

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

examination, that the preface is substantially the same as in the first edition of 1859.) In the translator's Prolegomena it is at once clear that the writer has not resided in Athens to no purpose, he understands the importance and validity of the Greek accents, which he vigorously defends; he understands also the popular overestimate of the itacistic variations in transcribed Greek texts from the earliest times; but it is when he comes to remark upon what he calls dialectology that he breaks most decidedly with current ideas, and prepares to deal out translator's footnotes to Winer himself: for Masson had arrived, by the study of the modern Greek, at the same results which Deissmann and Moulton reach from the study of the papyri, namely, that the supposed Biblical Greek was the spoken Greek of the day. Let us, then, see what Masson says on the point; here are some sentences:—

P. vii. 'The diction of the New Testament is the plain and unaffected Hellenic of the Apostolic Age, as employed by Greek-speaking Christians when discoursing on religious subjects.

'It cannot be shown that the New Testament writers introduced any word or expression whatever, peculiar to themselves; . . . the history and doctrines of Christianity had been for some years discussed in Greek before any part of the New Testament was written. . . . Apart from the Hebraisms—the number of which has, for the most part, been grossly exaggerated—the New Testament may be considered as exhibiting the only genuine *facsimile* of the colloquial diction employed by *unsophisticated* Grecian gentlemen of the first century, who spoke without pedantry—as *ιδιωται* and not as *σοφισται*.'

Here, then, we have the supposed Biblical Greek banished as effectively as by our modern exegetes and critics; the writer is as outspoken in

his scepticism of Hebraism in the New Testament as Professor Moulton himself, though he arrives at his results by a somewhat different road, and probably overshoots the mark in respect to Semitisms as Moulton did and as Hellenists might easily do. He is anxious to retain the authorship of the New Testament writings for Greek gentlemen, instead of cobblers and fishermen and agriculturists, but he admits that his gentleman writer is unsophisticated and is talking as *ιδιωτης*, which very nearly puts the matter as the papyri would suggest, and is practically equivalent to the assumption of the existence of the *Koinē*. They wrote, as Lightfoot imagined, *without any thought of being literary*.

If one reads Masson's preface as it appears in the English Winer, it will perhaps strike the reader as being somewhat superficial and his results rather hastily stated; but this is due, not to lack of ability to present his case, or to undue rapidity in formulating his conclusions, but to editorial compression exercised from without. It is much to be regretted that Masson's preface was reduced, I suppose by the publishers, to its present state of tenuity. One can only speculate on the reason for this treatment, for which Masson expresses regret; perhaps it was considered inimical to the interest of the author translated that his foundations should be undermined by his translator; but, whatever was the reason, there seems no doubt that a valuable piece of investigation was suppressed, or reduced to such scanty dimensions that its main thesis escaped the attention of New Testament students generally: even Professor Moulton, who had the re-editing of Winer in hand, does not seem to have been aware that any one had arrived some fifty years since, by the road of modern Greek, at the main conclusions of the papyrologists.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 13.

I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

I. It is not Paul the Apostle that is speaking here, but Paul the man; the man tried and trained, inured to hardship, and disciplined to

contentment by the numberless terrible vicissitudes of his strange, eventful life; the man of like passions with ourselves; the man who had to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, even as he exhorted others; and when, therefore, he thus tells us of the mastery which he had obtained over

himself and over circumstances, and of the strength with which he felt himself endued by Christ—strength which rendered him consciously equal to every duty, every trial—he said only that which every individual Christian ought to be able to say. Fortitude in suffering, patience in tribulation, contentment with the allotments of Divine providence, vigour and fidelity in the discharge of duty—these are obligations resting equally upon all; and the strength, therefore, by which they are to be fulfilled must also be equally attainable by all.

2. Here, then, we have the language of actual experience. Here is a man whose name is known, whose identity is not questioned, whose history is familiar, whose letters are genuine, who tells us, modestly but frankly, what he himself has experienced and accomplished. He leaves the Stoics and the Epicureans whom he met in the streets of Athens far behind him; they are toiling laboriously up the lower slopes of the mountain over which he flies with majestic and vigorous wing. A high state of grace, this? No doubt. But St. Paul knew the meaning of his own words, and when in ch. 3 he says, 'I count all things but loss for Christ,' he can add, 'for whom I did suffer the loss of all things.' The words of such a man, whose history we can recall, are not mere brag or bravado; he calmly tells us that this is where he stands, this is his relation to the great riddle of existence, this is what life means to him.

The text may be treated, first, in its special application to St. Paul, and then in its wider application to the followers of Christ generally.

I.

THE SPECIAL APPLICATION.

1. From the context we discover that the Apostle had been speaking about the sympathetic thoughtfulness of the Philippians for himself. It had been their desire to minister to him in his need, and although the lack of opportunity had prevented this service, he accepted the will for the deed, and was grateful to them. But he would have them know that Christ was so much to him that the vicissitudes which beset him could not disturb his contentment. Life was full and satisfying whatever its outward conditions and changes. Alike in want and when abundance fell to his lot; alike in storm and sunshine, his soul dwelt at ease, because his life was hid with Christ in God, and

was unaffected in its deeper experience by temporal and material things. 'I have learned,' he said, 'in whatever state I am, therein to be content.' I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: everywhere and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. 'I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.'

The sailing vessel was at the mercy of wind and wave and had to reckon with every storm and current. The modern ship towers many decks high; by virtue of her own weight and strength she can ride through any sea; by virtue of the steam-power within her she is independent of wind and current—able to force her way to the desired haven. So Paul is independent of circumstance by virtue of the Christ-power within him.

2. To the Apostle Christ was all in all. He had such a conception of Christ's grace—its power and its adaptation—that he believed that nothing in life—not its highest demands or sorest trials—was outside His sway, and that it was possible so to appreciate it as to become equal for all things. He declares that Christ is enough, that we want no other aid, no other inspiration, no ampler store to draw from; for in Him is life eternal, in Him is light, in Him is majesty and strength; and he who believes, even though his faith be but as a grain of mustard seed, becomes thereby so strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, that nothing in the way of precious and abiding triumph of the inner over the outer is impossible to him.

The Christ in whom St. Paul trusts is no narrow Christ, but One as broad as the necessities and cravings and duties of the human soul. Not a partial Christ, but One who, while He is yet human, is nevertheless filled with all the fulness of God. Not a dead Christ, but One who, having died once for all, hath now ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on High, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Not a far-away Christ, but One walking with us in all the round of life in a blessed companionship, and near at hand in every time of trouble. Not a merely beautiful Christ, suiting with His rare symmetry the fine demands of art, and improving lives and elevating society by the grace of His sweet, wise speech; but a helping Christ, a sin-delivering Christ, a burden-bearing Christ, a guiding Christ, a Christ who to poor, lost men can be the hope of the glory in the world to come.

It is as though Marconi with his experience of the inexhaustible nature of electrical energy should cry out, 'I can do anything—talk across the ocean without wires, or heat all the houses on this planet without stove or furnace.' Paul had found out how to draw upon the inexhaustible spiritual reservoir of the universe. He felt himself linked, beyond severing, with the infinite Heart and Will. And so he saw no insuperable difficulties.¹

3. The only limitations to St. Paul's words are limitations implicit to the subject. Whatever lies within the horizon of duty and necessity and desire, he can do. To him as to God there is no question of can or cannot. In Christ he is morally omnipotent. But just as God's inability to lie (He 6¹⁸) does not in the least degree limit His infinite power (for lying is contrary to the Divine nature, and therefore outside the horizon of Divine action), so St. Paul is strong only for that which Christ would have him do. All else is outside Christ, the sphere of his strength. But within the limits of the personality of Christ lay Paul's whole action, thought and life. Consequently this limit was no limit to him. And he felt himself endowed with infinite strength. To him, therefore, the burdens of life were light, and its toil was easy.

When Oliver Cromwell was dying, he asked that Ph 4¹¹⁻¹³ should be read to him. 'Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned . . . to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound . . . and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' And then he repeated the words of the passage to himself. When the Apostle spoke of his contentment and submission to the will of God in all conditions, he said, 'It's true, Paul, you have learned this, and attained to this measure of grace; but what shall I do? ah, poor creature, it is a hard lesson for me to take out! I find it so.' But when he came to the words which followed, faith began to work, and his heart found comfort and support, and he said, 'He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too'; and so he drew water out of the wells of salvation. And such an experience is just that of unrecorded multitudes, writ large, in which God's Word restores the faith of the stricken, cheers the downcast and chases despair away; revives courage and binds up the wounds of the struggling and driven.²

II.

THE GENERAL APPLICATION.

1. The things of which the Apostle declares himself to be independent are the very things which too often are exaggerated in our lives, and

¹ Rufus M. Jones.

² Muir, *Our Grand Old Bible*, 165.

made the occasion of stumbling. In the greater losses or calamities we cast ourselves upon God, and so obtain help and comfort; but in respect to the lesser trials—the worries and cares which intermingle with the events of the passing days—these find us unprepared, and we meet them with fretful complaints, and angry outbursts unworthy of the Christian name. What we need is, like St. Paul, so to live in Christ that they shall no longer exert this influence over us.

There are the irritations of life, the people who differ from us and are sometimes bitter in their differences; the people and things that will not shape themselves to our minds; the annoyances that belong to business, the wrongs that obtain there, the self-seeking of people, the unscrupulousness of people, the untrustworthiness of people, the bad temper of people. How can we bear it all? How can we behave ourselves worthily, and keep our souls free from it, apart from Christ? We cannot. But in Christ it can be done. That is the experience of the Apostle. A man can live the Christian life, the real and true Christian life, under the most adverse conditions; not the life of outward ceremonies or observances, but the life of holy love.

It is said that once, in a room full of musicians, among whom was the celebrated pianist, Liszt, a little girl, having heard some of the performers on the piano, ran to the instrument and attempted to produce such music as she had listened to. She only made a dreadful discord, and soon turned aside in despair, exclaiming, 'I can't play! I wish I could play!' 'Do you, dear?' said the great Liszt, 'Come here and you shall.' Liszt sat before the piano, took the child on his knee, placed his hand on the keys and then told the child to put her fingers on his and keep them firmly there. Forthwith he began to play the instrument, as only he could play it. The child, keeping her fingers on the musician's as they ran over the keys, was delighted, and exclaimed, 'Now I can play! Now I can play!' So can we do all things in Him who strengthens us. Yet it is not we that do them, but Christ.³

2. This temper of mind by which St. Paul is able to say, 'I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me,' is one which we all might well covet. To be superior to every need; to bear prosperity without pride, and adversity without a murmur; to feel that there is no earthly circumstance that can disturb the soul from its equilibrium in God; to be able to yoke the most untamable difficulties to the car of spiritual progress; to have such a sense of power as to laugh

³ Herbert Windross.

at impossibility and to sing in adversity; to help the weak even though we might seem to need every scrap of power for ourselves; to feel amid the changing conditions of life as a strong swimmer does in the midst of the ocean waves, which he beats back in the proud consciousness of power—all this and much more is involved in the words of the text.

There is an old story called the Mountain of Miseries. The writer dreamed that on a certain day all men were to bring their griefs and miseries and cast them down in a certain place. They came, each bearing his burden, and cast it down, till the burdens formed a mountain higher than the clouds. One carried a load of poverty, another one of sickness, another crippled limbs, another old age, another remorse and disappointment, and all were cast away. Then the dream changed; a command was given that as all must bear a burden of some kind there should be an exchange made, and each person should go away carrying the burdens given to him. So some who had cast off poverty carried away sickness instead, for hunger they received thirst; one who had cast away a deformed limb found a rebellious son; a woman exchanged an ugly face for a bad reputation. Another gave up white hairs to carry away asthma, and there was wailing and discontent on all sides. Then the writer teaches the lesson that our Heavenly Father knows best, and assigns to each soul the sphere to which it is best fitted, and the burden it best can bear. Yes, God sends our sorrows, and they are blessed angels in disguise.¹

3. The Apostle calls it a secret which he has learned. It is an open secret now, and yet it remains a hidden thing until it is translated into life. Let us consider some of the ways in which it may be utilized in our daily life.

(1) *It should help us in our contest with sin.*—One of the sayings of the early Church forcibly expresses a great truth: 'Where Christ is, there are sacred fires.' Through our union with Him these fires burn in our breasts, quickening what is good and holy, destroying what is evil. It is by this help of the indwelling Christ, through the Spirit, that the dominion of sin is overcome, and that spiritual attainments are developed. Our Lord is not only Himself endowed with all-sufficient grace, but He has conquered sin in our humanity, and in His conflict with it has penetrated to its recesses, extracted its sting, and robbed it of its power. He need not be its victim who has taken Christ to be his Lord—the Christ who knows what is in man and understands each one of us both in our likeness to others and in our individual peculiarities. To stand alone without Him is to

¹ H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Day by Day Duty*, 143.

be weak. Circumstances will always be too strong for us, and sin will be too strong. The secret of strength for all men is to hold fast by the 'strong son of God'; and they alone are sufficient in whatsoever state they are, to whom this loving and quickening voice has spoken the charter, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'

A young Japanese preacher told the following story of his soul. 'I wished to get rid of my sins. I tried Confucius and Buddha, and one by one all the religions of the East; but they gave me no help. I turned to the Roman Catholics, and at first hoped much from them; but I found that their priestly magic was too nearly akin to my native religion. I then discovered the American missionaries, who taught me the gospel in its simplicity. With them I found what I sought in vain elsewhere. My heart was like one of our most complicated locks. Confucius came with his key, but he could not get it in. So did Buddha. The Pope got his key in, but it stuck half-way. Christ's key, however, entered at once, glided quickly to the very bottom, and gently opened the lock. I then felt sure that the Maker of that Divine key was also the Maker of my heart.'²

(2) *It should inspire noble ambitions.*—Our Lord has taught us that 'all things are possible to him that believeth.' They are possible in Christ. With such a conviction we ought surely to aim at something higher than it is usual for us to do. We are too much contented with a poor, barren, restricted life; treading the lowlands when we might climb to the highlands, satisfied with the mean and commonplace when we might attempt higher things. Can we put any limit to what may be done by a Christ-moved and a Christ-filled heart? Many examples teach us what heights of saintliness may be attained, what deeds of heroic self-sacrifice performed, what sufferings patiently borne through the power of Christ resting upon men; saintliness like that of Thomas à Kempis and Samuel Rutherford, heroism like that of Luther and Livingstone, patience like that of untold thousands whose lives though unknown to the world have been in obscure spheres fragrant with the savour of Christ.

Westcott was an elderly man of sixty-four, worn with prodigious work when the offer of the bishopric of Durham came to him. He had been a student and a preacher all his life and he had come singularly little in touch with the world; he knew little of parochial work or diocesan administration. The state and pomp of the position were distasteful to him. Long ago he had said to Dr. Vaughan at Harrow, much to Vaughan's surprise, that he felt he might be called upon some day to rule, and now in the evening of life he was

² J. Wells, *Christ in the Present Age*, 111.

summoned. He made a clean sweep of preferences and fears alike, and wrote to Lord Salisbury that he did not feel justified in declining the heavy charge laid upon him. It was thought by many to be a rash experiment. He wrote to his son: 'In the prospect of such a charge every thought of fitness vanishes. There can be no fitness or unfitness but simply absolute surrender. I think I can offer all; and God will use the offering.'¹

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed,
Whose deeds, both great and small,
Are close-knit strands of one unbroken thread,
Where love ennobles all.
The world may sound no trumpets, ring no bells,
The Book of Life the shining record tells.

(3) *It should comfort us when life's outlook is dark and threatening.*—The anticipation of evil, when clouds overcast the sky, is often difficult to bear. The uncertainty of what is before us, the suspense, the ominous signs and sounds which awaken sombre forebodings, are disturbing to the spirit and impressively teach us that 'this is not our rest.' But the assurance of a Divine strength which has proved sufficient for us in the past will dissipate the clouds of despondency, and enable us to face the future without fear.

In my present charge are two old people who have reached the fourscore mark; both are very fine Christian characters. The husband is very ill, and the doctor advises that he must be taken to the hospital; to this the wife will not consent, as it means their separation for the time being. I asked her how she was able to do the extra work involved by the sickness, and her answer was, 'I ask Christ for strength each day, and He has not failed me yet.'²

(4) *It should increase our love of Christ and encourage us in His service.*—The truth that He is ever with us, ready to fill us with His strength so as to fit us for doing or bearing God's will, should draw out our most fervent affection. What patience

¹ A. C. Benson, *Biographical Sketches*.

² G. I. Campbell.

on His part it implies, what watchful interest, what willingness to help, what outflow of Divine energy, what constancy of grace! The realization of this truth should unite us very closely to Christ, and should receive an active response from us, as we rely upon Him and constantly receive of His fullness. Therefore do not cease from God's work because you are unable to perform it of yourself. Let it teach you to cease from yourself, but not from your work. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,' but cease not to serve your God; but rather, in Christ's strength, do it with greater vigour than before. All the achievements in the world, both political and religious, have been begun by men who thought themselves called to perform them, and believed it possible that they should be accomplished. So if you are called to any work for Christ, go straight at it, writing this upon your escutcheon, 'I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me,'—I will do what God has called me to do, whether I am blessed or whether I am left alone.

A visitor once went to hear the famous chimes in a certain Cathedral abroad. When he entered the belfry he found a man with wooden gloves striking the keys of the chimes. There was a deafening noise, but no music; the performer and the visitor could hear nothing but the clash of wood. But far away in the fields and streets people heard the sweet voices of the chimes. Most of our work is like that of the man with the wooden gloves; we seem to make no music, we exert no influence. We toil away amid the noise and clatter of everyday work; we teach in the school, or preach in the pulpit, or hammer on the bench, and it seems only noise and not music. Ah, if it is rightly done, it is music; God hears it. Souls are comforted and made better by our work. Doing our duty is like playing the chimes, it seems hard and harsh, but it sends out music to cheer and encourage others in the right way.³

³ H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Day by Day Duty*, 146.

New Testament Fragments from Turkestan.

BY LOUIS H. GRAY, A.M., PH.D., SOMETIME FELLOW IN INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGES IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

THE decipherment of the rich manuscript treasures discovered in recent years in Central Asia, particularly by the German expeditions of Grunwedel and Le Coq, and the French of Pelliot, has already produced much that cannot fail to be of value to

the student of Biblical literature. It has long been known that some few verses from both the Old and the New Testament exist in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth chapters of a Pahlavi, or Middle Persian, treatise of the ninth century, the