

“**I** shall urge on you how well it will repay you to study the words which you are in the habit of using or of meeting, be they such as relate to highest spiritual things, or our common words of the shop and the market, and all the familiar intercourse of life” (R.C. Trench, *The Study of Words*, p. 1).

Words are the building blocks of language, and language is what sets man apart from the animals. Man is a rational, thinking creature; he is able to frame his feelings, desires, and conclusions in words which are then conveyed to others. Through words man speaks his mind to God, and through words God has spoken His mind to man (1 Cor 2:13). Words, not vague feelings or indefinite intuitions, carry the message of salvation from heaven to earth. If we do not understand the meanings of those words, salvation will remain beyond our grasp.

When men wrote the Scriptures by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit chose certain words because they had definite meaning. Our study of the Bible takes on new depth and breadth when we delve into the definitions of those words and learn of the various shades of meaning they possess.

This is not beyond the ability of the average reader. For example, if one looks up the word “crown” in Vine’s Expository dictionary he will learn that it is used to translate two different Greek words: *stephanos* and *diadema*. The *stephanos* was “the victor’s crown, the symbol of triumph in the games or some such contest ... It was woven as a garland of oak, ivy, parsley, myrtle or olive, or in imitation of these in gold” (Vol 1, p. 258).

On the other hand, the *diadema* “is never used as *stephanos* is; it is always the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity” (ibid). This distinction becomes clearer when we consider that the dragon and the sea-beast in Revelation (i.e., Satan and his persecuting force, the Roman Empire) do not wear a *stephanos*, a crown of victory, but *diademata*, crowns of civil power (Rev 12:3; 13:1; 19:12). God’s faithful people, however, are promised “the crown (*stephanos*) of life” (Rev 2:10). In other words, God’s people will be victorious in the end, not Rome.

When an unfamiliar word is heard from the pulpit, read in a passage or encountered in a Bible lesson, the thorough student will consult a dictionary (Greek, English or both) and add a new word to his or her vocabulary. Thus one’s ability to understand and be understood is enhanced.