

**THE EPISTLES OF PAUL
IN MODERN ENGLISH:
A PARAPHRASE**

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The Epistles of Paul in Modern English: A Paraphrase by George Barker Stevens

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A PARAPHRASE**

Bible N. T. Ep. Paul. Eng.

THE
EPISTLES OF PAUL
IN
MODERN ENGLISH

A Paraphrase

BY

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Preface

IN this volume I have sought to reproduce the thought of Paul's epistles, and of the kindred letter to the Hebrews, in the language of to-day. The terms of our English versions have purposely been avoided, so far as practicable, because their very familiarity is often a hindrance to the apprehension of the meaning. I have hoped to awaken a fresh interest in the apostle's thoughts by breaking up the form in which he expressed them and by setting forth his ideas in a free modern rendering.

The reading of a "literal," or verbal, translation of Paul's letters is attended by many difficulties. The apostle's carelessness of form, his vehemence in utterance, his use of complex figures, and his involved and elliptical style, are among the peculiarities which often render his meaning obscure. Now a translation can only represent in English words the form of the original; it is debarred not only from introducing explanatory words, but even, to a great extent,

from the use of free idiomatic English renderings. A literal translation is a kind of Anglicized Greek text. It necessarily reproduces, in large part, the idioms of the Greek language in English words, and taxes the mind of the reader by compelling him to grapple with all the perplexing irregularities of the apostle's style.

It has seemed to me that a paraphrase, or thought-translation, which purposely disregards the form, and expresses in idiomatic English the substance of the apostle's thought, would greatly aid the understanding of our popular versions by presenting the meaning in a fresh setting, by disentangling, in some instances, the idea from its figurative form, by expressing the implied thought of many passages, and by concentrating attention upon the main drift of the argument. It is believed that such a version will be adapted for use in schools in which Bible study is a part of the curriculum, and, especially, for use in Sunday-school classes which have occasion to study this portion of the New Testament.

It is obviously impossible to represent in a paraphrase every shade and turn of Paul's thought. To do that would require a commentary, and I have wished to avoid the danger to

which commentaries are exposed, namely, that of obscuring the general sense by the elaborate treatment of details. I have, therefore, constantly aimed to bring into clear relief the central idea, the essential substance, of Paul's arguments and exhortations. If, in doing this, minor phases of his thought have sometimes been neglected, it is believed that the omission is justified in the interest of simplicity and clearness.

This version of Paul's epistles has of course been written with constant reference to the original Greek and with the aid of various critical helps for the determination of its exact meaning. In cases where there are important variations of text the reading which seemed to me preferable has been followed. Where different interpretations are current among scholars the paraphrase has been based, without justification or comment, upon that interpretation which commended itself as the best. It did not accord with the plan of this book to append to it critical notes and explanations. If this were to be done at all it would need to be done on a far greater scale than was possible in a small volume. Moreover, there is no lack of critical commentaries for

those who have the time and patience to use them. I have preferred simply to present my conception of the meaning of these writings in as readable a form as possible, without distracting attention by a multitude of critical details. The book should be judged by its purpose and used in accordance with it. I trust that it may be found helpful to the understanding of Paul's epistles and to the appreciation of his teaching.

GEORGE BARKER STEVENS.

YALE UNIVERSITY,

October 1, 1898.

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*The First Epistle to the
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