

SHORT  
EXPOSITORY READINGS  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

A SELECTION DESIGNED FOR  
Family Reading, Mothers' Meetings, and  
District Visitors.

BY THE  
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LONDON: WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,  
12, PATERNOSTER ROW.  
IPSWICH : WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

1882.

XV.

CHRIST'S PERFECT HUMANITY.

JOHN IV. 5, 6.

*“Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.*

*“Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.”*

WE should observe in this passage, *what is said about our Lord’s human nature.* We read that Jesus was “wearied with His journey.”

We learn from this, as well as many other expressions in the Gospels, that our Lord had a body exactly like our own. When “the Word became flesh,” He took on Him a nature like our own in all things, sin only excepted. Like ourselves, He grew from infancy to youth, and from youth to man’s estate. Like ourselves, He hungered, thirsted, felt pain, and needed sleep. He was liable to every sinless infirmity to which we are liable. In all things His body was framed like our own.

The truth before us is full of comfort for all who are true Christians. He to whom sinners are bid to come for pardon and peace, is one who is man as well as God. He had a real human nature when He was upon earth. He took a real human nature with Him, when He ascended up into heaven. We have at the right hand of God a High Priest

who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He has suffered Himself being tempted. When we cry to Him in the hour of bodily pain and weakness, He knows well what we mean. When our prayers and praises are feeble through bodily weariness, He can understand our condition. He knows our frame. He has learned by experience what it is to be a man. To say that the Virgin Mary, or any one else, can feel more sympathy for us than Christ, is ignorance no less than blasphemy. The man Christ Jesus can enter fully into everything that belongs to man's condition. The poor, the sick, and the suffering, have in heaven One who is not only an Almighty Saviour, but a most feeling Friend.

The servant of Christ should grasp firmly this great truth, that there are two perfect and complete natures in the one Person whom he serves. The Lord Jesus, in whom the Gospel bids us believe, is, without doubt, almighty God,—equal to the Father in all things, and able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him. But that same Jesus is no less certainly perfect man,—able to sympathize with man in all his bodily sufferings, and acquainted by experience with all that man's body has to endure. Power and sympathy are marvellously combined in Him who died for us on the cross. Because He is God, we may repose the weight of our souls upon Him with unhesitating confidence. He is mighty to save.—Because He is man, we may speak to Him with freedom, about the many trials to which flesh is heir. He knows the heart of a

man.—Here is rest for the weary! Here is good news! Our Redeemer is man as well as God, and God as well as man. He that believeth on Him has everything that a child of Adam can possibly require, either for safety or for peace.

XVI.

CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN IV. 7-18.

*“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her. Give Me to drink.*

*“(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

*“Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

*“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.*

*“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water?*

*“Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

*“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:*

*“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him*

*shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

*“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this waler, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

*“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*

*“The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:*

*“For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly.”*

WE should mark, firstly, *the mingled tact and condescension of Christ in dealing with a careless sinner.*

Our Lord was sitting by Jacob’s well, when a woman of Samaria came thither to draw water. At once He says to her, “Give Me to drink.” He does not wait for her to speak to Him. He does not begin by reproving her sins, though He doubtless knew them. He opens communication by asking a favour. He approaches the woman’s mind by the subject of “water,” which was naturally uppermost in her thoughts. Simple as this request may seem, it opened a door to spiritual conversation. It threw a bridge across the gulf which lay between her and Him. It led to the conversion of her soul.

We should mark, secondly, *Christ’s readiness to give mercies to careless sinners.* He tells the Samaritan woman that if she had asked, He would have given her “living water.” He knew the character of the person before Him

perfectly well. Yet He says, "If she had asked, He would have given,"—He would have given the living water of grace, mercy, and peace.

The infinite willingness of Christ to receive sinners is a golden truth, which ought to be treasured up in our hearts, and diligently impressed on others. The Lord Jesus is far more ready to hear than we are to pray, and far more ready to give favours than we are to ask them. All day long He stretches out His hands to the disobedient and gainsaying. He has thoughts of pity and compassion towards the vilest of sinners, even when they have no thoughts of Him. He stands waiting to bestow mercy and grace on the worst and most unworthy, if they will only cry to Him. He will never draw back from that well-known promise, "Ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find." The lost will discover at the last day, that they had not because they asked not.

We should mark, thirdly, *the priceless excellence of Christ's gifts when compared with the things of this world.* Our Lord tells the Samaritan woman, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

There is no heart-satisfaction in this world, until we believe on Christ. Jesus alone can fill up the empty places of our inward man. Jesus alone can give solid, lasting, enduring happiness. The peace that He imparts is a fountain, which, once set flowing within the soul, flows on to all eternity. Its waters may have their ebbing seasons; but

they are living waters, and they shall never be completely dried.

We should mark, fourthly, *the absolute necessity of conviction of sin before a soul can be converted to God.* The Samaritan woman seems to have been comparatively unmoved until our Lord exposed her breach of the seventh commandment. Those heart-seaching words “Go, call thy husband,” appear to have pierced her conscience like an arrow. From that moment, however ignorant, she speaks like an earnest, sincere inquirer after truth. And the reason is evident. She felt that her spiritual disease was discovered. For the first time in her life she saw herself.

To bring thoughtless people to this state of mind should be the principal aim of all teachers and ministers of the Gospel. They should carefully copy their Master’s example in this place. Till men and women are brought to feel their sinfulness and need, no real good is ever done to their souls. Till a sinner sees himself as God sees him, he will continue careless, trifling, and unmoved. By all means we must labour to convince the unconverted man of sin, to prick his conscience, to open his eyes, to show him himself. To this end we must expound the length and breadth of God’s holy law. To this end we must denounce every practice contrary to that law, however fashionable and customary. This is the only way to do good. Never does a soul value the Gospel medicine until it feels its disease. Never does a man see any beauty in Christ as a Saviour, until he discovers that he is himself a lost and ruined



sinner. Ignorance of sin is invariably attended by neglect of Christ.

XVII.

THE FATHER'S WORK.

JOHN IV. 31-42.

*“In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying. Master, eat.*

*“But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

*“Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?*

*“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.*

*“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

*“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.*

*“And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth.*

*“I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”*

WE have, for one thing, in these verses, *an instructive pattern of zeal for the good of others.* We read, that our Lord

Jesus Christ declares, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.” To do good was not merely duty and pleasure to Him. He counted it as His food, meat and drink. Job, one of the holiest Old Testament saints, could say that he esteemed God’s *word* “more than his necessary food.” (Job xxiii. 12.) The Great Head of the New Testament Church went even further: He could say the same of God’s *work*.

Do we do any work for God? Do we try, however feebly, to set forward His cause on earth,—to check that which is evil, to promote that which is good? If we do, let us never be ashamed of doing it with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Whatsoever our hand finds to do for the souls of others, let us do it with our might. (Eccl. ix. 10.) The world may mock and sneer, and call us enthusiasts. The world can admire zeal in any service but that of God, and can praise enthusiasm on any subject but that of religion. Let us work on unmoved. Whatever men may say and think, we are walking in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us, beside this, take comfort in the thought that Jesus Christ never changes. He that sat by the well of Samaria, and found it “meat and drink” to do good to an ignorant soul, is always in one mind. High in heaven at God’s right hand, He still delights to save sinners, and still approves zeal and labour in the cause of God. The work of the missionary and the evangelist may be despised and ridiculed in many quarters; but while man is mocking,

Christ is well pleased. Thanks be to God, Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

We have, for another thing, in these verses, *strong encouragement held out to those who labour to do good to souls*. We read that our Lord described the world as a “field white for the harvest;” and then said to His disciples, “He that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.”

Work for the souls of men is undoubtedly attended by great discouragements. The heart of the natural man is very hard and unbelieving. The blindness of most men to their own lost condition and peril of ruin is something past description. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Rom. viii. 7.) No one can have any just idea of the desperate hardness of men and women, until he has tried to do good. No one can have any conception of the small number of those who repent and believe, until he has personally endeavoured to “save some.” (1 Cor. ix. 22.) To suppose that everybody will become a true Christian, who is told about Christ, and entreated to believe, is mere childish ignorance. “Few there be that find the narrow way!” The labourer for Christ will find the vast majority of those among whom he labours unbelieving and impenitent, in spite of all that he can do. “The many” will not turn to Christ. These are discouraging facts. But they are facts, and facts that ought to be known.

The true antidote against despondency in God’s work, is an abiding recollection of such promises as that before

us. There are “wages” laid up for faithful reapers. They shall receive a reward at the last day, far exceeding anything they have done for Christ,—a reward proportioned not to their success, but to the quantity of their work. They are gathering “fruit,” which shall endure when this world has passed away,—fruit, in some souls saved, if many will not believe, and fruit in evidences of their own faithfulness, to be brought out before assembled worlds. Do our hands ever hang down, and our knees wax faint? Do we feel disposed to say, “My labour is in vain and my words without profit”? Let us lean back at such seasons on this glorious promise. There are “wages” yet to be paid. There is “fruit” yet to be exhibited. “We are a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that are saved and in them that perish.” (2 Cor. ii. 15.) Let us work on. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psa. cxxvi. 6.) One single soul saved shall outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of the world.

XVIII.

HEALING OF THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

JOHN IV. 46–54.

*“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

*“When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*

*“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

*“The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*

*“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.*

*“And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

*“Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.*

*“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed and his whole house.*

*“This is again the second miracle that Jesus did. when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.”*

WE learn, firstly, *that the rich have afflictions as well as the poor.* We read of a nobleman in deep anxiety because his son was sick. We need not doubt that every means of restoration was used that money could procure. But money is not almighty. The sickness increased, and the nobleman’s son lay at the point of death.

We learn, secondly, in this passage, that *sickness and death come to the young as well as to the old.* We read of a son sick unto death, and a father in trouble about him. We see the natural order of things inverted: the elder is obliged to minister to the younger, and not the younger to the elder. The child draws nigh to the grave before the parent, and not the parent before the child.

He that is wise will never reckon confidently on long life. We never know what a day may bring forth. The strongest and fairest are often cut down and hurried away in a few hours, while the old and feeble linger on for many years. The only true wisdom is to be always prepared to meet God, to put nothing off which concerns eternity, and to live like men ready to depart at any moment. So living, it matters little whether we die young or old. Joined to the Lord Jesus, we are safe in any event.

We learn, thirdly, from this passage, *what benefits affliction can confer on the soul.* We read, that anxiety about a son led the nobleman to Christ, in order to obtain help

in time of need. Once brought into Christ's company, he learned a lesson of priceless value: in the end, "he believed, and his whole house." All this, be it remembered, hinged upon the son's sickness. If the nobleman's son had never been ill, his father might have lived and died in his sins.

Affliction is one of God's medicines. By it He often teaches lessons which would be learned in no other way. By it He often draws souls away from sin and the world, which would otherwise have perished everlastingly. Health is a great blessing, but sanctified disease is a greater. Prosperity and worldly comfort are what all naturally desire: but losses and crosses are far better for us, if they lead us to Christ. Thousands at the last day, will testify with David, and the nobleman before us, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Let us beware of murmuring in the time of trouble. Let us settle it firmly in our minds that there is a meaning, a needs-be, and a message from God, in every sorrow that falls upon us. There are no lessons so useful as those learned in the school of affliction. There is no commentary that opens up the Bible so much as sickness and sorrow. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit." (Heb. xii. 11.) The resurrection morning will prove that many of the losses of God's people were in reality eternal gains.



We learn, lastly, from this passage, *that Christ's word is as good as Christ's presence*. We read that Jesus did not come down to Capernaum to see the sick young man, but only spoke the word: "Thy son liveth." Almighty power went with that little sentence: that very hour the patient began to amend. Christ only spoke, and the cure was done: Christ only commanded, and the deadly disease stood fast.

The fact before us is singularly full of comfort. It gives enormous value to every promise of mercy, grace, and peace, which ever fell from Christ's lips. He that by faith has laid hold on some word of Christ, has got his feet upon a rock. What Christ has said, He is able to do; and what He has undertaken, He will never fail to make good. The sinner who has really reposed his soul on the word of the Lord Jesus is safe to all eternity. He could not be safer if he saw the Book of Life and his own name written in it. If Christ has said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in nowise cast out," and our hearts can testify, "I have come," we need not doubt that we are saved. In the things of this world, we say that seeing is believing. But in the things of the Gospel, believing is as good as seeing. Christ's word is as good as man's deed. He of whom Jesus says in the Gospel, "He liveth," is alive for evermore, and shall never die.