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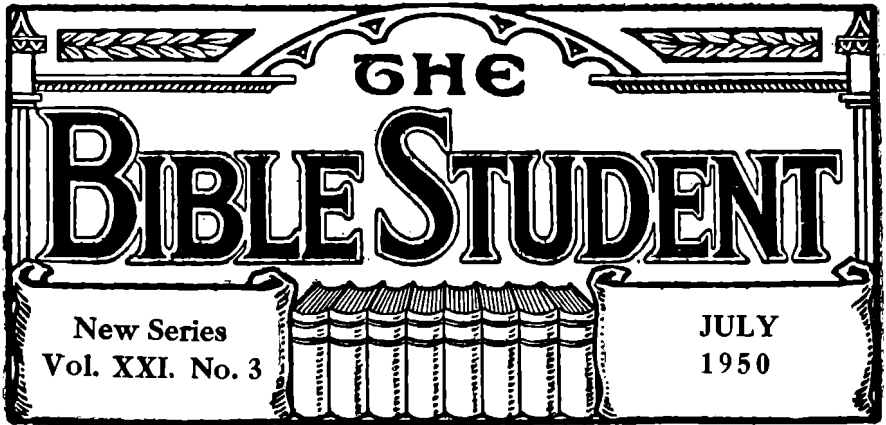
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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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us not merely intelligent expectancy but holy conduct and godliness of character. We may thus "*hasten* the coming of the Day of God".* And if that Day can be hastened so may it be delayed by our conduct. This may seem difficult to appreciate, that your way of living and mine in bearing testimony to and for Christ in our respective spheres, small and insignificant as they may be, can have even any *remote* effect in such a momentous matter. But it is not *one* grain of sand but the millions *together* on the sea shore that mark the limits of the incoming tides. Yet each grain adds its infinitesimal quota to the whole. And *each* life lived is infinitely more to God, and in the service of God, than immeasurable grains of sand and limitless stellar galaxies in God's marvellous Creation.

But "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Let us determine to "hasten His coming."†

HYPERBOLES OF FAITH

A Word Study

BY W. WILCOX

In the writings of the Apostle Paul we frequently find him using superlative terms in his endeavour to do justice to the great matters with which he is dealing. It shows his desire to express in words great ideas which nevertheless cannot be limited thereby. The goodness, graces and glories of God baffle his descriptive powers. In his attempt to describe them as fully as possible, he enriches his descriptions by the use of remarkable superlatives, and sometimes piles epithet upon epithet, and superlative upon superlative, and even then realizes that his description is inadequate when compared with the plenitude of the reality.

One such superlative is found in the word *hyperballō*, usually rendered by "exceeding", once by "excelleth", and could be well rendered by "*par excellence*".

The word is found five times in the New Testament—twice

* The margin of the R. V. is to be preferred to its text—"hastening the coming." With this Trench, Alford, and other Greek authorities agree.—Ed.

† From MSS sent to us after the author's decease; somewhat editorially revised.

in 2 Corinthians and three times in Ephesians, the former being a book in which emotions are deeply stirred, and the latter one in which attempts are made to reach indefinable heights of spiritual truth. In both cases language seems an inadequate tool with which to shape ideas.

Formed from a preposition and a verb the word literally means: "to throw over, or beyond" and hence "to surpass" or "exceed". It is found used in the passive, in one of the papyri, of a house for which a higher bid has been made, and so indicates that which surpasses another.

1. *Exceeding Grace* (2 Cor. 9:14). "They long after you by reason of the *exceeding* grace of God in you". This was the grace of *giving* manifested in a contribution the Corinthian saints had made to the poor saints. A great change had been wrought in their lives by the work of God in them. Instead of the continual efforts to grasp as much of this world's goods as were found amongst the rich citizens of such a commercial emporium as Corinth had become, they had learnt to loosen their purse strings and have compassion upon God's poor. Such a tremendous change Paul traced back to the "surpassing grace of God" in them. No latent power of their own had been developed, nor had it been evolved out of instinctive tendencies; rather, God's exceeding grace had become *resident* in them, being revealed in this gift and so was reduplicated in the recipients of the gift, who now longed after them.

Here is an inward grace shining out in an outward act of giving: the grace of God within them illuminating and beautifying a simple act of charity.

2. *Exceeding Glory* (2 Cor. 3:10). "By reason of the glory that surpasseth". Paul is describing the glory of the old covenant as being outshone by the glory of the new. To make his argument clear he draws three or four parallels between the former and the latter.

There is—

A ministry of condemnation,	and a ministry of righteousness,
A glory,	and a glory that surpasseth,
A glory passing,	and a glory remaining,
A temporary glory on the face of Moses which was not to be looked upon	and an eternal glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and this we have seen and by it obtained the knowledge of the glory of God.

Each item would bear prolonged study, but suffice it to say that here we have "a glory that excelleth". In every detail the old exhibits its inferior character as compared with the new, in the Person by Whom it is ministered, the period for which it endures, and the *par excellence* of its nature.

These belong to the "better things" of the New Covenant as outlined by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; but he writes from the special point of view of priesthood and sacrifice, while here Paul writes from the point of view of the law; but both were means for the ratification and continued working of the covenant. In each case the New was better, its glory excelled.

3. *Exceeding Greatness of Power* (Eph. 1:19). The Ephesian saints having the eyes of their heart enlightened were to know— (i) the hope of His calling; (ii) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and (iii) the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. In each case is the object spoken of as His: *His* calling, *His* inheritance and *His* power. By means of the first we have become the children of God, and therefore have become that in which His soul can find delight, and, that this may perpetually be so, He puts forth that same power which brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, and we shall be raised together to be ever more with Him. No ordinary power could thus raise us from the dead. It is great power called forth, it is exceeding great power in exercise.

These Ephesian saints in unconverted days had cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians": now, in answer to the prayer of the apostle, they were to learn "the exceeding greatness of His power"; i.e., of God's power. This power was exercised "to usward who believe", i.e., in our direction; not to the conquest of forces opposed to us, nor to the changing of the circumstances hindering our progress, but to usward, effecting a powerful regeneration within ourselves, and finally in that great resurrection, to bring us in our perfected selves into the Presence of our Lord and with capacities to enjoy His Presence forever.

Roman power and might were great in conquest, the Empire and its forces were great in their display of martial strength, and its senate and consuls might manifest great wisdom in ruling over subject races, but here was power exercised "toward" humble believers that surpassed every known power that could be imagined.

It is power put into exercise for us *who believe*. There is the

simple phrase with no other conditioning thought expressed. Being believers God's exceeding great power is operative for us.

4. *Exceeding Glut of Glory* (Eph. 2:7). "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus". The surpassing wealth of the divine grace is again the subject. How can he fully portray such a theme? Words fail him, but he seems to have a spiritual intuition which enables him to grasp the great glory and goodness of God even though intellectual processes fail to find satisfactory definitions for them.

For instance, we speak of "grace" as "divine favour", but how cold and unsatisfying such a definition is for that which includes the outpouring of the heart of God into vessels conscious of their demerit and unworthiness to receive it, and yet aware of its necessity if they are to escape the final issue of the destructive tendencies at work within them.

His grace, marvellous thought! The wealth of *His* grace; wonderfully marvellous thought—and all available for *us* as seen in His kindness toward us.

5. *Exceeding Gift of a true and enlarging Knowledge* (Eph. 3:19). These Ephesian saints are to know the love of Christ in its fulness—not as a mere series of loving acts, great as they may be, but to know the love of Christ as a deep but ever flowing stream, fresh in its daily supplies yet ever the same, full and inexhaustible. It is a knowledge-surpassing love, and yet it ever invites us to know it in its fulness. As Moule says, "Here is an object eternally transcending while it eternally invites, the effort after a complete cognition. Forever there is more to know"; and Findlay similarly, "The idea is conveyed of an object that invites our observation and pursuit, but which at every step outreaches apprehension, each discovery revealing depths within it unperceived before".

Such superlatives are necessary, if language is to live and if hearts are to grasp the warmth of the divine grace and love, and the pervading power of the divine goodness; if we are, to use Findlay's phrase, "to know the unknowable".