

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS.
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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ST. LUKE. VOL. I.

LONDON:

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY, 23, HOLLES STREET.
CAVENDISH SQUARE

IPSWICH: WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

MDCCCLVIII.

LUKE I. 39–45.

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda ;	and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.	43 And whence <i>is</i> this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb ; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.	44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.
42 And she spake out with a loud voice,	45 And blessed <i>is</i> she that believed : for there shall be a performance of those things <i>which</i> were told her from the Lord.

WE should observe, in this passage, *the benefit of fellowship and communion between believers*. We read of a visit paid by the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elisabeth. We are told in a striking manner how the hearts of both these holy women were cheered, and their minds lifted up by this interview. Without this visit, Elisabeth might never have been so filled with the Holy Ghost, as we are here told she was; and Mary might never have uttered that song of praise which is now known all over the Church of Christ. The words of an old divine are deep and true: "Happiness communicated doubles itself. Grief grows greater by concealing: joy by expression."

We should always regard communion with other believers as an eminent means of grace. It is a refreshing break in our journey along the narrow way to exchange experience with our fellow travellers. It helps us insensibly and it helps them, and so is a mutual gain. It is the nearest approach that we can make on earth to the joy of heaven. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." We need reminding of this. The subject does not receive sufficient attention, and the souls of believers suffer in consequence. There are many who fear the Lord and think upon His name, and yet forget to speak often one to another. (Malachi iii. 16.) First let us seek the face of God. Then let us seek the face of God's friends. If we did this more, and were more careful about the company we keep, we should oftener know what it is to feel "filled with the Holy Ghost."

We should observe in this passage, *the clear spiritual knowledge which appears in the language of Elisabeth*. She uses an expression about the Virgin Mary which shows that she herself was deeply taught of God. She calls her "the mother of my Lord."

Those words "my Lord" are so familiar to our ears, that we miss the fullness of their meaning. At the time they were spoken they implied far more than we are apt to suppose. They were nothing less than a distinct declaration that the child who was to be born of the Virgin Mary was the long promised Messiah, the "Lord" of whom David in spirit had prophesied, the Christ of God. Viewed in this light, the expression is a wonderful example of faith. It is a confession worthy to be placed by the side of that of Peter, when he said to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ."

Let us remember the deep meaning of the words, “the Lord,” and beware of using them lightly and carelessly. Let us consider that they rightly apply to none but Him who was crucified for our sins on Calvary. Let the recollection of this fact invest the words with a holy reverence, and make us careful how we let them fall from our lips. There are two texts connected with the expression which should often come to our minds. In one it is written, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” In the other it is written, “Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (1 Cor. xii. 3. Philipp. ii. 11.)

Finally, we should observe in these verses, *the high praise which Elisabeth bestows upon the grace of faith*. “Blessed,” she says, “is she that believed.”

We need not wonder that this holy woman should thus commend faith. No doubt she was well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures. She knew the great things that faith had done. What is the whole history of God’s saints in every age but a record of men and women who obtained a good report by faith? What is the simple story of all, from Abel downwards but a narrative of redeemed sinners who believed, and so were blessed? By faith they embraced promises. By faith they lived. By faith they walked. By faith they endured hardships. By faith they looked to an unseen Saviour, and good things yet to come. By faith they battled with the world, the flesh, and the devil. By faith they overcame, and got safe home. Of this goodly company the Virgin Mary was proving herself one. No wonder that Elisabeth said, “Blessed is she that believed.”

Do we know anything of this precious faith? This, after all, is the question that concerns us. Do we know anything of the faith of God’s elect, the faith which is of the operation of God? (Titus i. 2. Col. ii. 12.) Let us never rest till we know it by experience. Once knowing it, let us never cease to pray that our faith may grow exceedingly. Better a thousand times be rich in faith than rich in gold. Gold will be worthless in the unseen world to which we are all travelling. Faith will be owned in that world before God the Father and the holy angels. When the great white throne is set, and the books are opened, when the dead are called from their graves, and receiving their final sentence, the value of faith will at length be fully known. Men will learn then, if they never learned before, how true are the words, “Blessed are they that believed.”

NOTES LUKE I. 39–46.

- 39.—[A *city of Judah*] It is thought by many that this city was Hebron, and by examining Joshua xxi. 9-11, we shall see there is considerable probability that it was. It is the place where Abraham, the father of the faithful, long dwelt, and the place where Sarah died. Gen. xiii. 18, and xxiii. 2. Few places in Palestine have been so highly honoured.