

**THE NEW TESTAMENT:
AN UNDERSTANDABLE VERSION**

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VERSION**

By William E. Paul

This version of the New Testament was produced by consulting several Greek-English interlinear texts, a large number of English translations, and then confirming the meaning of each word from exegetical commentaries. Its purpose was to enhance the personal understanding and spiritual devotion of its publisher, his family members and those persons especially interested in Bible versions.

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BY WILLIAM E. PAUL

DEDICATION

To

Bennie, Terry, Tim, Sheila, Billy and Dan

and their children

Understand what the Lord wants you to do@ Eph. 5:17

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PREFACE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Why use the term *Understandable* in describing this version?

Are not all Bible versions understandable? Well, they certainly are to the ones who produced them! And that is the very purpose for this one. The term *Understandable* simply means that the words used are familiar to Bill Paul and convey what he believes the inspired writers were saying. Notice the title includes the word *an* also. That means there are certainly many other understandable versions, but this one happens to express meaning in a way that offers maximum understanding to the one who produced it. In other words, of the many understandable versions available, *this one* says it best...for me!

WHY ANOTHER ONE?

Probably the most frequently asked question by those who pick up a new version is, *What? Another version of the New Testament? Akin to that one is the question, Is there really a need for another one? I guess I would have to answer, I wanted a better understanding of the New Testament and this seemed the best way to acquire it. You see, the reason for this version is that it fills a need. It afforded me the opportunity of taking a more serious and detailed look at each verse of the New Testament writings with a view to seeing what it actually said and meant. But, could not that have been done by reading one of the approximately 350 English translations in my personal collection? Yes and no! A number of them were read, and still not every verse or passage resulted in a clear understanding. (Probably because I, like you, read over some verses and thereby miss the meaning). So, the decision was made to attempt making a *personal* version, intended to provide me with a better understanding of the New Testament Scriptures.*

This version may be unique in that it does not guarantee to be *exactly* what the Holy Spirit inspired the original writers to record. Instead, this work represents only what I *understand* those writers to be saying. There is a difference. Since this version is intended principally for personal use, it should be kept in mind, in the likely event that it falls into other hands; this is what Bill Paul *understood* the writers to be saying. Many Bible versions are said to be *better, closer, easier, simpler, clearer, or plainer* renditions of the original, inspired (Greek) documents. No such claim is being made for this one. I am not saying that *everyone else* must accept this version as *the most accurate one.* I, more than anyone else, am aware of its weaknesses. And yes, you may possibly find some deficiencies in its clarity of expression, in its use of proper wording, and especially in its interpretative portions. In a work of this magnitude, done by a person with limited abilities, this

is inevitable. So, if you feel led to offer advice or suggestions, they would be most welcome.

The time spent working on the basic translation of this version consisted of several hours a day for twenty-three months. During that time I produced an average of twelve verses per day. However, the additional hours spent in the planning, layout, proof reading, typing, retyping, rereading and making the final corrections extended the project for another five months.

The experience of working on this version proved a special blessing. The insights gained in the process of trying to determine what each word, sentence and verse meant were very enlightening. Even though I had read the entire Bible from several translations (and the New Testament from even more), this endeavor has proven to be more rewarding than any previous reading of the New Testament.

HOW WAS IT DONE?

The rendering of each New Testament verse involved reading and studying it at least five times. It was first written out in long hand in spiral notebooks after the sources mentioned below were carefully consulted. Then, it was reviewed for proper syntax and style as it was being typed into the computer. Next, the computer printouts were reread carefully (three times), and numerous corrections and changes in wording were made each time before the final draft was placed on computer and appeared in its present form. I am deeply indebted to my dear wife, Bethel, for reading much of the manuscript carefully, and suggesting numerous ways to improve the clarity and wording of many passages.

In the course of producing this version, as many as thirty English translations were constantly consulted, especially on difficult words and sentences, and some of the readings from those that provided the clearest *understanding* were selected and used. Especially useful was *The Translator's New Testament*, prepared by the British and Foreign Bible Society for use by those preparing a version from the English language instead of directly from the Greek only.

This version was not rendered from a Greek text *only* for two reasons: [1] While I am familiar with New Testament Greek, having studied it in college, I do not consider myself an *authority* in the Greek language. (However, I did constantly consult the Nestle-Aland, 26th corrected edition (1986) Greek text, and the United Bible Societies, 4th corrected edition (1993) Greek text, with their English interlinear

readings, among the original language reference works utilized). [2] The fact that I have also utilized so many English translations, most of which were made by highly competent Greek scholars, afforded me access to the studied conclusions of capable and experienced people in the field of Bible translation. (The cumulative number of years of New Testament Greek scholarship consulted would easily be in the hundreds). So, this version involved a considerable amount of evaluation and utilization of some of the English words used in the various New Testament translations which appeared to me to be the most *understandable*, and which best conveyed the meaning of the Greek text. However, in many cases, the wording I used was not found in any of the translations consulted. And, of course, the final choice of words, carefully selected and utilized, rests squarely upon me and I assume full responsibility for the rendition of every verse.

Also, throughout the work, the words eventually chosen were determined only after a constant examination of commentaries and atlases which were carefully studied to determine proper antecedents and to confirm historical, geographical, cultural, circumstantial and theological details. (A list of over 120 reference works used in the preparation of this work is available on request).

The words or phrases in brackets ([]) are entirely mine and do *not* generally contain words found in any other text. Instead, they are inserted for the following four reasons: [1] To clarify the meaning of a sentence. For example AHe went to the city [of Jerusalem].@The words Aof Jerusalem@are not in any Greek text but helped me to keep the sense of the narrative in clearer perspective. These insertions generally do not interrupt the flow of the sentence. [2] To explain a word or phrase. In doing this the letters Ai.e.@(meaning Athat is@) are used. For example Ahe was a Pharisee [i.e. a strict sect of the Jewish religion].@ These insertions tend to interrupt the flow of the sentence, but seemed worthwhile to me since they explain a word or phrase and thereby enhanced the meaning of the passage. [3] To provide information of a geographical, historical or cultural nature. These insertions are always introduced by the word “[Note].” They definitely interrupt the flow of the sentence and even the thought. But they are felt to be very helpful in gaining a better *understanding* of the passage. (Many translations place such items in the footnotes, but here they are placed within the text so as to insure a greater likelihood of being read). An example of this use of brackets follows the passage in Matthew 5:13, where it says that salt was Agood for nothing except to be thrown out into the roadway and

walked on by people [Note: This was mined salt which, when losing its saltiness due to exposure to the sun or rain, was simply disposed of by being dumped onto the roadway where people walked]. Also, an occasional Note will include a brief explanation of the foregoing verse when it seemed helpful in understanding the passage better. Such notes are admittedly interpretive. [4] Brackets are frequently used to enclose words supplied to complete a sentence. These words usually do not have counterparts in the original Greek text and are used somewhat like the italics of the *New American Standard Version*. Sometimes they take the form of inserting an ellipsis, for added clarity. For example, They say [the right things], but do not do them. The words the right things are not found in any Greek text, but I add them, in brackets, to complete the idea of the sentence. So, because of such extensive use of brackets, it would be better if this version were approached as a tool for careful study rather than being read aloud or as devotional reading. The bracketed material, in non-bold type, may be skipped if the reader wishes to have a smoother reading of the text and avoid rambling sentences.

A liberty taken in this version is the substitution of common or proper nouns for pronouns in many instances. For example, if the text actually says, They came... or He said..., this version may substitute Jesus and the apostles came... or The Pharisee said.... This is felt to be especially helpful in clearly identifying to whom the nearest antecedent pronoun refers and is done in the interest of making the narrative or description of the event more *understandable*.

Another element that is utilized is the substitution of a different word for the conjunction And when it appears at the beginning of a sentence. It seems the Greek uses And to start a sentence far more frequently than is customary in current English usage. For this reason, many translations simply drop the And, considering it a redundancy. In this version such an And, when used as the first word of the sentence, is often rendered Then, But, Now, So, or just dropped altogether. This liberty is taken only when such words appear **not** to alter the sense of the passage in any way and was done for the purpose of enhancing the *understanding*.

Finally, considerable care was given in an attempt to express the exact meaning of each word, verse, sentence and passage with a minimal amount of paraphrasing. Remember, a primary objective has been to make it *understandable*, while at the same time remaining as **true** to the best Greek manuscripts as I was capable of producing.

SHOULD YOU READ ON?

If this version were intended for Bill Paul, then why should you be reading it? Good question. You really do not *need* to in order to understand and obey the teaching of the New Testament. But, since it has obviously fallen into your hands, you may want to read it along side a standard translation for whatever helpful ideas, insights or understanding it may afford you.

In any event, here it is --- in your hands. Should you choose to read on, may you find the experience worthy of the effort. And if your reading of it proves to be only a fraction of the blessing it was to me, during the preparation of it, then a valuable reward awaits you.

---William E. Paul, 1994

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

After the first edition of this work was printed in 1995, a number of typographical and other kinds of errors were discovered. I appreciate those who kindly called my attention to them. These were corrected and the entire work was then mounted on Charles Dailey's website in 1998. Since that time, the first edition went out of print. In time the need for additional corrections became evident, so these have been incorporated into this present print edition. Arrangements for this second edition have been made and orders for it are being filled on a print-on-demand basis.

---William E. Paul, 2002