

Introduction

This Week I would like to take you through some introductory remarks and setting the platform of how we are going to do Greek together. There is a common belief that Greek is a very difficult language to learn and many students of theology try their best to avoid. In other seminaries, it is compulsory to do some introductory course on Greek and those who are passionate about it will then take it further in other courses. I experienced that a student, first at Bishop Gaul Theological College in Harare, it was compulsory and everyone have to do it. Then at the University of Zimbabwe it was an elective course and I still remember that out of more than 120 students enrolled for the programme, only 10 of them enrolled for Greek and less than that number for Hebrew. The scenario at Nashotah was similar to that as well. In the first year, Greek was compulsory and the full class of about 15 students enrolled for it but in the second and third year it was an elective and I remember we were only three in that class.

The first task of this introduction is to demystify that Greek is a hard nut to crack. It is however partially true that it is difficult as J.W Wenham puts it that,

“the learning of a language is an enormous task.” (Wenham 1965:VI). This is true of any language; I am currently experiencing that in Spain as I am trying to learn Spanish. David Wenham in Jeremy Duff concurs that, “learning Greek may be a slog, especially for some, but, just as with learning a musical instrument, the rewards for hard work can be very great.” (Duff 2005:X). Therefore, learning anything new is not easy at all but it requires determination and commitment.

Here are the tips for learning Greek;

1. Hardworking and consistency.
2. Practice it daily
3. Learn small chunks at a time.
4. Empty yourself and behave like a small child learning language for the first time.
5. Do not overdo it. Otherwise you will be exhausted and get frustrated.
6. Attend group discussions by your peers and sometimes they simplify grasping techniques more than that done by the teacher.
7. Subscribe to online daily Greek tips like the Daily Dose of Greek especially after going through some couple of lessons.

8. Try to internalize at least three new words per day and it means at the end of a year you would have internalized about 1095 words.
9. Do not be shy to share your challenges with your teacher and colleagues.
10. Be positive about the subject

Why bothering yourselves studying an ancient language? True, it is ancient language that dates back to the 13th Century BC but it still written and spoken today as the official language of other states. It was in the 5th and 4th century BC that classical Greek developed during the production of Greek drama, oratory, history and philosophy when Athens rose as the capital city of Greece. J.W Wenham describes this period as the, “golden age of Greek literature and language.” (Wenham 1965: 9). The coming of Alexander the Great into power and his introduction of Hellenization shaped the influence of the Greek language. Greek became an international language that was spoke throughout his empire and the language became known as, ‘Common Greek’ . The Greek word for ‘common’ is koine (κοινε). This is the Greek that influenced New Testament writings. However, in the period of the renaissance they was that attempt to distinguish classical Greek

and Koine Greek by scholars who were trying to study ancient literature.

In this study, I prefer the term, 'New Testament Greek' to Koine Greek. The justification being that "Koine Greek' is broader because it covers not just the New Testament but also the wider range of Bible-related Greek, especially the Septuagint and to some extent the pseudepigrapha and apostolic fathers." (Decker 2014.XIX). This study will be limited to New Testament Greek.

Is it necessary to study New Testament Greek when they are enormous volumes of New Testament translations? They are big benefits in studying New Testament Greek;

1. According to David Wenham in Duff, "it is a door into Christian scriptures." (Duff 2005:X). He further argues that, "translations are often very good, but not always, and going back to the original is very worthwhile, as well as exciting for those who get some facility in the language." (Duff 2005:X).
2. Understanding Greek is a tool for proper exegesis. Dobson argues that, "if you wish to study the New Testament, it helps greatly if you

are able to read it in the original language.”
(Dobson 1993)

3. Furthering the point of studying New Testament in the original language, David Wenham in Duff argues that, “reading the New Testament in Greek rather than in English is like watching a sports game on television rather than hearing it on the radio.” (Duff 2005:X). Sometimes the radio commentary is fast than the action.
4. You will be able to read much of the New Testament material without referring to the lexicon. That saves a lot of time.

These are some of the benefits of studying some basics of New Testament Greek especially for theologians, biblical scholars, and preachers. I will conclude by the words of Geoffrey Horrocks, “no one writer can be an expert on everything.” (Horrocks 2010: XII). I also admit that though I has been a teacher of New Testament Greek over a long period of time, I also have my weak areas in the subject that I struggle with and in most cases when I reach to the area, I study and work hard to produce a lesson. Do not be shy to correct me when I make blunders in some of weaker areas. Let meet next week for the alphabet lesson.

List of Reference

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