

Book Review
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Devotions on the Greek New Testament by J. Scott Duvall & Verlyn D. Verbrugge, editors, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 2012, 154 pp., \$16.99, ISBN: 978-0-310-49254-2.

The editors Duvall and Verbrugge have put together short essays on fifty-two New Testament texts by various Greek scholars. They have attempted to show the value of the Greek New Testament to ministers.

Each of the essays contains an exegetical analysis of the Greek text of a New Testament passage. In the analysis, the author attempts to show how the knowledge of the Greek language helps to glean understanding of the Scriptures that could not be known by examining the English translation alone.

A list of the Authors is included in the back of the book. Some of the men who wrote essays include: Craig L. Blomberg, Darrell L. Bock, J. Scott Duvall, Scot McKnight, William Mounce, Mark Strauss, and Ben Witherington III. Thirty-one scholars are listed and each one holds the terminal degree (PhD). Several women also authored essays: Linda Belleville, Constantine Campbell, and Lynn H. Cohick to mention a few.

A knowledge of the Greek language would be helpful when reading and studying this work. Consequently, this book is aimed at those who are students of the Greek New Testament and primarily ministers who may not realize how knowledge of the Greek language helps in New Testament exegesis.

Since this book is not arranged in chapters, I will be noting some of the highlights of the studies that impressed me. Hopefully, this will stimulate your own desire to read the book.

The first essay was written by Roy E. Ciampa and titled, *Learning From Joseph's Righteousness*(p. 15). In this essay, Ciampa attempts to show the relationship between Joseph's righteousness and his plan to put Mary away privately (Matthew 1:19). Righteousness is not compromised by mercy and is fully compatible with it. Joseph planned to put Mary away (divorce) in a way that showed his love for her. Joseph desired to spare Mary the public denouncement that would follow her supposed sin. Ciampa focuses on the two present participles (*dikaios ὄν* “being righteous” and *mē thelōn*, “not wanting”) in the sentence. How are these participles to be understood? Both participles could be taken as “causal.” Or, the first could be taken as concessive and the second as causal (i.e. “despite being righteous and because he was unwilling to make an example of her, he decided...”). Most interpreters take both participles to be “causal.” Ciampa draws the same conclusion after considering the wider context of the Gospel of Matthew and the new definition of “righteousness” it contains. Because Joseph was righteous, he was merciful to Mary as he supposed that she had been unfaithful to her promise to him. Whenever Joseph learns that Mary did not commit sexual sin and that her pregnancy was the result of the work of God, he accepted it and took Mary as his wife and performed the duties of a father to Jesus. This is exactly what you would expect from a righteous man. The integrity of Joseph is preserved by his honorable actions.

Craig L. Blomberg wrote the fourth essay in the book on the *Great Commission* (Matthew 28:19-20) (p. 24). Blomberg shows that the present participles, “baptizing” and “teaching” are “modal” participles and show how to “make disciples” (the main verb in the sentence). The main verb has imperative force (it is a command). The command was not only to Jesus’ twelve disciples, but to all subsequent disciples. This is indicated by the force of

teaching the nations *everything* Jesus had taught them (the disciples). *Everything* includes the Great Commission.

Dean Deppe wrote an essay titled, *Discovering The Main Verb* (Mark 5:25-27) (p. 31). Mark gives an account of a story within a story. He tells of two miracles of Jesus involving the raising of Jairus' daughter and the woman with an issue of blood (hemorrhage). Both of these miracles involved the *touch* of Jesus. The word *touch* is a verb and more important it is the main verb and the big idea in the miracle story. The touch of Jesus heals, cleanses and gives life. The touch of Jesus involved a dead body and a bleeding woman, both of which would have made Him ceremonially unclean under the Law of Moses. However, Jesus does not become unclean. Instead He heals, cleanses and gives life. The ceremonial laws are no longer applicable under the new covenant. Jesus is ushering in a new age and a new kingdom.

Deppe also wrote the essay on *You and You* (p. 43). Deppe references John 1:50-51 and shows that in the Greek it is easy to follow the pronouns regarding number (singular or plural). Most modern translations use "you" for both the singular and the plural. However, the King James Version makes an interesting distinction with pronouns. The "t" words such as "thee" and "thou" are always singular and the "y" words such as "you" and "your" are always plural. In the KJV, the pronouns in John 1:50 refer to Nathaniel. But, the pronouns in John 1:51 refer to all of Jesus' disciples. By use of the pronouns, Jesus draws His disciples into the narrative and makes application to all of them, not just Nathaniel. All of us must enter into conversation with Jesus.

Darrell Bock gives us an essay on *Conditional Clauses Matter* (p. 52). The text is Acts 5:38-39 and involves the speech of Gamaliel before the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel was a noted teacher of the Law of Moses among the Jews. Block defines the difference between the various types of conditional statements in the Greek language. A first-class conditional statement (written with *ei* in the indicative case) presents the situation as though it were so (since it is the case or since it is a fact). A second-class conditional statement is written with *ei* plus the imperfect tense in the "if" clause, followed by *an* and an indicative in the "then" clause. It indicates a contrary to fact statement. A third-class conditional statement uses *ean* with the subjunctive case. It makes no presentation either way and so is the most doubtful. Gamaliel states, "So in this case I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, because if (ean) this plan or this undertaking originates with people, it will come to nothing; but if (ei) it is from God, you will be unable to stop them, or you may even be found fighting against God." The first conditional statement is a third-class conditional statement and makes no commitment either way. The second conditional statement is a first-class conditional statement and is presented as a fact (the more likely case). Bock believes that Luke is playing with Gamaliel's words. His explanation is not convincing. Luke would have no interest in altering Gamaliel's words to suite his own ends (this would be dishonest as a historian). The better interpretation is to understand Gamaliel as presenting two alternatives, one being stronger in possibility than the other, and let time settle the matter. Time will tell! The problem with Gamaliel's advice is it counsel's indecision in the face of hard facts (the resurrection of Jesus from the dead). Gamaliel's advice is the result of unbelief. If "time will tell" how long would we wait? It could be possible that the final decision could not be made in one's own lifetime. In this case, one would lose out on the blessings of the gospel and eternal salvation and go to their grave still waiting for a verdict. The solution to this dilemma is to *let the truth tell*. Truth is a better basis than time upon which one could decide on the validity of the Christian religion.

Mark Wilson presents an essay on the subject: *Paul: Bound in the Spirit for Jerusalem* (p. 54). The biblical text is Acts 20:22. Wilson correctly shows that Paul's imprisonment at

Jerusalem was foretold prophetically by Agabus (Acts 21:11). Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:11). Agabus' prophecy gave Paul specific information about what would befall him there. The prophecy of Agabus confirmed what the Holy Spirit had revealed to Paul along the way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:23). Paul was determined to go even in the face of certain persecution (Acts 21:13). Paul trusted God. Wilson makes a personal application of the direct leading of the Holy Spirit in his own life. He claims that the Holy Spirit guided him and his wife to do mission work in Turkey. How did the Holy Spirit do this? We are not told. The Word of God teaches that miraculous guidance such as Paul received has ceased and is not for us today (I Cor. 13:8-10).

Ben Witherington III wrote an essay on *Kicking Against the Goads* (p. 56). In Acts 26:14, Paul recounts the events of his conversion. He relates the words of Jesus to him, "It hurts you to kick against the goads." The historical account is given by Luke in Acts 9:4. The Greek word *kenton* (goad, prick) means *a sharp point*. The same word is used by Paul in I Cor. 15:55-56 of the *sting* of death which is sin. The word is taken from a common agricultural scene. Whenever a farmer was driving a team of oxen, he would use a long, sharp, stick to prod the oxen forward. Whenever the ox kicked against the goad, he inflicted a wound. When Saul (Paul) persecuted the church and Jesus, he produced *an unintended consequence*. He inflicted pain on himself by "kicking against the pricks or goads." Saul was resisting the work of God. Saul sinned when he did this and inflicted harm to his own soul. While he thought he was doing good, in reality he was hurting himself. The use of the same word in I Cor. 15:56 indicates that all sin produces self-inflicted wounds. Most sin to have pleasure. In reality, all sin produces a wound to the soul that leads to peril for the soul.

The essays in the book are short comprising only two to two and half pages of material. They are written in an easy-to-read style. The articles are not footnoted. This book would be most beneficial to ministers who have a knowledge of the Greek language and feel that they wasted time studying Greek. A word of encouragement to these preachers is needed. Get out your Greek New Testament, open up your Greek grammar, brush off your Greek tools and get to work!