

Passages Explained

Increased Accuracy

Genesis 40:19 | “Within three days Pharaoh...

Psalm 9:17 | The wicked go down to the realm of the dead...

Psalm 26:3 | For I have always been mindful of your unfailing love...

Matthew 16:16 / Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah...

John 1:18 / No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son...

John 9:22 / His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders...

Colossians 2:8 / See to it that no one takes you captive...

Hebrews 10:34 / You suffered along with those in prison...

Genesis 40:19 (TNIV)

Joseph said... “Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and **impale your body on a pole.**”

Genesis 40:19 (NKJV)

Joseph said... “Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and **hang you on a tree.**”

OK...it's not exactly the most uplifting verse in the Bible. But it highlights the TNIV's commitment to giving you the most accurate translation possible—based on the most up-to-date evangelical biblical scholarship.

What's going on here?

- Most translations have Joseph telling this poor guy (his cellmate, Pharaoh's ex-chief baker) that he was going to be hung from a tree.
- There are just two problems with this. One, Joseph also said Pharaoh was going to have this guy's head cut off first—which would make hanging him a bit...challenging, logistically speaking. Two, execution by hanging was unknown in the ancient world.
- A closer look suggests that the original Hebrew was referring to a method of execution that was fairly common in the ancient Near East: death by impaling.
- All right, so it's not the most inspiring passage in the Bible, but what really counts is this: the TNIV translators care deeply about getting it right with every passage—not just the inspirational ones.

Psalm 9:17 (TNIV)

The wicked go down to the **realm of the dead...**

Psalm 9:17 (NLT)

The wicked will go down to the **grave...**

One of the many things that make translation so challenging is that the Bible was written thousands of years ago in a world very different from our own. The TNIV translators appreciate this. Their goal is to help you experience the text like its original audience experienced it.

What's going on here?

- Psalm 9 praises God for his justice—for not letting the wicked go unpunished in the end. Specifically, verse 17 promises that the wicked will go down to *Sheol*...at least, that's the original Hebrew word for it. Must be a pretty difficult word, too—some versions of the Bible don't even bother translating it.
- Others translate it as “the grave,” which is a lot better than just saying “*Sheol*” and leaving you to wonder what on earth that means. The only problem is, when we think of a “grave,” we think of a six-foot hole in the ground. But to the ancient Israelites, *Sheol* was much different. It was a place you went after you died; it was the realm to which the dead descended. There are even some passages, like Job 10:21-22, that figuratively refer to *Sheol* as another land altogether.
- It's the little things that count. The TNIV cares about capturing every little detail of meaning as much as possible...so you won't miss something you weren't meant to miss.

Psalm 26:3 (TNIV)

For I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
and have lived in reliance on your **faithfulness**.

Psalm 26:3 (KJV)

For thy loving kindness *is* before mine eyes:
and I have walked in thy truth.

When you're looking for a Bible, you might think you have to choose between one that's accurate and one you can actually read. But the TNIV translators—the same group that did the NIV thirty years ago—are committed to giving you the best combination of *both* readability and reliability.

What's going on here?

- It doesn't take long to see how the TNIV makes Psalm 26:3 easier to understand. "I have been mindful" means the same thing as "before mine eyes," but the TNIV communicates the meaning in language we actually use today.
- But the translators didn't just settle for making the Bible easy to read. They pored over every word in the original languages to give you the most precise translation possible. That's why the TNIV says "faithfulness" in Psalm 26:3, while a lot of other good translations say "truth."
- The Hebrew word is *'emet*, and in this context it means a lot more than simple honesty. It means faithfulness, reliability, trustworthiness. To walk in God's truth is to depend on his faithfulness. The TNIV communicates this important aspect of meaning, reminding you that the God of the Bible is the God you can count on.

Matthew 16:16 (TNIV)

Simon Peter answered, “You are the **Messiah**, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:16 (NASB)

Simon Peter answered, “You are the **Christ**, the Son of the living God.”

The TNIV’s unwavering commitment to accuracy means getting the words right so you don’t miss their impact.

What’s going on here?

- This is Simon Peter’s famous confession. Jesus asks his disciples what others are saying about him. Then he gets to the point, asking who *they* think he is. Peter speaks first, declaring (as most translations put it), “You are the Christ.”
- Well that’s nice. But what on earth does it mean? “Christ” is simply a transliteration of the Greek word *Christos*. Elsewhere in the Bible it’s used like a personal name for Jesus, but here in the Gospels, it’s a title. And it’s packed with significance.
- *Christos* is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew word for Messiah—the promised one, the deliverer God said would come to liberate his people from oppression. Peter’s not just telling us Jesus’ last name; he’s declaring that Jesus is the one they’ve been waiting for, the one the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to.
- With the TNIV, there’s no mistaking the significance of Peter’s famous statement.

John 1:18 (TNIV)

No one has ever seen God, but the **one and only Son, who is himself God** and is in **closest relationship with the Father**, has made him known.

John 1:18 (NASB)

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 1:18 is a mouthful no matter how you translate it. That's because it's packed with really important ideas about Jesus, the Son of God. The TNIV's absolute commitment to accuracy and clarity helps readers navigate their way through this powerful passage.

What's going on here?

- Here's the gist of this verse. The ancient Jews believed that no human being could see God because to see him meant instant death. But God's only Son bridges the gap between us and God—because he *is* God and he's as close to God as you can possibly get.
- This verse is so important because it's one of the few places where the Bible comes right out and says "Jesus = God." You don't want *that* message to get lost in the translation!
- The original Greek uses the metaphor "in the bosom of" (*kolpon tou patros*, for all you Greek fans) to describe the closeness between Father and Son. Let's face it—a literal translation of this metaphor into modern English brings all the wrong connotations to mind. The TNIV captures the full sense of the Greek in English that's clear and understandable.

John 9:22 (TNIV)

His parents said this because they were afraid of the **Jewish leaders**, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

John 9:22 (NIV)

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

Precision counts when you're translating the Bible. The TNIV translators carefully study every word in its context to give you the best, most precise translation possible.

What's going on here?

- In just about any language, a single word can have a number of different meanings. Take our word "trunk." It can mean the back of a car. Or the front of an elephant. Or how about a person's midsection? It's also another word for a suitcase. So how on earth do you know what the word "trunk" means when you read it in a sentence? You look at the context.
- The same is true in Greek, the language of the New Testament. Take the phrase "Jewish leaders"—that's how the TNIV translates the word *loudaioi* in John 9:22. *loudaioi* often refers to Jewish people in general, but in some contexts it means a specific group of Jews.
- In John, for example, *loudaioi* is a reference to the Jewish religious authorities. So if you were to simply translate it "the Jews" without looking at the context, you might get the mistaken idea that John is referring to all Jewish people everywhere. But he's not. In fact, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (the premier lexicon for New Testament Greek) puts it like this: "There is no indication that John uses the term in the general ethnic sense suggested in modern use of the word 'Jew.'"
- Still not sure? Take a closer look at the story in John 9. As Jesus is going through Jerusalem, he stops and heals a blind man—a blind *Jewish* man. The Pharisees, who don't exactly see eye to eye with Jesus, investigate the healing. They interrogate the blind man's frightened parents—his frightened, *Jewish* parents—who plead ignorance because, according to John, they are afraid of the *loudaioi*. Now unless this guy's parents suffered from autophobia (the fear of yourself), *loudaioi* isn't a reference to all Jewish people in John 9:22. It was the religious authorities they were afraid of. Only the Jewish *leaders* had the authority to kick someone out of the synagogue for claiming Jesus was the Messiah.
- The TNIV pays attention to detail—to the context of each word—and translates the text with precision and clarity.

Colossians 2:8 (TNIV)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the **elemental spiritual forces** of this world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

The TNIV benefits from the latest archaeological discoveries and advancements in biblical scholarship. The result? A world-class translation you can rely on.

What's going on here?

- How did the TNIV translators go from “basic principles” to “elemental spiritual forces”? By keeping up with the latest advances in biblical scholarship and archaeology, that's how.
- The Greek phrase in question is *ta stoicheia tou kosmou*—literally, “the elements of the world.” Seems simple enough...almost too simple. What you may not know is that Paul wrote this passage to believers living in Colossae, a city in Asia Minor (a.k.a. modern day Turkey). Archaeologists excavating in the region have uncovered plenty of evidence pointing to the popularity of something known as the “mystery cults.”
- Mystery cults were secretive religious societies known for their outrageous beliefs and bizarre rituals. (If you wanted to join one, your initiation might involve being baptized in cow's blood or something completely normal like that.) These mystery cults worshiped a slew of intermediary spiritual forces—sort of like mid-level deities between us and God. And as recent archaeological finds in Asia Minor have revealed, the technical term for these spiritual intermediaries was—you guessed it—*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*.
- Paul was reminding the Colossians (and us) that Jesus is the only mediator between human beings and God. Anything (or anyone) else claiming to be a gateway to God just doesn't ring true.
- Unmatched scholarship and careful study enable the TNIV to give you fresh insight on the timeless truth of the Bible.

Hebrews 10:34 (TNIV)

You **suffered along with** those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

Hebrews 10:34 (HCSB)

For you sympathized with the prisoners and accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession.

The TNIV pays close attention to the context of every word, every phrase, and every passage to give you the best possible translation.

What's going on here?

- A number of good translations say, "You *sympathized* with those in prison." Which is a legitimate way to translate Hebrews 10:34, considering the Greek word here is *sumpatheo*. (Just so happens to be where we get our English word "sympathy.")
- But the Greek word *sumpatheo* and the English word "sympathy" don't always have the exact same meaning. In our language, to sympathize with someone is to feel their pain—from a distance. And that just doesn't begin to describe what the people in Hebrews 10:34 experienced. They actually suffered along with those who had been thrown in jail because of their faith. The "lucky" ones who managed to stay out of prison had their property taken away. They didn't just sympathize; they *empathized*, because they were all going through the same rough times together. It's a powerful image of believers bearing each other's burdens.
- The point? You can depend on the TNIV because it's accurate to the details of meaning.