

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

*And Many Explanatory Notes.*

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LUKE XII. 41–48.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speak thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

WE learn from these verses, *the importance of doing, in our Christianity*. Our Lord is speaking of His own second coming. He is comparing His disciples to servants waiting for their master's return, who have each their own work to do during His absence. "Blessed," He says, "is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so *doing*."

The warning has doubtless a primary reference to ministers of the Gospel. They are the stewards of God's mysteries, who are specially bound to be found "doing," when Christ comes again. But the words contain a further lesson, which all Christians would do well to consider. That lesson is, the immense importance of a working, practical, diligent, useful religion.

The lesson is one which is greatly needed in the Churches of Christ. We hear a great deal about people's intentions, and hopes, and wishes, and feelings, and professions. It would be well if we could hear more about people's practice. It is not the servant who is found wishing and professing, but the servant who is found "doing," whom Jesus calls "blessed."

The lesson is one which many, unhappily, shrink from giving, and many more shrink from receiving. We are gravely told that to talk of "working," and "doing," is legal, and brings Christians into bondage! Remarks of this kind should never move us. They savour of ignorance or perverseness. The lesson before us is not about justification, but about sanctification,—not about faith, but about holiness. The point is not *what a man should do to be saved*,—but *what ought a saved man to do*? The teaching of Scripture is clear and express upon this subject. A saved man ought to be "careful to maintain good works." (Tit. iii. 8.) The desire of a true Christian ought to be, to be found "doing."

If we love life, let us resolve by God's help, to be "doing" Christians. This is to be like Christ: He "went about doing good." (Acts x. 38.) This is

to be like the Apostles: they were men of deeds even more than of words. This is to glorify God: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (John xv. 8.) This is to be useful to the world: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.)

We learn, secondly, from these verses, *the awful danger of those who neglect the duties of their calling*. Of such our Lord declares, that they shall be "cut in sunder, and their portion appointed with the unbelievers." These words no doubt apply especially to the ministers and teachers of the Gospel. Yet we must not flatter ourselves that they are confined to them. They are probably meant to convey a lesson to all who fill offices of high responsibility. It is a striking fact that when Peter says at the beginning of the passage, "Speakest thou this parable to us, or even to all?" our Lord gives him no answer. Whosoever occupies a position of trust, and neglects his duties, would do well to ponder this passage, and learn wisdom.

The language which our Lord Jesus uses about slothful and unfaithful servants is peculiarly severe. Few places in the Gospels contain such strong expressions as this. It is a vain delusion to suppose that the Gospel speaks nothing but "smooth things." The same loving Saviour who holds out mercy to the uttermost to the penitent and believing, never shrinks from holding up the judgments of God against those who despise His counsel. Let no man deceive us on this subject. There is a hell for such an one as goeth on still in his wickedness, no less than a heaven for the believer in Jesus. There is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi. 16.)

Let us strive so to live that whenever the heavenly Master comes we may be found ready to receive Him. Let us watch our hearts with a godly jealousy, and beware of the least symptom of unreadiness for the Lord's appearing. Specially let us beware of any rising disposition to lower our standard of Christian holiness,—to dislike persons who are more spiritually-minded than ourselves, and to conform to the world. The moment we detect such a disposition in our hearts we may be sure that our souls are in great peril. The Christian professor who begins to persecute God's people, and to take pleasure in worldly society, is on the high road to ruin.

We learn, lastly, from these verses, that *the greater a man's religious light is, the greater is his guilt if he is not converted*. The servant which "knew his lord's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

The lesson of these words is one of wide application. It demands the attention of many classes. It should come home to the conscience of every British Christian. His judgment shall be far more strict than that of the heathen who never saw the Bible.—It should come home to every Protestant who has the liberty to read the Scriptures. His responsibility is far greater

than that of the priest-ridden Romanist, who is debarred from the use of God's Word.—It should come home to every hearer of the Gospel. If he remains unconverted he is far more guilty than the inhabitant of some dark parish, who never hears any teaching but a sort of semi-heathen morality.—It should come home to every child and servant in religious families. All such are far more blameworthy, in God's sight, than those who live in houses where there is no honour paid to the Word of God and prayer. Let these things never be forgotten. Our judgment at the last day will be according to our light and opportunities.

What are we doing ourselves with our religious knowledge? Are we using it wisely, and turning it to good account? Or are we content with the barren saying, "We know it: we know it!" and secretly flattering ourselves that the knowledge of our Lord's will makes us better than others, while that will is not done? Let us beware of mistakes. The day will come when knowledge unimproved will be found the most perilous of possessions. Thousands will awake to find that they are in a lower place than the most ignorant and idolatrous heathen. Their knowledge not used, and their light not followed, will only add to their condemnation.

NOTES. LUKE XII. 41–48.

42.—[*And the Lord said.*] Let it be noted that our Lord Jesus Christ did not give any direct reply to the question which Peter asked. Major remarks, "The meaning of our Saviour's reply appears to be this: The precepts that I have given apply to every individual, but with greater force to you who are in the situation of stewards, to whom much has been entrusted, and from whom consequently much will be required."

The whole passage, down to the 48th verse, appears to be parabolic and figurative; and we must be careful not to strain any particular expression in it, further than is warranted by the general scope of the context.

[*Steward.*] This word, it should be noted, is specially used by St. Paul as descriptive of the ministerial office. (1 Cor. iv. 1.) It would seem to show that ministers are primarily pointed at in our Lord's teaching in this parable.

44.—[*Make him ruler over all that he hath.*] This expression should be compared with similar expressions in the parables of the talents and of the pounds.

45.—[*Beat the menservants, &c.*] Stella, though a Roman Catholic Commentator, remarks how closely this verse describes the conduct of Cardinals and Bishops at Rome in the beginning of the 17th century.

46.—[*Will cut him in sunder.*] It admits of some doubt whether the Greek word so translated will bear so strong a sense as our translators have put upon it. It is only found in this passage, and a similar passage in Matt. xxiv. 51.

Parkhurst thinks that it means, "shall scourge with the utmost severity." Others think that it means, "shall separate, or remove, from his office: shall dismiss." It certainly is worthy of note, that after using this expression, our Lord speaks of the unfaithful servant as yet alive: "He shall appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

[*With the unbelievers.*] Some think that this expression means simply “with the unfaithful servants,” in contradistinction to the “faithful servants,” described in the 42nd verse. Comparison with Matthew xxv. 21, favours this idea.

48.—[*Knew not...commit things worthy of stripes.*] Watson thinks that the ignorance here must be “taken comparatively, and not absolutely.” Few expressions in the Bible are more unfavourable to the heathen who die in ignorance of the Gospel than this. It is vain to conceal from ourselves the solemn truth, that no degree of ignorance makes a man entirely guiltless and excusable in the sight of God. Our very ignorance is part of our sin.

[*Unto whomsoever much is given, &c.*] In this sentence our Lord lays down a great principle in His kingdom, as an appropriate conclusion to the parable he has just been speaking.

Baxter remarks on this verse, “Great gifts are to be used with great diligence; and great trusts, and powers, and charges, are rather to be feared than sought. Little do the conquerors of the world, or those that strive for Church preferments, believe and consider what duty, or what deep damnation, they labour for.”