

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS. ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XIII. 1-5.

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem.

5 I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

THE murder of the Galilæans, mentioned in the first verse of this passage, is an event of which we know nothing certain. The motives of those who told our Lord of the event, we are left to conjecture. At any rate, they gave Him an opportunity of speaking to them about their own souls, which He did not fail to employ. He seized the event, as His manner was, and made a practical use of it. He bade His informants look within, and think of their own state before God. He seems to say, "What though these Galilæans did die a sudden death? What is that to you? Consider your own ways. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Let us observe, for one thing, in these verses, *how much more ready people are to talk of the deaths of others than their own*. The death of the Galilæans, mentioned here, was probably a common subject of conversation in Jerusalem and all Judæa. We can well believe that all the circumstances and particulars belonging to it were continually discussed by thousands who never thought of their own latter end. It is just the same in the present day. A murder, a sudden death, a shipwreck, or a railway accident, will completely occupy the minds of a neighbourhood, and be in the mouth of every one you meet. And yet these very persons dislike talking of their own deaths, and their own prospects in the world beyond the grave. Such is human nature in every age. In religion, men are ready to talk of anybody's business rather than their own.

The state of our own souls should always be our first concern. It is eminently true that real Christianity will always begin at home. The converted man will always think first of his own heart, his own life, his own deserts, and his own sins. Does he hear of a sudden death? He will say to himself, "Should I have been found ready, if this had happened to me?"—Does he hear of some awful crime, or deed of wickedness? He will say to himself, "Are *my* sins forgiven? and have I really repented of my own transgressions?"—Does he hear of worldly men running into every excess of sin? He will say to himself, "Who has made *me* to differ? What has kept me from walking in the same road, except the free grace of God?"—May we ever seek to be men of this frame of mind! Let us take a kind interest in all around us. Let us feel tender pity and compassion for all who suffer vio-

lence, or are removed by sudden death. But let us never forget to look at home, and to learn wisdom for ourselves from all that happens to others.

Let us observe, for another thing, in these verses, *how strongly our Lord lays down the universal necessity of repentance*. Twice He declares emphatically, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The truth here asserted is one of the foundations of Christianity. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All of us are born in sin. We are fond of sin, and are naturally unfit for friendship with God. Two things are absolutely necessary to the salvation of every one of us: we must repent, and we must believe the Gospel. Without repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, no man can be saved.

The nature of true repentance is clearly and unmistakably laid down in Holy Scripture. It begins with knowledge of sin. It goes on to work sorrow for sin. It leads to confession of sin before God. It shows itself before man by a thorough breaking off from sin. It results in producing a habit of deep hatred for all sin. Above all, it is inseparably connected with lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance like this is the characteristic of all true Christians.

The necessity of repentance to salvation will be evident to all who search the Scriptures, and consider the nature of the subject.—Without it there is no forgiveness of sins. There never was a pardoned man who was not also a penitent. There never was one washed in the blood of Christ who did not feel, and mourn, and confess, and hate his own sins.—Without it there can be no meetness for heaven. We could not be happy if we reached the kingdom of glory with a heart loving sin. The company of saints and angels would give us no pleasure. Our minds would not be in tune for an eternity of holiness. Let these things sink down into our hearts. We must repent as well as believe, if we hope to be saved.

Let us leave the subject with the solemn inquiry,—Have we ourselves repented? We live in a Christian land. We belong to a Christian Church. We have Christian ordinances and means of grace. We have heard of repentance with the hearing of the ear, and that hundreds of times. But have we ever repented? Do we really know our own sinfulness? Do our sins cause us any sorrow? Have we cried to God about our sins, and sought forgiveness at the throne of grace? Have we ceased to do evil, and broken off from our bad habits? Do we cordially and heartily hate everything that is evil? These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. The subject before us is no light matter. Nothing less than life—eternal life—is at stake! If we die impenitent, and without a new heart, we had better never have been born.

If we never yet repented, let us begin without delay. For this we are accountable. "Repent ye, and be converted," were the words of Peter to the Jews who had crucified our Lord. (Acts iii. 19.) "Repent and pray," was the

charge addressed to Simon Magus when he was in the “gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.” (Acts viii. 22.) There is everything to encourage us to begin. Christ invites us. Promises of Scripture are held out to us. Glorious declarations of God’s willingness to receive us abound throughout the Word. “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.” Then let us arise and call upon God. Let us repent without delay.

If we have already repented in time past, let us go on repenting to the end of our lives. There will always be sins to confess and infirmities to deplore, so long as we are in the body. Let us repent more deeply, and humble ourselves more thoroughly, every year. Let every returning birthday find us hating sin more, and loving Christ more. He was a wise old saint who said, “I hope to carry my repentance to the very gate of heaven.”

NOTES. LUKE XIII. 1–5.

- 1.—[*The Galilæans, whose blood, &c.*] We know nothing about the event here mentioned. Josephus speaks of the slaughter of certain Samaritans by Pilate upon mount Gerizim. But they seem to have been rebels and fanatics, and to have died in battle. It is far more probable that the case reported to our Lord was that of certain Galilæans who had come up to Jerusalem to worship, and were slain by Pilate’s soldiers in some popular tumult.
- 2.—[*Suppose ye...sinners above all, &c.*] It is evident that our Lord’s informants were filled with the vulgar opinion that sudden deaths were special judgments, and that if a man died suddenly, he must have committed some special sin. Our Lord bids them understand that this opinion was a mere baseless delusion. We have no right whatever to conclude that God is angry with a man because He removes him suddenly from the world.

Ford gives a quotation from Perkins, which deserve reading: “The common opinion is, that if a man die quietly, and go away like a lamb (which in some diseases, as consumption, any man may do), then he goes straight to heaven. But if the violence of the disease stirs up impatience, and causes frantic behaviour, then men use to say ‘There is a judgment of God, serving either to discover a hypocrite or to plague a wicked man.’ But the truth is otherwise.—A man may die like a lamb, and yet go to hell; and one dying in exceeding torment and strange behaviour of body, may go to heaven.”—(*Perkins’ Salve for a Sick Man.*)
- 3.—[*Ye shall all likewise perish.*] It is highly probable that these words were spoken with a prophetic meaning, and that our Lord had in view the tremendous slaughter of the Jews by the Roman army under Titus, which was to take place in a few years at the siege of Jerusalem.
- 4.—[*Those eighteen...tower in Siloam.*] We know nothing about the circumstance which our Lord here mentions. It is probable it was something which had lately happened, and was the common subject of conversation among dwellers in Jerusalem, just as any great accident is among ourselves at the present day. The word translated “sinners” in this verse, means literally, “debtors.”
- 5.—[*Except ye repent, &c.*] The repetition of this sentence shows the general importance of repentance, and the great need in which the Jews in particular stood of it. Ford quotes a saying of Philip Henry’s, which is worth reading: “Some people do not like to hear much of repentance. But I think it so necessary, that if I should die in the pulpit, I should desire to die preaching repentance, and if I should die out of the pulpit, I should desire to die practising it.”