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Resources for Teachers

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Wendell Willis, Editor

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

MEANINGS IN CONTEXT

How to use a Concordance, III

In this final installment about maximizing the usefulness of your concordance, we will see how the analytical concordance can give access to relationships among verses which are not obvious in translation.

In Galatians 6:10 the NIV (like most modern versions) translates, "as we have **opportunity**, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Focusing on the word "opportunity", it has often been understood to mean, "whenever, from time to time, as occasion arises, we ought to do some good as Christians." This understanding hardly gives the student any sense of this command as an urgent matter.

However, if we look up the word "opportunity" in the concordance (Youngs, p. 721; Strong, #2540), we find that it translates the word **kairos** (καιροω in Greek). Then turning to the Greek appendix (Young, p. 75; Strong p. 39) we find that kairos is translated by seven other words and phrases in the New Testament. So that just checking an English concordance for "opportunity" would lead to overlooking most of these other passages!

Among these other passages is Gal 6:9, the verse immediately preceding our verse, where **kairos** is rendered "due season." Gal 6:9 says, "Let us not grow weary in well doing for in **due season** (καιροω) we shall reap if we do not lose heart." This translation conveys an important implication of the Greek word,

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"an opportune time, a special time" (as in Romans 5:6 "At the **proper time** (kairos), God sent forth his Son, born under the Law to redeem those under the law").

Galatians 6:9 thus means, "Let us not grow weary in doing well, for if we remain loyal to the gospel, at the appropriate time God will reward our faithfulness—if we do not lose heart." Thus "due season" in this passage refers to "the End", when God rewards his people.

By reading these two verses together, as indeed they belong together, we can see that the true meaning of "opportunity" is "**as long as time remains before the End**, let us be busy doing good to all men, not neglecting other believers however, and God, the righteous Judge, will reward our untiring efforts with a joyous harvest."

A similar use of the concordance will help to show the relationships in clusters of ideas found in various passages, and thereby see broader concepts. To take yet another example, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 speaks of the "power" of the "gospel." What is that referring to, how does power relate to gospel? We can begin to find out by looking up both words, "power" and "gospel."

First, we will see that "gospel" is not quite as frequent in the New Testament as we might anticipate—in view of how freely we use it as an adjective today (e.g. "gospel paper," "gospel preaching," "gospel truth," etc.). "Gospel" translates the Greek word ευαγγελιον (in English letters euangellion). When we look up the word ευαγγελιον in the concordance (Young, and Strong #2098, p. 33), we see that it occurs predominantly in Paul's letters.

Then we examine the word "power" and discover that it translates the Greek δυναμις (or in English letters, dunamis, from which we get dynamite!).

We should also look up *δυναμις* in the Greek Appendix (Young, p.66 and Strong#1411, p. 24) and when we do so we will see that it is translated by 13 other English words! Making a list of the occurrence of both these Greek words (*δυναμις* and *ευαγγελιον*), we see that they are often associated together in the New Testament. (For example, Rom 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor 4:19; 2 Cor 4:7; Eph 3:7; 2 Thess 1:7 and 2 Tim 1:7,8 in addition to our passage under study).

Thus additional help in understanding a key thought in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 is found in other Pauline

verses where these two words are used together. This association of ideas, found by using an analytical concordance, is much more revealing than examining either word by itself. When we read these other passages which closely associate the two words "power" and "gospel" we come to see that the power of the gospel is not just its importance, nor the strength with which Paul presents it. Rather the gospel message itself has a power, a *dunamis*, apart from the abilities of the one who presents it, because God himself is behind it.

If we are to gain the skills and virtues required to follow the way of the cross, we will have to acquire them in a very different training ground. We will require a community that stands in sharp contrast to the dominant social order. For Jesus' way calls for kinds of caring that in the eyes of the world seem reckless and ill-advised.

*--Leonard Allen
The Cruciform Church*
