

Heresies, Galatians 5:20



The ESV fails dramatically in certain portions of the scripture, indicating either a deception that has crept into the conservative view of scripture or a purposeful attempt to subvert the scripture by a liberal or liberals among the Translation editors. The error as to one particular word in the list of the works of the flesh is a deadly error in that it relieves heretics of having their sin in the list of those works. And it works to the benefit of those who attack, undermine, and take over conservative denominations.

Galatians 5:19-20 states: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, **Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, . . .**” That is the King James version (KJV) of the bible, but the English Standard version says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality,

impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, **rivalries, dissensions, divisions, . . .**” Notice the last three words in each of these versions. These three works of the flesh are all related to each other and seem to be rooted in the actions/words of those who cause disunity. Paul could have just used one word meaning “disunifier” or “divider.” So why use three different words?

Here are the Greek words for each of the three: *eritheia*, *dichostasia*, *hairesis*.

Eritheia (translated “strife” in the KJV & “rivalries” in the ESV), when examined in more detail, means something akin to selfish ambition, which is how it’s translated in James 13:16 in the New International Version (NIV). In the King James, it’s translated as “strife” in both James and Galatians. Strong’s Concordance defines it as:

electioneering or intriguing for office: A) apparently, in the NT a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and fractious spirit which does not disdain low arts; B) partisanship, fractiousness.

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon explains the meaning as follows:

ἐριθεία (not ἐπίθεια, cf. W. § 6, 1 g.; [Chandler § 99]) [-θία WH; see I, ι and *Tdf.* Proleg. p. 88], -είας, ἡ, (ἐριθεύω to spin wool, work in wool, Heliod. 1, 5; Mid. in the same sense, Tob. ii. 11; used of those who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts, Aristot. polit. 5, 3; the verb is derived from ἔριθος working for hire, a hireling; fr. the Maced. age down, a spinner or weaver, a worker in wool, Is. xxxviii. 12 Sept.; a mean, sordid fellow), *electioneering* or *intriguing for office*, Aristot. pol. 5, 2 and 3 [pp. 1302^b, 4 and 1303^a, 14]; hence, apparently, in the N. T. *a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness*: Jas. iii. 14, 16; κατ' ἐριθείαν, Phil. ii. 3; Ignat. ad Philadelph. § 8; οἱ ἐξ ἐριθείας (see ἐκ, II. 7), Phil. i. 16 (17) [yet see ἐκ, II. 12 b.]; i. q. contending against God, Ro. ii. 8 [yet cf. Mey. (ed. Weiss) ad loc.]; in the plur. αἱ ἐριθείαι [W. § 27, 3; B. § 123, 2]: 2 Co. xii. 20; Gal. v. 20. See the very full and learned discussion of the word by Fritzsche in his Com. on Rom. i. p. 143 sq.; [of which a summary is given by Ellic. on Gal. v. 20. See further on its derivation, *Lobeck*, Path. Proleg. p. 365; cf. W. 94 (89)].*

Eritheia is translated in other parts of the KJV as strife, strifes, contention, and contentious. In the ESV, it's translated in other parts as hostility, self-seeking, and selfish ambition.

Therefore, after reviewing all of the meanings in the Greek, the sense one gets from the word *eritheia* is that of a spirit of partisanship seeking its own way without regard to the peace of the church or the benefit of others. Whether translated as "strife" or as "rivalries," *eritheia* equates to partisanship to advance oneself or a

group using any tactics, no matter how low, and to the detriment of unity of the body. It's a horizontal sin, among believers, and would only indirectly be a threat to church authority.

Dichostasia (translated "seditions" in the KJV & "dissensions" in the ESV), according to Strong's Concordance, means "disunion, i.e. (figuratively) dissension: division, sedition." It is translated as "divisions" in two other verses in the KJV New Testament – Romans 16:17 & I Cor. 3:3.

διχοστασία, -ας, ἡ, (διχοστατέω to stand apart), *dissension, division*; plur.: Ro. xvi. 17; 1 Co. iii. 3 [Rec.]; Gal. v. 20. (Occasionally in Grk. writ. fr. Solon in Dem. p. 423, 4 and Hdt. 5, 75 on; [1 Macc. iii. 29].) *

Thayer's Greek Lexicon explains the meaning as follows:

Therefore, after reviewing all of the meanings in the Greek, the sense one gets from the word *dichostasia* is that of an independence that leads to divisions, perhaps even that threatens the authority structure of the church.

Hairesis (translated as "heresies" in the KJV & "divisions" in the ESV), according to Strong's Concordance, means

- I. act of taking, capture: e.g. storming a city
- II. choosing, choice
- III. that which is chosen
- IV. a body of men following their own tenets (sect or party)
 - A. of the Sadducees
 - B. of the Pharisees
 - C. of the Christians
- V. dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims

αἵρεσις, -εως, ἡ; 1. (fr. αἰρέω), *act of taking, capture*: τῆς πόλεως, the storming of a city; in prof. auth. 2. (fr. αἰρέομαι), *choosing, choice*, very often in prof. writ.: Sept. Lev. xxii. 18; 1 Macc. viii. 30. 3. *that which is chosen*, a chosen course of thought and action;

Hairesis in five other verses in the New Testament (KJV) is translated “sect” and “heresy” in four other verses. In the NASB Greek New Testament, it is translated “party” three times, “factions” one time, “sect” three times, and “heresies” one time (II Pet. 2:1).

Hairesis contains an added element to the disunity root of the other two Greek words – purposeful, committed rebellion. Only this rebellion doesn’t involve the storming of a physical city; it involves the storming of the City of God, the Church, the pillar and ground of the truth. It has to consist of a philosophical attack, more to the point, a theological attack. It’s not just an attack on unity or peace or other believers; heresy is an attack on God Himself and His word.

Although, the word clearly involves actions and words that create “divisions,” as the ESV translates it, such is a very inadequate definition. It fits much better the translation of the other two Greek words, *eritheia* & *dichostasia*, than *haireisis* does. So why translate it as “divisions,” thereby leaving out of the list entirely the explicit word “heresies” from the list of the works of the flesh? Why is this important? For several reasons.

First, the full meaning of a word should be used when appropriate. In this case, *haireisis* means much more than divisive; it involves rebellious takeover against the authority. Divisiveness can be merely horizontal, among the members, and need not be an attempt to undermine or take over the authority of the church. The other two words do not. *Dichostasia* can be translated as sedition, which involves attempts to undermine authority, it does not contain the same intentional rebellious purpose as *haireisis*. In fact, the translation by the ESV editors of *dichostasia* as dissension is a

problem because dissent is not always sinful. Jesus spent most his discussions with Pharisees and Sadducees dissenting from their opinions. Sinful divisiveness is covered by the other two Greek words, while *hairesis* involves so much more than mere divisiveness.

Second, the translation of *hairesis* as divisiveness works in favor of heretics in the church. In the early part of the twentieth century, the major Presbyterian denomination was overtaken by heretics, also known as liberals, progressives, the tolerant, higher critics, modernists, etc. There was no question that they were heretics because the doctrines they challenged – the virgin birth, the resurrection, the miracles of Jesus, the divine inspiration of the scripture, Jesus’ divinity – could not be more foundational to the Faith. As J. Gresham Machen explained, these “liberal churchmen” could not in reality even be called Christian, much less Orthodox.

Athanasius stood up for the Trinity in the early Church and for his “divisiveness,” he was ejected from the Roman Empire more than once. Martin Luther was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church for his “divisiveness” when he stood up for justification by faith and other biblical doctrines. Jesus came to bring a sword, dividing not just religiously but even families. See Matthew 10:35.

Machen stood up to the so called liberals of his day, stood for the Orthodox Faith, and in writing up the “fundamentals” upon which every Christian must believe, he helped establish the term, “Fundamentalist Christian.” Machen was the intellectual peer of the liberals, and he was respected throughout the denomination. In other words, he was a threat. Yet, the liberals succeeded in expelling Machen from the denomination in the 1930’s, even though he had been Moderator of the General Assembly. What was the charge? Divisiveness.

So in trading “heresies” as a work of the flesh for “divisions,” the ESV Translation editors chose, either by mistake or by deception, the liberal/progressive movement over biblical truth. Can one word be that important?