

## Same Word Fallacy in Bible Study

The Strong's concordance has become a staple for many students of the Bible who seek to see the underlying Greek or Hebrew in an English translation. The concordance comes with a Hebrew and a Greek lexicon which has a numbering system which enables people without training in Greek or Hebrew to link an English word back to the original language. Usually, the lexicons in Strong's Concordance will give several suggestions to equivalent English words. The other advantage of the Concordance is it will list every place the Hebrew or Greek word is found in the English Bible. Many use this list to believe the meaning of the word in one scripture is the same meaning of the word in another scripture. This is a fallacy that prevents people from coming to a correct understanding of a scripture. Further harm is done when the scripture is used to support a teaching that the Bible does not support. An understanding of word usage in English will help to expose the same word fallacy.

To help understand this fallacy, think about the word "bank." Some will hear the word and think "bank" is what an airplane does when it turns to the left or the right. Someone else will think about a building where financial transactions occur and as a place where money is kept in a vault. Others will think of the word as the land on the edge of the river where they love to go fishing. The only way to understand the word "bank" is to provide context for its use.

Another example will be the word bear. Simply saying the word "bear" will cause some people to think of a large four-legged, furry animal who lives in the wild. Others may think of the word to describe a hard to do task. Once again, the word must be used in context to help readers or listeners determine the correct meaning of the word "bear."

A final example is the word "apprehend." A policeman may hear the word and think someone was arrested or needs to be arrested. A college professor may hear the word and think about the difficulty students have in understanding a specific topic. Without context, readers or listeners would not know what the word really means.

Here is the bottom line. A word does not always mean the same thing when it appears in different places. Often, when beginning Bible students look up the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word in Strong's Concordance, they will read the list of possible uses of the word as definitions. This is not what Strong's Concordance was designed to do. The list of words is not meant to show the different ways the word is used in the scriptures. It does not mean every word in the list is a way to think of a word in a particular scripture. 2 Corinthians 1:15 is an example. Strong's Concordance gives this information about the underlying word for "benefit."

5485. χάρις **charis**, *khar'-ece*; from 5463; *graciousness* (as *gratifying*), of manner or act (abstr. or concr.; lit., fig. or spiritual; espec. the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including *gratitude*):—acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy)

The word list included at the end of the listing is not a possible definition for the word “benefit” as used in 2 Corinthians 1:15. Instead, the context of the scripture helps the reader to understand which word best describes the use of the underlying Greek word. Many read into this verse the idea of a definite second work of grace. The reasoning being the Greek for the word “benefit” is translated in other places by the English word “grace.” However, a careful study of the morphology of the Greek word for “benefit” and the underlying Greek will show a verbal clause in which Paul is saying the Corinthians will receive a second proof of the goodwill that he has toward them when he comes to visit them the second time. The idea of the Holy Ghost coming and filling the Corinthians is not conveyed at all in the underlying Greek. Instead, the Corinthians would experience a second blessing under the ministry of the inspired Apostle.

The purpose of this little study is not to convince anyone there is not a second work of grace. However, the examples used here will help us to understand 2 Corinthians 1:15 does not teach a definite second work of grace simply because the same Greek word used in this text has the same meaning in other texts where the Greek word is translated grace. If one believes there is a second definite work of grace taught in the Bible, it would be wise not to use the “same word fallacy” to support the teachings. This statement should caution saints, if carried to its logical conclusion, to be careful they are not using texts to support any teachings that are based on the “same word fallacy.”

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