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 II. 21-24.

21 And when eight days were ac­complished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel be­fore he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her puri­fication according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him*to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

THE first point which demands our attention in this passage, is *the obedience which our Lord rendered, as an infant, to the Jewish law.* We read of His being circum­cised on the eighth day. It is the earliest fact which is recorded in His history.

It is mere waste of time to speculate, as some have done, about the reason why our Lord submitted to cir­cumcision. We know that “in Him was no sin,” either original or actual. (1 John iii. 5.) His being circumcised was not meant in the least as an acknowledgment that there was any tendency to corruption in His heart. It was not a confession of inclination to evil, and of needof grace to mortify the deeds of His body. All this should be carefully borne in mind.

Let it suffice us to remember that our Lord’s circum­cision was a public testimony to Israel, that according to the flesh He was a Jew, made of a Jewish woman, and “made under the law.” (Galat. iv. 4.) Without it He would not have fulfilled the law’s requirements. With­out it He could not have been recognized as the son of David, and the seed of Abraham. Let us remember, furthermore, that circumcision was absolutely necessary before our Lord could be heard as a teacher in Israel. Without it He would have had no place in any lawful Jewish assembly, and no right to any Jewish ordinance. Without it He would have been regarded by all Jews as nothing better than an uncircumcised Gentile, and an apostate from the faith of the fathers.

Let our Lord’s submission to an ordinance which He did not need for Himself, be a lesson to us in our daily life. Let us endure much, rather than increase the offence of the Gospel, or hinder in any way the cause of God. The words of St. Paul deserve frequent ponder­ing;—“Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more, and unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.”—“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. ix. 19-22.) The man who wrote these words walked very closely in the footsteps of His crucified Master.

The second point which demands our attention in this passage, is *the name by which our Lord was called, by God’s special command.* “His name was called Jesus, which was so named by the angel, before He was con­ceived in the womb.”

The word Jesus means simply “Saviour.” It is the same word as “Joshua” in the Old Testament. Very striking and instructive is the selection of this name. The Son of God came down from heaven to be not only the Saviour, but the King, the Lawgiver, the Prophet, the Priest, the Judge of fallen man. Had He chosen any one of these titles, He would only have chosen that which was His own. But He passed by them all. He selects a name which speaks of mercy, grace, help, and deliverance for a lost world. It is as a deliverer and Redeemer that He desires principally to be known.

Let us often ask ourselves what our own hearts know of the Son of God. Is He our Jesus, our Saviour? This is the question on which our salvation turns. Let it not content us to know Christ as one who wrought mighty miracles, and spake as never man spake,—or to know Him as One who is very God, and will one day judge the world. Let us see that we know Him experimentally, as our Deliverer from the guilt and power of sin, and our Re­deemer from Satan’s bondage. Let us strive to be able to say, “This is my Friend: I was dead, and He gave me life: I was a prisoner, and He set me free.”—Precious indeed is this name of Jesus to all true believers! It is “as ointment poured forth.” (Cant. i. 3.) It restores them when conscience-troubled. It comforts them when cast down. It smooths their pillows in sickness. It supports them in the hour of death. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” (Prov. xviii. 10.)

The last point which demands our attention in this passage, is *the poor and humble condition of our Lord’s* mother, the Virgin Mary. This is a fact which, at first sight, may not stand out clearly in the form of these verses. But a reference to the twelfth chapter of Leviti­cus will at once make it plain. There we shall see, that the offering which Mary made was specially appointed to be made by poor people:—“If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons.” In short, her offering was a public declaration that she was poor. (Lev. xii. 6.)

Poverty, it is manifest, was our Lord’s portion upon earth, from the days of His earliest infancy. He was nursed and tended as a babe, by a poor woman. He passed the first thirty years of His life on earth, under the roof of a poor man. We need not doubt that He ate a poor man’s food, and wore a poor man’s apparel, and worked a poor man’s work, and shared in all a poor man’s troubles. Such condescension is truly marvellous. Such an example of humility passes man’s understanding.

Facts like these ought often to be laid to heart by poor people. They would help to silence murmuring and complaining, and go far to reconcile them to their hard lot. The simple fact that Jesus was born of a poor woman, and lived all his life on earth among poor people, ought to silence the common argument that “religion is not for the poor.” Above all it ought to encourage every poor believer in all his approaches to the throne of grace in prayer. Let him remember in all his prayers that his mighty Mediator in heaven is accustomed to poverty, and knows by experience the heart of a poor man. Well would it be for the world if working men could only see that Christ is the true poor man’s friend.

NOTES. LUKE II. 21–24.

21.—[*Circumcising* *of the child.*]Bishop Hall remarks, “He that came to be sin for us, would in our persons be legally unclean, that by satisfying the law he might take away our uncleanness. Though he were exempted from the ordinary conditions of our birth, yet he would not deliver himself from those ordinary rites that implied the weakness and blemishes of humanity. He would fulfil one law, to abrogate it; another, to satisfy it. He that was above the law, would come under the law, to free us from the law.”

[*Named of the angel before he was conceived.*]Poole remarks, inhis annotations, “We read of four under the Old Testament, to whom God gave names before they were born: Isaac,—Gen. xvii. 19; Josiah,—1 Kings xiii. 2; Ishmael,—Gen. xvi. 11; Cyrus,—Isai. xliv. 28; and in the New Testament we read of two:—.John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Which lets us know the certainty to God of future contingencies; for though the parents of Ishmael, Isaac, and John the Baptist, imposed those names in obedience to the command of God, and there was but a small time betwixt the giving of the names and the births, yet the case was otherwise as to Josiah and Cyrus.”

24*.—*[*Two young pigeons.*]Lightfoot says that this was called, in the Hebrew language, “The offering of the poor, which if a rich man offered he did not do his duty.”