

Introduction:

1. I got caught again last week. After it happened, there was no way to deny it. It was there in plain sight for everybody to see.
 - a. I made a mistake on one of my scripture slides last week. I inadvertently left the little “not” out of my scripture slide on Mark 16:15-16. I can explain how it happened—it was a simple formatting mistake that left the “not” out—but explanations can become excuses and don’t change the fact that a word was left out.
 - b. If no one had noticed it, that would be one thing. But several noticed it.
 - c. My record as a preacher who never makes a mistake was spoiled—not by this incident—but was spoiled 40 years ago with my first attempt at preaching.
2. Are there any lessons that can be learned from the “not” that was not there.
 - a. A lesson for preachers is to carefully scan and proof their slides to catch such errors.
 - b. But, there are some other lessons that can be learned—lessons for all of us.

The Lesson:

I. Teachers make mistakes.

- A. It is likely that the only teacher who never made a mistake is Jesus. Though His enemies did not believe in Him, what they said as they tried to trap Him was indeed true, Luke 20:21.
 1. Everything Jesus taught was absolutely correct. He made no mistakes.
 2. The same may be said of the apostles and prophets when they spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 10:19-20. They spoke inspired words without error.
- B. But for the rest of us, we make mistakes.
 1. Everyone—preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, home study teachers—all make mistakes. No matter how hard we may try to teach without mistakes, it can happen.
 2. Even the great gospel teacher Apollos made mistakes, Acts 18:24-26. Few men in scripture are described as eloquent speakers. But no matter how eloquent, he was in error and needed to be corrected. He made a mistake but received the correction well.
- C. The application for the hearer of God’s word:
 1. Give a break to Bible teachers. Aquila and Priscilla gave Apollos a break, Acts 18:26. They didn’t jump down his throat or call him a false teacher, condemning him to hell. Instead, they took him aside and accurately taught him God’s way. By the way, if he refused correction and stubbornly insisted on error, he should be called a false teacher.
 2. Know that teachers might err. One of the saddest commentaries on our times is that most people don’t know enough about the Bible to determine whether a man has made a mistake or not. Do you think maybe we should do as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11?

II. Error is easily taught.

- A. The error made on “not” in Mark 16:16. Was inadvertent and completely accidental.
 1. If a person were to accept the verse as it was displayed on the slide, the verse would really make no sense. It would say, “He who believes...will be saved; but he who does believe will be condemned.”
 2. Which is it, will the believer be saved or condemned? If a person took the verse as it was on the slide, he might throw up his hands in discouragement. Error can have an impact!
- B. My point is, error is so easily taught and can be so damaging!
 1. While the mistake on the slide might be attributed to carelessness in checking the slide, anytime a man is careless in studying the Bible, the possibility of error being taught multiplies. Teachers must be diligent in study—carefully comparing what they say with all that God says on a given topic, 2 Timothy 2:15.
 2. Much of the error taught in the religious world comes about, not as the result of careless study, but by simply repeating what another teacher has said—repeating without personal study. Where do the errors of Calvinism, faith only salvation, once saved—always saved come from? Not by careful study of God’s word, but by repetition and assumption.
- C. The application for the hearer of God’s word:

1. Give time to Bible study. Don't assume that just because a teacher (even one of renown) has taught something that it is true. Jesus told men to search the scriptures, John 5:39. When Paul reasoned in the synagogues, he was calling upon men to study the scriptures for themselves, Acts 17:1-3.
2. Know what is true and false. There is no greater security than knowing the truth—and knowing that you know. You are not trusting what someone has told you, but have investigated and know for yourself, John 4:39-42.

III. One word makes a difference.

- A. What a big lesson this is. One word—"not"—missing from the text of Mark 16:16 changed the meaning of the verse. It went from a statement about salvation to contradictory nonsense.
 1. There is great power in one word. Paul made an argument in Galatians 3:16 based on one word—and how the addition of one letter to that word could change the meaning of God's promise to Abraham.
 2. There is great power in one word. Jesus made an argument in Matthew 22:32 based on one word. God said, "I *am* the God of..." He did not say, "I *was* the God of..." Jesus made it clear that God's use of the present tense of that one word meant that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continued to live in the realm of the soul. The Sadducees erred because they failed to see the meaning of that one word—and as a result—did not believe in the resurrection from the dead!
- B. Application for the hearer of God's word:
 1. Give careful attention to small words. We sometimes have problems wrestling with big words in the Bible: regeneration, atonement, antitype, or inspiration. While those are all important to study, look at the power in small words.
 - a. Consider the use of "if" in John 8:24, 31, 51. It makes the things Jesus speaks of conditional. What "if" a person does not do what Jesus said? Then they cannot claim the promise or blessing under consideration.
 - b. Consider the use of "except" in John 3:5 (KJV). It means "unless this condition or circumstance is present..." Similar use of "except" is found in Matthew 19:9.
 2. Know the meaning of words, and don't let anyone change the meaning. Be on guard.
 - a. Changing the meaning of one word can change the meaning of the text. Some false teachers labor hard to do that.
 - b. An example is where teachers have attempted to change the meaning is in the case of "for" in Acts 2:38. The word is used in the sense of "in order to" accomplish a thing. What are baptism and repentance for? They are for—that is, in order to—receive the remission of sins. Some argue that for means "because of"—because they already had received remission of sins. This argument has been repeated so many times that some people consider it a good and valid argument. But no matter how many times it is repeated, it is still false. I like to ask if those teachers will apply the same reasoning to the same phrase in Matthew 26:28? Know this for certain: Jesus did not shed His precious blood because men had already received remission of sins. He shed His blood in order that men might receive remission of sins.

Conclusion:

1. How important is one word? For me, I thought the mistake I made on just one word was important enough for us to study a whole lesson on that concept.
2. For you and for me, how important will just one word be on the Judgment Day? How important will the word "saved" be on that day? The only alternative to that one word is "lost." God lets you pick today which word you want on that day! Do your picking well, because there are no opportunities to change your choices when that last day comes.