

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

371

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be devoted to John Bois. He was one of the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. This monumental project took 7 years to complete. It began with 54 translators, but 7 passed away before the project was completed. After over 400 years the KJV is still preferred by 55% of Bible readers in the United States.

John Bois was born in the village of Nettlestead, Suffolk on January 3, 1561. His father was a Christian minister who graduated from Trinity College in Cambridge. John was a child prodigy who read the Bible through when he was only 5 years old. Dr. Henry Morris said that instead of reading the Bible through in English, he read it through in Hebrew. By the age of 6 he could write Hebrew with an eloquent hand. Bois was also fluent in both Koine and Attic Greek. He entered the University at Cambridge in 1574 at the age of 14 and was regularly writing letters in Greek to his professors. He was fastidious about his health and frequently walked 20 miles with book in hand to eat with his mother. Other health tips involved learning to study while standing, avoided cold drafts from the windows, keeping his teeth clean, and never going to bed with cold feet.

Bois was a diligent student throughout his entire life. He would rise before four in the morning and study until eight in the evening at the university library. Even in his old age he maintained the habit of studying at least eight hours a day. John eventually left Cambridge and became a country parson. He still, however, continued his studies and taught fellow ministers at his home every week. He also gave free instruction to poor children in the neighborhood. John married the daughter of Francis Holt in 1598. Holt was rector of Boxworth, Cambridgeshire. John ultimately succeeded his father-in-law in this rectory.

Providentially John met Andrew Downes who was a Greek scholar and future translator. Downes would have a profound influence upon his life. Besides the routine of delivering Greek lectures to Bois and other students five times a week, Downes privately tutored John by reading with him twelve of the most difficult Greek authors with particular attention to phrasing and dialect. John Bois graduated with a B.A. in 1579 and proceeded to receive his M.A. in 1582. He ultimately became a doctor of divinity in 1590.

John became a professor at St. John's College when he was only 20 years old. In 1598 he became rector of Boxworth, and was appointed principal Greek lecturer, senior dean, and senior fellow of this college. He served at Boxworth for many years (1596-1630). During this time he regularly rode the short distance from Boxworth to Cambridge to attend Andrew Downes' lectures on Greek and Edward Lively's lectures on Hebrew.

King James commissioned the translation of the Bible in 1604 and it was completed 7 years later in 1611. The translation was done by 6 panels of translators who were among the leading biblical scholars in England. The Old Testament was entrusted to three panels, the New Testament to two, and the Apocrypha to one. The New Testament was translated from Greek, the Old Testament from Hebrew and Aramaic, and the Apocrypha from Latin. John Bois was honored to be part of this select group of scholars. Bois was an exact grammarian who had studied sixty different grammars. He was also a Greek lecturer at St. John's College for 10 years. During this time he voluntarily lectured students in his own chamber at four o'clock in the morning.

While the men who translated the King James Bible were brilliant scholars, they used such simple words that average students between the 6th and 7th grades can understand it. In all 66 books they used only 8,000 different words and most of them have only a single syllable. Take for example this key passage from the book of Ephesians: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).** This is a profound Biblical truth and yet the only word used with more than one syllable is “yourselves”. These verses, of course, are easily understood by people with a limited education.

The use of words like “thee” and “ye” in the KJV are considered obsolete and are quite often a source of criticism. The critics think it better to simply say “you”. The critics, however, are apparently ignorant of the scholarship behind this choice of words. In the KJV the words THEE, THOU, THY, and THINE are always singular. The words YOU, YE, AND YOUR are always plural. These distinctions are clearly made in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts but are totally lost in most modern translations. Take, for example, Exodus 4:15 as translated in the KJV.

"THOU shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with THY mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach YOU what YE shall do." The THOU, and THY are singular and refer to Moses, but YOU and YE are plural and refer to the nation which would be instructed by Aaron. The King James translation is precise while many modern translations are not.

There are literally dozens of English versions that have been published since the KJV was authorized in 1611. Every one of these versions is of value and will guide you to heaven if it is read, believed, and obeyed. It has been my practice for more than 60 years to teach someone how to be saved from their own Bible regardless of what version it is.

The point of this letter is to emphasize the scholarship and integrity of Bible translators, and to encourage you to read, believe, and obey the Bible regardless of what version you have.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce