

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B. A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
VICAR OF STRADBROOKE, SUFFOLK;

Author of "Home Truths," etc.

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LUKE XI. 33–36.

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth *it* in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also *is* full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

WE learn from these words of the Lord Jesus, *the importance of making a good use of religious light and privileges*. We are reminded of what men do when they light a candle. They do not “put it in a secret place,” under a bushel measure. They place it on a candlestick, that it may be serviceable and useful by giving light.

When the Gospel of Christ is placed before a man’s soul, it is as if God offered to him a lighted candle. It is not sufficient to hear it, and assent to it, and admire it, and acknowledge its truth. It must be received into the heart, and obeyed in the life. Until this takes place the Gospel does him no more good than if he were an African heathen, who has never heard the Gospel at all. A lighted candle is before him, but he is not turning it to account. The guilt of such conduct is very great. God’s light neglected will be a heavy charge against many at the last day.

But even when a man professes to value the light of the Gospel he must take care that he is not selfish in the use of it. He must endeavour to reflect the light on all around him. He must strive to make others acquainted with the truths which he finds good for himself. He must let his light so shine before men, that they may see whose he is and whom he serves, and may be induced to follow his example, and join the Lord’s side. He must regard the light which he enjoys as a loan, for the use of which he is accountable. He must strive to hold his candle in such a way that many may see it, and as they see it, admire and believe.

Let us take heed to ourselves that we do not neglect our light. The sin of many in this matter is far greater than they suppose. Thousands flatter themselves that their souls are not in a very bad state, because they abstain from gross and glaring acts of wickedness, and are decent and respectable in their outward lives. But are they neglecting the Gospel when it is offered to them? Are they coolly sitting still year after year, and taking no decided steps in the service of Christ? If this be so, let them know that their guilt is very great in the sight of God. To have the light and yet not walk in the light, is of itself a great sin. It is to treat with contempt and indifference the King of kings.

Let us beware of selfishness in our religion, even after we have learned to value the light. We should labour to make all men see that we have found

“the pearl of great price,” and that we want them to find it as well as ourselves. A man’s religion may well be suspected, when he is content to go to heaven alone. The true Christian will have a large heart. If a parent, he will long for the salvation of his children. If a master, he will desire to see his servants converted. If a landlord, he will want his tenants to come with him into God’s kingdom. This is healthy religion! The Christian who is satisfied to burn his candle alone, is in a very weak and sickly state of soul.

We learn, secondly, from these verses, *the value of a single and undivided heart in religion*. This is a lesson which our Lord illustrates from the office of the eye in the human body. He reminds us that when the eye is “single,” or thoroughly healthy, the action of the whole body is influenced by it. But when, on the contrary, the eye is evil, or diseased, it affects the physical comfort and activity of the whole man. In an Eastern country, where eye diseases are painfully common, the illustration is one which would be particularly striking.

But when can it be truly said that a man’s heart is single in religion? What are the marks of a single heart? The question is one of deep importance. Well would it be for the Church and the world if single hearts were more common!

The single heart is a heart which is not only changed, converted, and renewed; but thoroughly, powerfully, and habitually under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It is a heart which abhors all compromises, all lukewarmness, all halting between two opinions in religion. It sees one mighty object,—the love of Christ dying for sinners. It has one mighty aim,—to glorify God and do His will. It has one mighty desire,—to please God and be commended by Him. Compared with such objects, aims, and desires, the single heart knows nothing worthy to be named. The praise and favour of man are nothing. The blame and disapprobation of man are trifles light as air. “One thing I desire,—one thing I do,—one thing I live for:” this is the language of the single heart. (Ps. xxvii. 4; Luke x. 42; Philip. iii. 13.) Such were the hearts of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Paul, and Luther, and Latimer. They all had their weaknesses and infirmities. They erred no doubt in some things. But they all had this grand peculiarity. They were men of one thing. They had single hearts. They were unmistakeably “men of God.”

The blessings of a single heart in religion are almost incalculable. He who has it, does good by wholesale. He is like a light-house in the midst of a dark world. He reflects light on hundreds whom he knows nothing of “His whole body is full of light.” His Master is seen through every window of his conversation and conduct. His grace shines forth in every department of his behaviour. His family, his servants, his relations, his neighbours, his friends, his enemies, all see the bias of his character, and all are obliged to confess, whether they like it or not, that his religion is a real and influential thing.

And not least, the man of a single heart finds a rich reward in the inward experience of his own soul. He has meat to eat the world knows not of. He has a joy and peace in believing to which many indolent Christians never attain. His face is towards the sun, and so his heart is seldom cold.

Let us pray and labour that we may have a single eye and a whole heart in our Christianity. If we have a religion, let us have a thorough one. If we are Christians, let us be decided. Inward peace and outward usefulness are at stake in this matter. Our eye must be single, if our whole body is to be full of light.

NOTES. LUKE XI. 33–36.

- 33.—[*No man...lighted a candle, &c.*] The saying of this verse is evidently intended to be a rebuke to the unbelieving Jews, who had the light, but would not use it,—and a warning to our Lord’s disciples, who believed in the light, that they ought not to conceal the light, but display it to the world. A candle is intended to be placed on a candlestick and give light. So also God’s truth is intended to be imparted to others, and exhibited to all around us.

It is hard to conceive a more striking example of putting the light “under a bushel” than the treatment of the Bible by the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome possesses that Word which is given to be the light of man’s soul, and yet discourages its reading and opposes its circulation.

- 34.—[*When thine eye is single, &c.*] The eye is to the body, what the heart is to the man. If the eye is dimmed, does not see objects clearly, the whole action of the body is more or less affected. If the heart is double-minded and compromising, the whole character of the man will be influenced by it. His course will be wavering and unstable. His life will be trimming and inconsistent.

Parkhurst says, that the Greek word rendered “single,” when applied to the eye, means clear. Doddridge says, “it is opposed to an eye overgrown with film, which would obstruct the sight.” Campbell says that it means “sound and healthy,” and that both Chrysostom and Theophylact interpret it in that sense.

- 35.—[*Take heed, therefore, &c.*] The meaning of this verse appears to be “Take heed lest that faculty in thee, which ought to be the eye of the soul, become so dimmed and obscured by sin, sloth, or unbelief, that it be as useless as if it were in utter darkness. Take heed, lest by hardening thy heart against the light of my Gospel, thou become utterly callous, and be given over to a reprobate mind.”

It must be remembered that the expression is parabolic and figurative. It must not be so strained and wrested as to convey the idea that man has naturally an “inward light” which can save his soul. Such an interpretation would contradict other plain texts of Scripture, and tend to Pelagianism.

- 36.—[*If thy whole body, &c.*] The meaning of this verse is at first sight nothing more than the assertion of a simple truism. It seems nothing more than saying, “If thy body shall be light, it shall be light.” This, however, is plainly not the full meaning of our Lord’s words.

The meaning of the words appears to be as follows. “If the eye of thy soul is thoroughly healthy, and thy heart thoroughly right in the sight of God, so that thy whole character is enlightened and influenced by it, then shall thy whole character shine after the manner of a candle which enlightens thee by its shining. Thou shalt not only have light for thyself, but reflect light on others.” The second expression, “full of light,” should be read in close connection with the likeness of the candle which immediately follows.—If thou art really full

of light, thou shalt be like a lighted candle on a candlestick. Thou shalt be a light to the world.

The marginal reading gives a more literal translation of the conclusion of the verse than the authorized version. The literal rendering of the Greek is, “as when a candle, by its bright, flashing shining, enlightens thee.”