

May 31

Bible Version Comparisons 2026

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We have had a new round of discussions about which version of the Bible is best for public reading at Immanuel Lutheran Church. I thought I could shed some light on the subject using one verse from Romans to highlight the differences in these English Language Bibles.

First I will go to the premiere version of the English Bible which has prevailed for centuries. It is called the King James Bible or the Authorized Version. I will use this verse as an example: Romans 5:17.

“For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)”

This version shows how difficult it is to understand the rendering through many centuries. The parenthesis ending closes an explanatory series of verses which began in Romans 5:13. The King James version tried to maintain the many dependent clauses in the original Greek which makes it clunky and hard to understand in spoken English.

Now we will look at the verse in the New Revised Standard Version which we provide in our pew Bibles at Immanuel: “If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

Notice how the English version maintains many of the commas and dependant clauses which are true to the Greek. They still make the public reading stilted, however. The tense of the first part of the verse is in the past, while the gift of righteousness is present continuous (implied future).

The next translation I will use for this comparison is the New American Standard copyright 1960. This version attempts to maintain the tense and dependant clauses of the Greek while offering standard English usage in

the words. Here we are: "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

The "Good News" Bible or Today's English Version was produced in 1976 with a modern English word choice and was made with public reading in mind. They eliminated many of the dependent clauses from the Greek reading. "It is true that through the sin of the one man death began to rule because of that one man. But how much greater is the result of what was done by the one man, Jesus Christ! All who receive God's abundant grace and are freely put right with him will rule in life through Christ."

Notice how this version divides the one sentence into three sentences.

The last version we will use for comparison is The Message Bible, which is not specifically a translation but a paraphrase or transliteration. It is the result of a lifetime of Bible study in the Hebrew and Greek and the ministry of Rev. Dr. Eugene Peterson. Dr. Peterson consulted the original languages but conveyed their meaning through contemporary English phrases.

"If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life- this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?"

You can see how this version takes the step of interpretation a little further into modern cultural settings, but sheds light on the original intent?