

PREFACE

The Clear Word is not a translation, but a devotional expanded paraphrase of the Holy Scriptures intended to nurture spiritual growth. It should not be considered a study Bible. Excellent translations of the Scriptures are available for such purposes.

This paraphrase provides my personal insights into the gracious and long-suffering character of God, the living ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and the struggles of the early Christian church to survive. May the Holy Spirit use it to stimulate a new experience of faith and spiritual growth.

Just what is a paraphrase? Webster defines it: "A restatement in different words or free rendering of a text, passage, etc."¹ Today's readers are familiar with modern translations and paraphrases. Phillips' *New Testament in Modern English*, Taylor's *The Living Bible*, and Peterson's *The Message* provide a variety of reading choices revealing that God has more ways than we can fathom to reach His children wherever they are. Each of these versions has proved beneficial in its own way to bring readers to a clearer understanding of God's magnificent gift to fallen mankind.

In his introduction to *The Message* (New Testament paraphrase), Eugene H. Peterson observes:

The goal is not to render a word-for-word conversion of Greek into English, but rather to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak. . . . In the midst of doing this work, I realized that this is exactly what I have been doing all my vocational life. . . . As a pastor I stood at the border between two languages, biblical Greek and everyday English, acting as translator, providing the right phrases, getting the right words so that the men and women to whom I was pastor could find their way around and get along in this world where God has spoken so decisively and clearly in Jesus. I did it from the pulpit and in the kitchen, in hospitals and restaurants, on parking lots and at picnics, always looking for an English way to make the biblical text relevant to the conditions of the people.²

A writer's understanding of theological issues will surface in a paraphrase, but this phenomenon occurs even in direct translations. However, every

attempt has been made to allow the Bible to interpret itself throughout this volume. Where a passage was difficult, the overall biblical teaching on the subject was cross-referenced and used to make the passage clear and scripturally sound. I am deeply indebted to the theologians who have researched and written numerous valuable commentaries. And to the many thoughtful colleagues and parishioners, ministers and laity, old and young who have been sought out or who have written or called with constructive help and encouragement.

Since *The Clear Word* was first published, friends, colleagues and students have made suggestions providing further insights into various passages of Scripture, which called for some "fine-tuning." So began this final revision in the hope of improving clarity. Much like a sermon, the volume in your hands is an interpretive work based on the greatest Book ever written.

So I wish to express gratitude to everyone who participated in bringing about this revised edition, most of whom prefer to remain unnamed. They, as I, pray that the Holy Spirit will use our humble efforts to bring many to a greater knowledge of Jesus Christ and what He has done to save us.

To the glory of God, our Father,
Jack J. Blanco

¹*New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language*, 1993, Lexicon Publications, Inc.

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