

# The Living Bible

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The Living Bible of Kenneth Taylor has become a popular, widely used version of the Bible. It appears in many forms: Reach Out; The Greatest is Love; The Way; Living Letters; the Highest Flight; etc. Its appeal is its claim that it presents the Word of God in clear, current understandable language, especially for the young.

In fact, however, The Living Bible is an attack on the Word of God, Holy Scripture. It is a loose paraphrase of Scripture, instead of an accurate translation. This paraphrase is corrupted throughout by the private interpretations of the one who did the paraphrasing, so that, although the book claims to be the Bible - the Word of God - it is not the Bible, but a human book, full of man's words. What is still worse, this version represents a deliberate attempt to destroy certain fundamental doctrines of Scripture. It does this by changing, or eliding, the words of the Bible which teach these doctrines. The Living Bible is an all-out attack on the Reformed faith. It is the "bible" of Arminianism, that false gospel that teaches that man must save himself by his own free will.

That these charges are correct is readily shown. The concerned child of God (and what child of God can remain unconcerned about the corrupting of Holy Scripture?) can compare for himself the passages that I will mention in The Living Bible with the correct translation in a reliable version, such as the King James Version.

First, The Living Bible does not faithfully give God's Word in English, but substitutes man's words. Thus, it obscures basic doctrines and introduces nonsense and false doctrine. Genesis 6:1-6 is an example from the Old Testament: "Now a population explosion took place upon the earth. It was at this time that beings from the spirit world looked upon the beautiful earth women and took any they desired to be their wives. Then Jehovah said, "My Spirit must not forever be disgraced in man, wholly evil as he is. I will give him 120 years to mend his ways! ...When the Lord God saw the extent of human wickedness...It broke his heart."

The same thing is found in the New Testament. John 3:3 reads: "Unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God." In reality, Jesus said: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There is a great difference between being unable to see the Kingdom and being unable to enter it. Ephesians 2:1 reads (in The Living Bible): "Once you were under God's curse, doomed forever for your sins." The correct translation is: "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The Living Bible here leaves out the word, "dead," thus hiding the truth that every man by nature is totally depraved. Romans 8:7 reads: "Because the old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God's laws and it never will." The correct translation is: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The last phrase, changed by The Living Bible, teaches the inability of the natural man to keep God's law - he cannot do the good.

The well-known and comforting 28th verse of Romans 8 is inexcusably changed in The Living Bible: "And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into His plans." This teaches that the working together for our good of all things depends on us ("If we love God and are fitting into His plans"). This is the very opposite of the truth taught in the text, namely, that it depends on God ("to them who are called according to his purpose").

This unfaithfulness to the true words of God occurs on every page. No one should try to minimize the seriousness of this unfaithfulness. This book claims to be the Bible. The fact that it plays fast and loose with God's Word is an evidence that it has no regard for the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. If God inspired the very words of Scripture, and II Timothy 3:16 teaches that He did, no one may substitute other words for God's words or replace the exact words that God inspired with a phrase that is supposed to express the idea of the text in a general way. This book is inherently an attack on the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture and, therefore, an attack on the doctrine of Scripture itself. The production of such a "Bible" and its popularity are terrifying testimonies to the extent to which the churches have departed from the truth that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Besides, all of these inaccuracies make The Living Bible completely unreliable. What good is a "Bible" that fails, not just here and there, but everywhere to give faithfully the Word of God that the Holy Spirit breathed out in Scripture? And what kind of a foundation can it be for the faith and life of the congregation and the life and death of the believer?

The second charge against The Living Bible is that it systematically and deliberately falsifies many passages of Scripture that teach the sovereignty of God in the salvation of the elect and in the damnation of the reprobate. Acts 13:48 is a glaring, almost unbelievable example: "When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and rejoiced in Paul's message; and as many as wanted eternal life, believed." Really, the last part of the text reads: "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," as the King James has it. Whereas God's Word teaches that a man's believing is due to his having been ordained, or elected, by God (faith depends on election), The Living Bible teaches that man's believing is due to his own will.

In The Living Bible, Romans 8:29 reads: "For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him - and all along he knew who would - should become like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers." The correct translation is: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." The text teaches that in eternity God predestinated, or elected, some persons to be conformed to the image of Christ, that is, to be saved. The Living Bible changes this to read that God merely decided that whoever would come to Him (of which coming the text does not even speak!) would be saved.

These are only two examples of The Living Bible's shameless perverting of passages that teach that salvation is God's sovereignly gracious gift and work. The interested reader might also look at Romans 9:10ff and I Peter 2:8, comparing The Living Bible with the King James Version.

The reason why The Living Bible changes these passages is plain. The author believes that the salvation of men depends in the final analysis upon their exercise of their own free will, their acceptance of the offer of Christ, their permitting Christ to come into their hearts. Scripture, however, teaches otherwise, namely, that salvation depends upon God's choice of some men (election) and upon God's efficacious gift of Grace to those whom He has chosen. Scripture, therefore, has to be changed to bring it into line with the author's belief.

This is a terrible wickedness. For one thing, the effect is a teaching that gives man the glory of his salvation, rather than God. But it is grievous sin to change God's Word. It is not less wicked than King Jehoiakim's burning of the scriptures that displeased him (cf. Jeremiah 36).

All Christians, and especially Reformed Christians, must repudiate The Living Bible. We must see to it that we have and use a good, faithful version - which the King James Version is. Parents, pastors, and Christian school teachers must instruct the children and youth to use a good version. We must have a good version, for the Church and the believer live, not by the words of men, but by the Word of God.