

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE X. 8–16.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

THESE verses comprise the second part of our Lord Jesus Christ's charge to the seventy disciples. Its lessons, like those of the first part, have a special reference to ministers and teachers of the Gospel. But they contain truths which deserve the serious attention of all members of the Church of Christ.

The first point we should notice in these verses is *the simplicity of the tidings which our Lord commanded some of His first messengers to proclaim*. We read that they were commissioned to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

These words we should probably regard as the keynote to all that the seventy disciples said. We can hardly suppose that they said nothing else but this single sentence. The words no doubt implied far more to a Jewish hearer at the time when they were spoken, than they convey to our minds at the present day. To a well-instructed Israelite, they would sound like an announcement that the times of Messiah had come,—that the long promised Saviour was about to be revealed,—that the "desire of all nations" was about to appear. (Hag. ii. 7.) All this is unquestionably true. Such an announcement suddenly made by seventy men, evidently convinced of the truth of what they said, travelling over a thickly peopled country, could hardly fail to draw attention and excite inquiry. But still the message is peculiarly and strikingly simple.

It may be doubted whether the modern way of teaching Christianity, as a general rule, is sufficiently simple. It is a certain fact that deep reasoning and elaborate arguments are not the weapons by which God is generally pleased to convert souls. Simple plain statements, boldly and solemnly made, and made in such a manner that they are evidently felt and believed by him who makes them, seem to have the most effect on hearts and consciences. Parents and teachers of the young, ministers and missionaries, Scripture-readers and district visitors, would all do well to remember this. We need not be so anxious as we often are about fencing, and proving, and demonstrating, and reasoning, out the doctrines of the Gospel. Not one soul in a hundred was ever brought to Christ in this fashion. We want more sim-

ple, plain, solemn, earnest, affectionate statements of simple Gospel truths. We may safely leave such statements to work and take care of themselves. They are arrows from God's own quiver, and will often pierce hearts which have not been touched by the most eloquent sermon.

The second point we should notice in these verses is *the great sinfulness of those who reject the offer of Christ's Gospel*. Our Lord declares that it shall be "more tolerable at the last day for Sodom," than for those who receive not the message of His disciples. And He proceeds to say that the guilt of Chorazin and Bethsaida, cities in Galilee, where He had often preached and worked miracles, but where the people had nevertheless not repented, was greater than the guilt of Tyre and Sidon.

Declarations like these are peculiarly awful. They throw light on some truths which men are very apt to forget. They teach us that all will be judged according to their spiritual light, and that from those who have enjoyed most religious privileges, most will be required.—They teach us the exceeding hardness and unbelief of the human heart. It was possible to hear Christ preach, and to see Christ's miracles, and yet to remain unconverted.—They teach us, not least, that man is responsible for the state of his own soul. Those who reject the Gospel, and remain impenitent and unbelieving, are not merely objects of pity and compassion, but deeply guilty and blameworthy in God's sight. God called, but they refused. God spoke to them, but they would not regard. The condemnation of the unbelieving will be strictly just. Their blood will be upon their own heads. The Judge of all the earth will do right. Let us lay these things to heart, and beware of unbelief. It is not open sin and flagrant profligacy alone which ruin souls. We have only to sit still and do nothing, when the Gospel is pressed on our acceptance, and we shall find ourselves one day in the pit. We need not run into any excess of riot. We need not openly oppose true religion. We have only to remain cold, careless, indifferent, unmoved, and unaffected, and our end will be in hell. This was the ruin of Chorazin and Bethsaida. And this, it may be feared, will be the ruin of thousands, as long as the world stands. No sin makes less noise, but none so surely damns the soul, as unbelief.

The last point that we should notice in these verses is *the honour which the Lord Jesus is pleased to put upon His faithful ministers*. We see this brought out in the words with which He concludes His charge to the seventy disciples. He says to them, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

The language here used by our Lord is very remarkable, and the more so when we remember that it was addressed to the seventy disciples, and not to the twelve apostles. The lesson it is intended to convey is clear and unmis- takeable. It teaches us that ministers are to be regarded as Christ's messen-

gers and ambassadors to a sinful world. So long as they do their work faithfully, they are worthy of honour and respect for their Master's sake. Those who despise them, are not despising them so much as their Master. Those who reject the terms of salvation which they are commissioned to proclaim, are doing an injury not so much to them as to their King. When Hanun, king of Ammon, ill-used the ambassadors of David, the insult was resented as if it had been done to David himself. (2 Sam. x. 1-19.)

Let us remember these things, in order that we may form a right estimate of the position of a minister of the Gospel. The subject is one on which error abounds. On the one side the minister's office is regarded with idolatrous and superstitious reverence. On the other side it is often regarded with ignorant contempt. Both extremes are wrong. Both errors arise from forgetfulness of the plain teaching of Scripture. The minister who does not do Christ's work faithfully, or deliver Christ's message correctly, has no right to look for the respect of the people.—But the minister who declares all the counsel of God, and keeps back nothing that is profitable, is one whose words cannot be disregarded without great sin. He is on the King's business. He is a herald. He is an ambassador. He is the bearer of a flag of truce. He brings the glad tidings of terms of peace. To such a man the words of our Lord will prove strictly applicable. The rich may trample on him. The wicked may hate him. The pleasure-lover may be annoyed at him. The covetous may be vexed by him. But he may take comfort daily in his Master's words, "He that despiseth you despiseth me." The last day will prove that these words were not spoken in vain.

NOTES. LUKE X. 8-16.

- 8.—[*Eat such things as are set before you.*] Quesnel remarks on this verse, "An evangelical labourer, to satisfy the necessities of life, may make use of all such things as are set before him, and are not forbidden, provided it be done without eagerness of affectation. If a missionary, a pastor, or a preacher do not show a great indifferency towards everything which relates to bodily wants, he will never be able much to advance the work of God."
- 11.—[*Be ye sure of this.*] The literal translation of the Greek expression used here, would be, "Know this."
- 12.—[*It shall be more tolerable, &c.*] Let it be noted here that there are degrees of guilt and punishment in hell, even as there are degrees of grace and glory in heaven.

Let it also be noted, that our Lord speaks of Sodom as a real city which once existed; and of the story of the guilt of its inhabitants, as a real and true story. There is no foundation here for the theory that the historical parts of the Old Testament are only mythical inventions, intended to point a moral, or convey a spiritual lesson.

Let it also be noted, that both in the present and the three following verses, the grand truth is manifestly implied that man is accountable for his belief, and that not believing the Gospel is a sin which leads to hell as really as not keeping the ten commandments. It is doubtless true that no man can come to Christ except the Father draws him. But it is also

no less true that God regards man as a responsible being, and that his not coming to Christ will be part of his guilt, and add to his condemnation at the last day.

- 13.—[*Chorazin,—Bethsaida.*] Let it be noted that these places were in the district where all our Lord's chiefest miracles were wrought; and where at least five of the apostles are supposed to have lived, Peter, Andrew, Philip, James, and John. It is not the seeing miracles alone that is necessary to convert souls.

[*Tyre and Sidon.*] These two cities were great commercial ports, famous for their riches, luxury, and idolatry. Ezekiel prophecies against them. (Ezek. xxxviii.) They are now little better than ruins.

- 15.—[*Thrust down to hell.*] It is worthy of remark, that Capernaum, of which this strong expression is spoken, has so completely passed away, that not even its ruins remain, and the place where it stood is matter of dispute.

It should be noted that "heaven" and "hell" are probably used here as allegorical expressions, signifying the highest exaltation and the lowest degradation. (See Isa. xiv. 13.)

- 16.—[*He that heareth you heareth me.*] There is probably no stronger language than this in the New Testament about the dignity of a faithful minister's office, and the guilt incurred by those who refuse to hear his message. It is language, we must remember, which is not addressed to the twelve apostles, but to seventy disciples, of whose names and subsequent history we know nothing. Scott remarks, "To reject an ambassador, or to treat him with contempt, is an affront to the prince who commissioned and sent him, and whom he represents. The apostles and seventy disciples were the ambassadors and representatives of Christ; and they who rejected and despised them, in fact rejected and despised Him."

It is one thing to take a Roman Catholic view of the ministry, maintain apostolical succession, and regard ministers as mediators between God and man, by virtue of their office and orders. It is quite another thing to despise their office, and regard their warnings and exhortations as of no importance. Both extremes are grievous errors, and should be carefully avoided.