

Hebrews 10:23 "the profession of our FAITH" - Is the KJB wrong here?

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our FAITH without wavering

There are many among the "No Bible is the complete and inerrant words of God" crowd that try to tell us that the King James Bible is wrong in its translation of Hebrews 10:23. They tell us the word should be "hope" and not "faith".

In support of the KJB reading of elpis as being translated as FAITH, the following should be considered. Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon 1968 on page 537 lists one of the meanings of elpis as "Reason to expect or Believe". The same is true of Kittell's massive work which shows that elpis shades over into being synonymous with Faith. "Hope as expectation of good is closely linked with trust. This hope is thus trust." "It consists rather in general confidence in God's protection and help." page 522.

This from Biblos.com on Hebrews 10:23 <http://scripturetext.com/hebrews/10-23.htm>

elpis noun - genitive singular feminine elpis el-pece': expectation (abstractly or concretely) or confidence -- FAITH, hope.

The verb form of this noun is elpizo and even the NASB and NIV have at times translated this word as to Trust. The KJB translates this verb as to Trust 18 times as well as to hope. If you trust something or someone, you believe them. It is really "gnat straining" to suggest that we are talking about the noun here and not the verb, when the very verb from which this noun comes is also translated as "to trust" in all the modern Bibles as well. In fact, Liddell and Scott's Abridged Lexicon Seventeenth Edition 1887 on page 217 lists the meanings of this verb elpizo as: "to hope, expect, think, BELIEVE."

The King James Bible is not the only one to translate this word as FAITH in Hebrews 10:23. In 1755 John Wesley made his own New Testament translation, and he changed thousands of words from the King James readings, but in Hebrews 10:23 Mr. Wesley went with "the profession of our faith". I have found other independent English translations that translated the phrase as "the profession of our FAITH". One is called "The book of the New Covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" done in 1836 by Granville Penn. Others are "The New Testament Translated from the Original Greek" done in 1858 by Leister Sawyer; Whiston's Primitive New Testament 1745, An Exposition of the New Testament by William Gilpin in 1790, and the 2001 Urim-Thummin Version by Dallas James, the Heritage Bible by Gwin Turner done in 2003 and God's Word to the Nations 1995 - "We must continue to hold firmly to our declaration of faith." A couple of other modern English versions are very similar in meaning to the King James Bible reading. These include the 2004 The Holy New Covenant translation by Thomas Hackett. It says: "Let us hold tightly to the hope we said we believed in"; the Context Group Version of 2007 with "Let us hold fast the confession of our abiding confidence" and the Worldwide English New Testament of 1969 reads: "We must hold onto God's promise that we have said we believe."

You can see these versions online here:

<http://www.lookhigher.net/englishbibles/index.html>

There are several foreign language translations that have the same reading of "faith" like the

King James Bible. Among these are the Spanish Reina Valera Antigua of 1602 and the Reina Valera 1909 - Heb 10:23 Mantengamos firme la profesión de nuestra **FE sin** fluctuar; que fiel es el que prometió.”, the Spanish Valera Nuevo Testamento of 1858, the Spanish Dios Habla Hoy 1996 by United Bible Society is similar with - “Mantengámonos firmes, sin dudar, en la esperanza de **la FE** que profesamos.” = "Let hold ourselves firm, without doubting, in the hope of the faith that we profess". Likewise the Italian La Parola e Vita (The Word of Life) done in 1997 reads just like the King James Bible - “Rimaniamo fermi nel dichiarare **LA NOSTRA FEDE**”

There is also the Portuguese New Testament: Easy-to-Read Version Copyright 1999 by World Bible Translation Center, that reads exactly like the King James Bible with: "Vamos seguir firmes e sem vacilar na esperança da **nossa fé**, pois aquele que fez a promessa é fiel."

The 2004 Spanish Reina Valera Gomez translation can be seen online at this site. It is a very accurate modern day Spanish translation.

<http://www.reinavalera.com/RVGhtml/index.html>

Hebrews 10:23 reads exactly like the King James Bible with: “Mantengamos firme, sin fluctuar, la profesión de nuestra **FE**; que fiel es el que prometió”

John Wesley's 1755 translation according to StudyLight.com

<http://www.studylight.org/desk/?l=en&query=Hebrews+10%3A23§ion=0&translation=wes&oq=&sr=1>

"Let us hold fast the profession of our **FAITH** without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised"

The Spanish Reina Valera Antigua of 1602 and the Reina Valera of 1909 - Hebreos 10:23 - "Mantengamos firme la profesión de nuestra **FE sin** fluctuar; que fiel es el que prometió". The Reina-Valera Antigua was first translated and published in 1569 by Casiodoro de Reina, after twelve years of intensive work, and later put out in 1602 in revised form by Cipriano de Valera, who gave more than twenty years of his life to its revision and improvement."

Even the same people who put out the NIV, the International Bible Society, have recently translated the 1997 Italian version called La Parola é Vita, and it reads just like the King James Bible. It says: "Rimaniamo fermi nel dichiarare **LA NOSTRA FEDE** (our faith) , senza vacillare, perché fedele è colui che ha fatto le promesse."

There is another interesting case of a modern day Spanish Bible which follows the Westcott-Hort text. It is a Catholic Bible called Santa Biblia Versión Popular done in 1983. It combines both ideas in it's translation - "Mantengámonos firmes, sin dudar, en la esperanza de **LA FE** que profesamos, porque Dios cumplirá la promesa que nos ha hecho." - which means "Let us hold firm, without doubting, the **HOPE OF THE FAITH** which we profess..."

Adam Clarke's commentary is interesting in that, though he disagrees with the reading "the

profession of our FAITH", yet he acknowledges that this is the reading in "one of the Barberini MSS. and two others", but perhaps more significantly, when he actually expounds upon the meaning of the verse, he himself uses the word "faith" three times, and "hope" not at all. Adam Clarke comments (CAPS are mine) "The word *omologia*, from *omou*, together, and *logos*, a word, implies that general consent that was among Christians on all the important articles of their FAITH and practice; particularly their acknowledgment of THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, and of Jesus Christ, as the only victim for sin, and the only Saviour from it. If the word washed above refer to Christian baptism in the case of adults, then THE PROFESSION is that which the baptized then made OF THEIR FAITH in the Gospel; and of their determination to live and die in that FAITH."

Another English version that has translated this word as Faith in Hebrews 10:23 is Webster's 1833 translation. Webster knew some 15 different languages including Hebrew and Greek, and he made his own translation of the Bible in 1833. He changed the wording of the KJB in many places, but he left the word Faith here in Hebrews 10:23.

In addition to this, we also have the more modern translations of the KJV 21st Century Version 1994 and the Third Millennium Bible of 1998 and both of these also have *elpis* as Faith in Hebrews 10:23. J.P. Green's Modern KJV 1998 and the King James 2000 translations also read "the profession of our FAITH". In 1842 a group of Baptists decided to update the KJB and they still kept the translation as it stands in the 1611 King James Bible.

Several Bible commentators agree with the reading as found in the KJB. Matthew Henry, who often made textual corrections to the KJB, when commenting on this passage made no attempt to "correct" the KJB but rather said this verse means: "the duty itself - to hold fast the profession of our faith, to embrace all the truths and ways of the gospel, to get fast hold on them, and to keep that hold against all temptation and opposition."

Jamison, Faucett and Brown, who likewise often correct the KJB, say the word is *elpis* or hope but remark "our hope, which is indeed Faith exercised as to the future inheritance."

John Gill - In his commentary on Hebrews 10:23 he makes no comment correcting the reading of the KJB's "the profession of our Faith" but rather defines faith here as being "faith - either in the grace or doctrine of faith, or in the profession of both." John Owen comments on Hebrews 10:23 - "'Let us hold fast the profession of our FAITH without wavering: For He is faithful that promised" (verse 23). There is some uncertainty as to the Greek here: some manuscripts having "faith" others "hope"; both the R.V. and Bag. Inter. have "the confession of our (the) hope." IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE A.V. IS TO BE PREFERRED, for while it is true that if we adopt the alternative, we then have "faith" verse 22, "hope" in verse 23, and "love" in verse 24, yet this is more than offset by the weighty fact that perseverance in the faith is the theme which is steadily followed by the apostle not only throughout the remainder of this 10th chapter, but also throughout the 11th."

Barne's Notes on the New Testament - Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering - "... the apostle adds that they should hold fast the profession of their FAITH without being shaken by their trials, or by the arguments of their enemies. We have the same inducement

to hold fast the profession of our FAITH - for it is the same religion still; we have the same Saviour, and there is held out to us still the same prospect of heaven.”

Lancelot Andrewes was one of the King James Bible translators. In a devotional book he commented on Hebrews 10:23. <http://books.google.com/books?id=ewDAAAQAAJ&pg=PA65> The heart by Lancelot Andrewes

Hebrews 10:23 - "Grant me always to hold fast the profession of my FAITH without wavering; For thou art faithful who hast promised. To this hope set before me."

I think it is a bit hypocritical of those who criticize the KJB for rendering this word as Faith here in Hebrews 10, yet all other times as Hope. The new versions likewise do many similar things in their translations. For example, the word Faith itself. The Greek word for faith is pistis and most of the time the NASB and NIV translate this word as Faith. Yet both translate this same word as Pledge only one time (I Timothy 5:12) and only one time as Proof (Acts 17:31). Wouldn't they also be wrong then for departing from the usual sense of the word and translating it this way? We can easily see that Proof, and Pledge and Faith are not at all the same things in English, yet words have different shades of meaning depending upon the context.

In Summary, we see that the evidence for the KJB being correct, or at the very least, not in error for translating elpis as Faith in Hebrews 10:23 are # 1 - the Lexicons of Liddell and Scott, and that of Kittle; # 2 - other translations both foreign and in English - the Spanish Reina Valera of 1602, and 1858, Dios Habla Hoy 1996, the 1997 Italian version put out by the International Bible Society, the Portuguese Easy to Read Version of 1999, Wesley's 1755 and Webster's 1833 translations, The Book of the New Covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ done in 1836 by Granville Penn, "The New Testament Translated from the Original Greek" done in 1858 by Leister Sawyer; Whiston's Primitive New Testament 1745, An Exposition of the New Testament by William Gilpin in 1790, the 2001 Urim-Thummin Version by Dallas James, the Heritage Bible by Gwin Turner done in 2003, God's Word to the Nations 1995, the KJV 21st Century version 1994, Green's 2000 MKJV, the King James 2000, and the Third Millenium Bible 1998, and # 3 - many commentaries make no attempt to change the reading of the King James Bible but rather expound it accurately just as it stands with the reading: "the profession of our Faith".

The context as well shows that Faith is the better choice here than Hope. The context is the once for all sacrifice of our Lord, the remission of our sins and no more offering to be made for sins. In holding fast the profession (what we speak and affirm) of our faith, is it more accurate to say "I hope I am forgiven", or "I believe (have faith) that I am forgiven"? I believe God guided the KJB translators in giving the proper sense of this word "elpis" as being contextually equivalent to "faith, or what we trust in and confess before others.

Will Kinney

Return to Articles - <http://brandplucked.webs.com/articles.htm>

