

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,
And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XVIII. 28–34.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.	the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.
29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,	32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:
30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.	33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.
31 Then he took <i>unto him</i> the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by	34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

LET us observe, firstly, in these verses, what a *glorious and satisfying promise our Lord holds out to all believers who make sacrifices for his sake*. He says, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

The promise before us is a very peculiar one. It does not refer to the believer's reward in another world, and the crown of glory which fadeth not away; it refers distinctly to the life that now is: it is spoken of "this present time."

The "manifold more" of the promise must evidently be taken in a spiritual sense. The meaning is, that the believer shall find in Christ a full equivalent for anything that he is obliged to give up for Christ's sake. He shall find such peace, and hope, and joy, and comfort and rest, in communion with the Father and the Son, that his losses shall be more than counterbalanced by his gains. In short, the Lord Jesus Christ shall be more to him than property, or relatives, or friends.

The complete fulfilment of this wonderful promise has been often seen in the experience of God's saints. Hundreds could testify in every age of the Church, that when they were obliged to give up everything for the kingdom of God's sake their losses were amply supplied by Christ's grace; they were kept in perfect peace, staying their souls on Jesus. (Isa. xxvi. 3.) They were enabled to glory in tribulation, and to take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses for Christ's sake. (Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 10.) They were enabled in the darkest hour to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and to count it an honour to suffer shame for their Master's name. (1 Pet. i. 8; Acts v. 41.) The last day will show that in poverty and in exile, in prisons and before judgment seats, in the fire and under the sword, the words of Christ before us have repeatedly been made good. Friends have often proved faithless; royal promises have often been broken;

riches have made themselves wings; but Christ's engagements have never been known to fail.

Let us grasp this promise firmly: let us go forward in the way of life with a firm conviction that it is a promise which is the property of all God's people; let us not give way to doubts and fears because of difficulties that cross our path; let us press onward with a strong persuasion, that if we lose anything for Christ's sake, Christ will make it up to us even in this present world. What believers need is more daily practical faith in Christ's words. The well of living water is always near us, as we travel through the wilderness of this world; yet for want of faith we often fail to see it, and faint by the way. (Gen. xxi. 19.)

Let us observe, secondly, in these verses, *the clear and plain prediction which our Lord makes about His own death*. We see Him telling the disciples that He would be "delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, spitefully entreated, spitted on, scourged, and put to death."

The importance of our Lord's death appears in the frequency with which He foretold it, and referred to it during His life. He knew well that it was the principal end for which He came into the world. He was to give His life a ransom for many; He was to make His soul an offering for sin, and to bear our transgressions in His own body on the tree; He was to give His body and blood for the life of the world. Let us seek to be of the same mind with Christ in our estimate of His death: let our principal thoughts about Jesus be inseparably bound up with His crucifixion. The corner-stone of all truth concerning Christ is this; that "while we were yet sinners He died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

The love of our Lord Jesus Christ towards sinners is strikingly shown in His steady purpose of heart to die for them. All through His life He knew that He was about to be crucified. There was nothing in His cross and passion which He did not foresee distinctly, even to the minutest particular: long before it came upon Him He tasted all the well-known bitterness of anticipated suffering. Yet He never swerved from His path for a moment. He was straitened in spirit till He had finished the work He came to do. (Luke xii. 50.) Such love passeth knowledge; it is unspeakable, unsearchable: we may rest on that love without fear. If Christ so loved us before we thought of Him, He will surely not cease to love us after we have believed.

The calmness of our Lord Jesus Christ in the prospect of certain death ought to be a pattern to all His people. Like Him, let us drink the bitter cup which our Father gives us, without a murmur, and say "Not my will but thine be done." The man that has faith in the Lord Jesus has no reason to be afraid of the grave. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 56, 57), the grave is no longer what it once was: it is the

place where the Lord lay. If the great Head of the body looked forward to the grave with calmness, much more may all His believing members. For them He has overcome death. The king of terrors at the worst is a conquered foe.

Let us observe, lastly, in these verses, *the slowness of the disciples to understand Christ's death*. We find that when our Lord described His coming sufferings, the disciples "understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

We read such passages as these, perhaps, with a mixture of pity and surprise. We wonder at the darkness and blindness of these Jews. We marvel that in the face of plain teaching, and in the light of plain types of the Mosaic law, the sufferings of Messiah should have been lost sight of in His glory, and His cross hidden behind His crown.

But are we not forgetting that the vicarious death of Christ has always been a stumbling-block and an offence to proud human nature? Do we not know that even now, after Christ has risen from the dead and ascended into glory, the doctrine of the cross is still foolishness to many, and that Christ's substitution for us on the cross is a truth which is often denied, rejected and refused? Before we wonder at these first weak disciples for not understanding our Lord's words about His death we should do well to look around us: it may humble us to remember that thousands of *so-called* Christians neither understand nor value Christ's death at the present day.

Let us look well to our own hearts. We live in a day when false doctrines about Christ's death abound on every side. Let us see that Christ crucified is really the foundation of our own hopes, and that Christ's atoning death for sin is indeed the whole life of our souls. Let us beware of adding to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as the Roman Catholic does. Its value was infinite: it admits of no addition. Let us beware of taking away from Christ's sacrifice, as the Socinian does. To suppose that the Son of God only died to leave us an example of self-denial, is to contradict a hundred plain texts of Scripture. Let us walk in the old paths. Let us say with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)

NOTES. LUKE XVIII. 28-34.

28.—[*We have left all.*] The remark has often been made, that Peter and his fellow disciples had left little or nothing for Christ's sake. A few boats and fishing nets were probably the whole amount of their worldly goods. Yet it must never be forgotten that a poor man's "all" is as dear to him, in a certain sense, as the rich man's palace. He knows nothing higher or better excepting by report. In giving up everything for Christ's sake, he makes, at any rate, the greatest sacrifice in his power.

29.—[*There is no man that hath left, &c.*] The cases which our Lord here describes are undoubtedly cases which can seldom occur in England. We can hardly conceive a case among ourselves in which religion could oblige a man to separate from his "wife and children."

But there can be no doubt that sacrifices like this were often necessary when the Gospel was first preached, and was bitterly opposed by prejudiced Jews and ignorant heathen. Moreover, it is a striking fact that at the present day a converted Jew is often obliged to separate from his nearest and dearest relatives, and a converted Hindoo is cast off by all his family.

There can be no doubt that our Lord spoke with foresight of cases like these. In this point of view His words are singularly full of comfort.

- 30.—[*Manifold more...this present time.*] It is the safest course to give a spiritual sense to this glorious promise. A converted man will no doubt often find new friends among converted people, who shall amply make up to him for the loss of his former worldly acquaintances. But it is not always so. The wisdom of God is sometimes pleased to allow a converted man to be a loser in temporal things by his conversion. Christ Himself, and all the inward comforts of heart, conscience, and soul which Christ alone can bestow, and the world can neither give nor take away, must be regarded as the real substance of the promise.
- 31.—[*All things...written, &c.*] If we confine this expression to the sufferings and passion of our Lord, the reference must of course be to Psalm xxii.; Isaiah liii.; and Daniel ix. 26. But it admits of question whether our Lord did not refer to all that was to happen at Jerusalem from the time when He rode into the city upon an ass until His resurrection. The passages referred to would then be more numerous. In any case, let it be noted the book of Psalms is classed among “the prophets.” There is far more of prophetic matter in the Psalms than most readers suppose.
- 32, 33.—[*He shall be delivered, &c.*] The following passage from Doddridge is worth reading: “This prediction is a strong instance of the spirit of prophecy exerted by our Lord. It was more probable that he would be privately slain, or stoned to death in a tumult. And when He was delivered back to the Jews by Pilate, with permission to judge Him according to their law, it is wonderful that He was not stoned. But all was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”
- 34.—[*They understood none, &c.*] The blindness of the disciples about our Lord’s crucifixion and sufferings is, at first sight, very extraordinary. But we must remember that they were all Jews, and trained from their infancy to expect a Messiah in glory and majesty, but not in suffering and humiliation. The influence of early training, and incessant indoctrinating with one set of ideas, is exceedingly great.

Pellican has a clever and ingenious note on this passage, in which he shows how the disciples would probably interpret our Lord’s predictions of His own sufferings, and explain away a sense which was offensive and painful to their own feelings.

He thinks that they would call to mind the many figurative and parabolical expressions which our Lord used in His teaching, such as “eating His flesh and blood,”—“taking heed of the leaven of the Pharisees,”—and would persuade themselves that His strong language about His own death might yet receive some figurative fulfilment without their Master really dying.

After all, we have no right to wonder at the disciples being slow to understand the first advent of Christ in humiliation, when we see how many Christians refuse to acknowledge the second advent in glory, although the texts about Messiah’s glory are far more numerous than those about His sufferings. Above all, we have no right to wonder when we see how many, even now, are utterly in the dark about the true purpose of Christ’s death upon the cross.