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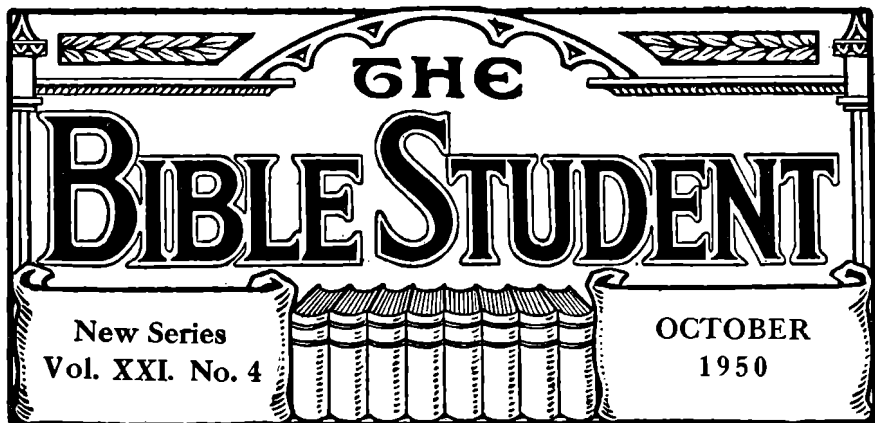
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

HYPERBOLES OF FAITH

BY W. WILCOX

"Fervent"—A Word Study

Peter writes his letter at times of great strain, when forces of evil were let loose with intent to destroy the little band of Christians. Hence he uses many colourful words and expressions which are found but rarely, if ever, in the writings of other authors of New Testament books.

Here is a word *ektenēs*, used once in Peter's Epistle, and once concerning prayer for Peter in the Acts.

The adverb *ektenōs*, is likewise only found once and that in Peter's epistle. A similar word, *ekteneia* is used once by Paul in his speech before Agrippa.

These words are derived from *ekteinō*, which is found frequently in the Gospels and the Acts where it is usually translated, "stretched forth" e.g. the hand. They are derived from *ek* = 'out of', and *teinō* = to stretch, to strain, to draw tight; hence the words signify "intense strain", feeling "on the rack", as Vincent puts it. The whole self is exerted, put to intense strain in any activity to which this adjective or adverb can be applied.

It is used of Prayer, Acts 12:5; of Love, 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8; and of Service, Acts 26:7. These activities call forth all the powers of a man; they cannot be lightly undertaken; they stretch out all his strength, but stretch out to an object. They are not concerned with self; they are rather the out-going of self to another. Each needs the force of a man's whole personality behind if it is to be of any real value. It is to be an activity in which *enthusiasm* has a real place.

1. *Fervent Prayer.* Acts 12:5.

(a) *It was prayer born out of crisis.* Previous persecution had been instigated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but now had been undertaken by the head of the State. James had been put to death, and now Peter had been put in prison to await execution of the sentence. If their leaders and teachers were to be taken off one by one, where would the Church be? The State had every weapon possible at its disposal, but what weapon could these few believers use? They turned to prayer, fervent prayer, continual prayer.

It was prayer with the intensity that the occasion demanded. There was no mere mumbling over of general phrases prepared beforehand, but it was a "stretching forth" of the hand of prayer to grasp the hand of the Almighty God, as a man will feel he must do when he realizes the desperate character of his own situation and of his inability to grapple with it. Words of prayer will come from the depths of his soul, out of the intensity of his emotion, out of the agony of his spirit for deliverance from the entangling bonds of his adverse circumstances.

It was prayer in which spiritual forces were storming the embattled and entrenched forces of the foe—no mean struggle, requiring the putting forth of the maximum of spiritual power.

(b) *It was prayer in which there was unity expressed*; a unity of fellow believers, a unity of the Church which had so recently sprung into being. It was a spontaneous expression of that unity of believers, joined by a common bond of love, and yielding allegiance to the same Lord. Another brother was in danger, and, if possible, he must be saved. Their one hope was to gather together and express their need to the One they served.

The prayer that they voiced was that of the Church, not merely of its individual members: They all had the same mind; they all spoke the same thing. Is there any wonder that their prayer prevailed, and that God set in motion forces unknown to them, to effect an answer to their prayer?

It was thus a prayer which was definite; no idle words were used, no loosely constructed phrases, but words pregnant with meaning surged up from within, words which besought omnipotent help to meet the need of impotent man.

(c) *It was prayer directed to God*. There was no intermediary; they spoke to the very Source of Power. Immediate aid was requested and immediate power was released to break fetters, to silence guards and keeper, and to secure the opening of barred doors and gates.

Among many words used in the New Testament, and translated by the word prayer, two are more common than others, *deēsis* seems to be used in the sense of petition for particular benefits, whether directed to God or to man. *Proseuchē* is restricted to sacred uses and is always addressed to God. Here the second word is employed, and their prayer is directed to Him who was greater than their persecutor, as was so signally shown at the close of the chapter where Herod is struck down in his own person.

It was prayer to God also because it concerned a servant of God and so was the special concern also of the Church of God.

The phrase *pros ton Theon* indicates that prayer was made "face to face with God" i.e. in His immediate Presence; there was a free access possible to these saints, as they brought their prayers, not by proxy nor through human mediation, but directly to, and in the immediate presence of God.

2. *Fervent Love.* 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8.

(a) *Mutuality.* Love is reciprocal, it goes out from one to another, and that one loves in return. It is a love which is strong, *agapaō*, of which Soutter says, "it is used nearly always of the love of God or Christ to us, and of our love to Him and to our fellow creatures as inspired by His love to us". This love inspired by the love of God to them, was to be the love whereby they loved one another; a strong, pure, unadulterated love.

(b) *Reality.* It was to come from the heart. Note the position of these words giving them a definite emphasis (at the beginning of the Greek sentence). The love is to flow forth from the whole personality, from the inner life; it was not to be some passing emotion called forth by immediate contingent circumstances, but a real, full, glad outburst of love to another brother in the Lord.

It was to be "unfeigned", i.e. "without hypocrisy". There was to be no acting of the part without the corresponding reality; there was to be no mere affectation about it. It was to be a love arising from a new life, "being begotten again". Hence it would be untainted by these selfish motives which find so large a place in the old life.

(c) *Intensity.* It was a love which was fervent, "stretched out", giving of its fullest, and being content with nothing less. Love does not wait to reason out the pros and cons, and so to find a basis for its giving, but out of the fulness of the heart, it spends itself to the utmost limit. It is a love with a passion; it is love poured forth, it is a love which pauses not for hindering obstacles, but mounts them and seeks its object, refusing to be turned from it.

Is it with such love that we reach out to our brethren in the Lord?

3. *Fervent Service.* Acts 26:7.

This is first spoken of Israel, but the principle is applicable to the service of the saints of every dispensation. It was a fervent service in which Israel engaged, calling for unceasing effort and devotion. We may notice the—

(a) *Incentive* to such Service. God gave to them the promise, the promise of the resurrection and hence of inheritance in the eternal Kingdom. Similarly to the saints of the present dispensation there is ever placed before them "the precious promises", the greatest of which is "the Blessed Hope", and so of their ever being "with the Lord". What greater incentive to service can there be? The promise with its bright prospect, its blessed Partner and its bountiful provision, is ever held before the believer, and this incites him to service, stabilizes him in trial and encourages him to press steadily forward in everything that concerns his Lord.

(b) *Service.* It is a service such as all God's children can render, *latreuō*. Originally the word meant "to serve for hire" i.e. to serve as servants. Every believer is engaged in a service for God. But man's service for the one who hires him is often done grudgingly, as if under compulsion. Here is a service rendered "with all one's powers at full stretch". It is no half-hearted service, but a service to the Lord, whole-heartedly and with a blessed disregard of self.

It is an unceasing service, rendered "night and day", so different from that spasmodic service often engaged in today.

It is an unassuming service, regarding one's self as but a servant, an unprofitable servant, who when he has done all that was within his power to do has but done that which was his duty to do.

If Israel were capable of such fervent service, how much more fervent should we be, as those in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit which He has given to us! The "hired" service becomes a service of "love"; the unwilling bond-service of the slave becomes the service of "a willing mind" by the bondservant of Jesus Christ; the compulsory service of the household servant, becomes the fully yielded service of the one who refuses to go out because of his confessed love for his Master.

(c) *Attainment of the Hope* as in Phil. 3:11 where Paul speaks of *attaining* "unto the resurrection of the dead" i.e. "come to"; and Eph. 4:13 "till we all *attain* to the unity of the faith".

Service while it is an expression of devotion, yet it is not

looked upon as an end in itself. It ever looks on to the accomplishment of some design, the achievement of an end. Here it looks on to the attainment of the risen state in which that service will be glorified.

Prayer, Love, Service without fervour are lifeless, but when fervent in the spirit with which they are engaged in will be to the praise of the glory of His grace both now and in the eternal age.

NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Analysis of Chap. 7: 11-28

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Introduction

In this section the superiority of Christ's priesthood is set forth in three respects, (1) in its perfection (vv. 11-14); (2) in its eternity (vv. 15-19); (3) in its sacredness (vv. 20-24). The