more

esoteric and less demanding god (the unchurched masses), their true fear is that God wants something.

Childishly, they think that if they don't think about Him, then they are not dependent on Him and they are not judged by Him, and they can claim ignorance about Him at their final Court appearance. It's not only childish, it's really dumb.

That brings me to this line of self-defense employed by such people... They throw up a bunch of false arguments generally posed as statements of irrefutable fact or as innocent questions (they're neither) with the hope that by the distraction, through the obfuscation, and in the confusion that they can get through the confrontation without be challenged to address the Truth about God.

Don't fall for the defense tactics that include making it personal by attacking you. Understand that such people are driven by fear – don't you allow fear to drive you, in such an encounter. It's not about you, it's about calmly and confidently sharing what Jesus has done for you. What the other person does with that is between them and Christ.

Do your job and don't worry about how everyone else is doing their job... Each Christian will stand or fall on their own and Christ will enable them to stand. Each non-Christian will believe or not believe on their own and Christ alone will Judge them.