

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE X. 1–7.

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes:

and salute no man by the way.

5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house.

6 And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

THE verses before us relate a circumstance which is not recorded by any Gospel writer except St. Luke. That circumstance is our Lord's appointment of seventy disciples to go before His face, in addition to the twelve apostles. We do not know the names of any of these disciples. Their subsequent history has not been revealed to us. But the instructions with which they are sent forth are deeply interesting, and deserve the close attention of all ministers and teachers of the Gospel.

The first point in our Lord's charge to the seventy disciples is *the importance of prayer and intercession*. This is the leading thought with which our Lord opens His address. Before He tells His ambassadors what to do, He first bids them to pray. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."

Prayer is one of the best and most powerful means of helping forward the cause of Christ in the world. It is a means within the reach of all who have the Spirit of adoption. Not all believers have money to give to missions. Very few have great intellectual gifts, or extensive influence among men. But all believers can pray for the success of the Gospel,—and they ought to pray for it daily. Many and marvellous are the answers to prayer which are recorded for our learning in the Bible. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James v. 16.)

Prayer is one of the principal weapons which the minister of the Gospel ought to use. To be a true successor of the apostles, he must give himself to prayer as well as to the ministry of the word. (Acts vi. 4.) He must not only use the sword of the Spirit, but pray always, with all prayer and supplication. (Eph. vi. 17, 18.) This is the way to win a blessing on his own ministry. This, above all, is the way to procure helpers to carry on Christ's work. Colleges may educate men. Bishops may ordain them. Patrons may give them livings. But God alone can raise up and send forth "labourers" who will do work among souls. For a constant supply of such labourers let us daily pray.

The second point in our Lord's charge to the seventy disciples, is *the perilous nature of the work in which they were about to be engaged*. He does

not keep back from them the dangers and trials which are before them. He does not enlist them under false pretences, or prophecy smooth things, or promise them unvarying success. He tells them plainly what they must expect. "Behold," He says, "I send you forth as lambs amongst wolves."

These words, no doubt, had a special reference to the life-time of those to whom they were spoken. We see their fulfilment in the many persecutions described in the Acts of the Apostles. But we must not conceal from ourselves that the words describe a state of things which may be seen at this very day. So long as the church stands believers must expect to be like "lambs among wolves." They must make up their minds to be hated, and persecuted, and ill-treated, by those who have no real religion. They must look for no favour from unconverted people, for, they will find none. It was a strong but a true saying of Martin Luther, that "Cain will murder Abel, if he can, to the very end of the world." "Marvel not," says St. John, "if the world hate you." "All that will live godly in Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "shall suffer persecution." (1 John iii. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 8.)

The third point in our Lord's charge to the seventy disciples is, *the thorough devotion to their work which He enjoins upon them*. They were to abstain even from the appearance of covetousness, or love of money, or luxury: "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes."—They were to behave like men who had no time to waste on the empty compliments and conventional courtesies of the world: "Salute no man by the way."

These remarkable words must doubtless be interpreted with some qualification. The time came when our Lord Himself, at the end of His ministry, said to the disciples, "He that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip." (Luke xxii. 36.) The apostle Paul was not ashamed to use salutations. The apostle Peter expressly commands us to "be courteous." (1 Pet. iii. 8.) But still, after every deduction and qualification, there remains a deep lesson beneath these words of our Lord, which ought not to be overlooked. They teach us that ministers and teachers of the Gospel should beware of allowing the world to eat up their time and thoughts, and to hinder them in their spiritual work. They teach us that care about money, and excessive attention to what are called "the courtesies of life," are mighty snares in the way of Christ's labourers, and snares into which they must take heed lest they fall.

Let us consider these things. They concern ministers especially, but they concern all Christians more or less. Let us strive to show the men of the world that we have no time for their mode of living. Let us show them that we find life too precious to be spent in perpetual feasting, and visiting, and calling, and the like, as if there were no death, or judgment, or life to come.—By all means let us be courteous. But let us not make the courtesies of life an idol, before which everything else must bow down. Let us declare

plainly that we seek a country beyond the grave, and that we have no time for that incessant round of eating, and drinking, and dressing, and civility, and exchange of compliments, in which so many try to find their happiness, but evidently try in vain. Let our principle be that of Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." (Neh. vi. 3.)

The fourth point in our Lord's charge to the seventy disciples is *the simple-minded and contented spirit which He bade them to exhibit*. Wherever they tarried, in travelling about upon their Master's business, they were to avoid the appearance of being fickle, changeable, delicate livers, or hard to please about food and lodging. They were to "eat and drink such things" as were given them. They were not to "go from house to house."

Instructions like these no doubt have a primary and special reference to the ministers of the Gospel. They are the men above all who, in their style of living, ought to be careful to avoid the spirit of the world. Simplicity in food and household arrangements, and readiness to put up with any accommodation, so long as health can be preserved uninjured, should always be the mark of the "man of God." Once let a preacher get the reputation of being fond of eating and drinking and worldly comforts, and his ministerial usefulness is at an end. The sermon about "things unseen" will produce little effect when the life preaches the importance of the "things that are seen."

But we ought not to confine our Lord's instructions to ministers alone. They ought to speak loudly to the consciences of all believers, of all who are called by the Holy Ghost and made priests to God. They ought to remind us of the necessity of simplicity and unworldliness in our daily life. We must beware of thinking too much about our meals, and our furniture, and our houses, and all those many things which concern the life of the body. We must strive to live like men whose first thoughts are about the immortal soul. We must endeavour to pass through the world like men who are not yet at home, and are not overmuch troubled about the fare they meet with on the road and at the inn. Blessed are they who feel like pilgrims and strangers in this life, and whose best things are all to come!

NOTES. LUKE X. 1-7.

- 1.—[*Appointed.*] The Greek word so translated is only found in one other place in the New Testament, Acts i. 24., where it is rendered "show." According to Parkhurst, it signifies "to mark out, or, appoint to an office by some outward sign, and is often used in this sense by profane writers and in the apocryphal books." John the Baptist's "showing" to Israel, Luke i. 80, is a substantive derived from this word.

[*Other seventy.*] We know nothing of the names, or subsequent history of these seventy disciples. They are nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament. Most commentators remark on the selection of the number seventy, and assign reasons for it. Grotius says, that they were chosen according to the number of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and so were seventy-two, six being chosen out of every tribe of Israel. Wordsworth remarks, that "the number seventy was that of the heads of the families of Israel (Gen. xlvi. 27.)"

and of the elders constituted by Moses. (Numb. xi. 16. 25) and of the palm trees at Elim. (Exod. xv. 27.) And the Jews supposed that the languages of the world were seventy.”

[*Sent them two and two.*] The mission of the disciples in pairs deserves remark, and ought to be remembered in modern missionary work. “Two are better than one.” (Eccles. iv. 9.) Cornelius à Lapide has a long and interesting note, to show the wisdom of the arrangement.

[*He would come.*] The Greek expression would be more literally rendered, “was about to come.”

2.—[*Send forth.*] The Greek word so rendered is peculiar. It signifies literally “to cast forth,” or, “send forth with a degree of force.” It implies that nothing but God’s powerful and constraining call will ever move men to become ministers and labourers in the Gospel harvest.

3.—[*Go your ways.*] The Greek here is simply one word, “go away,—depart.”

[*I send you forth.*] The Greek for “I” is here emphatically inserted, as if to show the dignity of the disciple’s office.

4.—[*Nor shoes.*] We find in St. Mark vi. 9., that when the apostles went forth, our Lord commanded them to be “shod with sandals.” It should be remembered therefore, that the sandal and the shoes among the Jews, essentially differed. The sandal only covered the sole of the foot and was fastened about the foot and ankle with straps. The shoe, on the contrary, was a more luxurious thing, and covered the whole foot. In the passage before us the prohibition is only against shoes and not against sandals. This is Major’s explanation, and seems the most probable one. Shoes were not so suitable as sandals to men whose only business was to preach the kingdom of God.

[*Salute no man by the way.*] This expression has given rise to many explanatory remarks. One thing is perfectly clear. Our Lord did not intend His disciples to neglect common courtesy. The very next verse enjoins the use of a courteous salutation on visiting a house.

Schoettgen thinks that our Lord refers to a custom among the Jews, according to which people journeying, or praying, and meditating, were exempted from giving or returning salutations.

Others think that our Lord refers to the long and ceremonious salutations which prevail in Eastern countries, and desired His disciples not to waste time in conforming to them. Barnes says, “If two Arabs of equal rank meet each other, they extend to each other the right hand, and having clasped hands, they elevate them, as if to kiss them. Each one then draws back his hand, and kisses it instead of his friend’s, and then places it upon his forehead. The parties then continue the salutation by kissing each other’s beards. They give thanks to God that they are once more permitted to see their friend,—they pray to the Almighty in his behalf. Sometimes they repeat not less than ten times this ceremony of grasping hands and kissing.”

The explanation of Euthymius seems most natural. He thinks our Lord meant that His disciples should devote themselves entirely to the work they were engaged in, and not waste precious opportunities of preaching, on things which were not of paramount necessity. He also very properly refers us to the case of Elisha and Gehazi: “He said to Gehazi, gird up thy loins, and take thy staff in thine hand, and go thy way, if thou meet any man, salute him not, and if any man salute thee answer him not again.” (2 Kings iv. 29.)

The plain practical lesson to ministers ought never to be forgotten. They should be careful not to waste their time in leaving cards, and paying unmeaning morning calls, as

others do who have nothing better to do with their time. The man of God ought to have no leisure for any work but that of his Master. The man of the world who expects clergymen to be as ready as other people to leave cards, and pay morning calls, and dine out, only displays his own ignorance of what a Christian minister ought to be.

- 5.—[*Peace be to this house.*] It is probable that this was a common Jewish form of salutation. (See 1 Sam. xxv. 6: Psalm cxxii. 7, 8.)
- 6.—[*If the Son of peace be there, &c.*] Bishop Pearce's explanation of this verse is worth quotation. "In the Jewish style a man who has any good or bad quality, is called the son of it. So here the son of peace is mentioned: and in Matt. xi. 19, and Luke vii. 35, are men called children of wisdom. So likewise what a man is doomed to, he is called the son of. Wicked men are children of wrath. (Ephes. ii. 3.) Judas is the son of perdition. (John xvii. 12.) So also a man desiring to die is called a son of death. (2 Sam. xii. 5.)" The expression therefore means, "If a worthy person, or one deserving your good wishes, be there, your peace shall rest upon it." The conclusion of the verse is like the expression in the Psalms, "My prayer returned into mine own bosom." (Psalm xxxv. 13.)
- 7.—[*In the same house remain.*] The meaning of this direction is made clear from the end of the verse, "go not from house to house." The disciples were to be content with such lodgings as were provided for them, and not to be hard to please either in the matter of bed or board.

[*Such things as they give.*] The first expression so translated would be rendered more literally, "The things from them." Major thinks it means, "That which belongs to them, and such things as they themselves eat."

[*The labourer is worthy of his hire.*] This expression is a proverbial one. It is remarkable as being the only expression in the Gospels, which is quoted in the Epistles. St. Paul uses it in writing to Timothy, in connection with the expression "the Scripture saith." (1 Tim. v. 18.) This has led many to conclude with much probability that St. Luke's Gospel was finished, and regarded as part of Holy Scripture, at the time when St. Paul wrote to Timothy.

Mr Ford quotes some admirable remarks from Cecil and Scougal on the duties of ministers, which throw some light on the general lessons of the whole verse. Cecil says, "It is one thing to be humble and condescending: it is another to make yourself common, cheap, and contemptible. The men of the world know when a minister is out of his place."

Scougal says, "Another occasion of contempt is too much frequenting the company of laity, and a vain and trifling conversation among them. The saying of Jerome to Nepotian, is very observable, 'A clergyman soon becomes contemptible if, when often invited to dinner, he generally accepts the invitation.'"