EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS.

ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,
*And Many Explanatory Notes*.

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LUKE II. 41-52.

41 Now his parents went to Je­rusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jeru­salem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it.*

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and ac­quaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that af­ter three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them,

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wis­dom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

THESE verses should always be deeply interesting to a reader of the Bible. They record the only fact which we know about our Lord Jesus Christ during the first thirty years of His life on earth, after His infancy. How many things a Christian would like to know about the events of those thirty years, and the daily history of the house at Nazareth! But we need not doubt that there is wisdom in the silence of Scripture on the subject. If it had been good for us to know more, more would have been revealed.

Let us, first, draw from the passage a *lesson for all married people.* We have it in the conduct of Joseph and Mary, here described. We are told that “they went to Jerusalem every year, at the feast of the passover.” They regularly honoured God’s appointed ordinances, and they honoured them together. The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem was great. The journey, to poor people without any means of conveyance, was, doubtless, troublesome and fatiguing. To leave house and home for ten days or a fortnight was no slight expense. But God had given Israel a command, and Joseph and Mary strictly obeyed it. God had appointed an ordinance for their spiritual good, and they regularly kept it. And all that they did concerning the passover they did to­gether. When they went up to the feast, they always went up side by side.

So ought it to be with all Christian husbands and wives. They ought to help one another in spiritual things, and to encourage one another in the service of God. Marriage, unquestionably, is not a sacrament, as the Romish Church vainly asserts. But marriage is a state of life which has the greatest effect on the souls of those who enter into it. It helps them upwards or downwards. It leads them nearer to heaven or nearer to hell. We all depend much on the company we keep. Our characters are insensibly moulded by those with whom we pass our time. To none does this apply so much as to married people. Husbands and wives are continually doing either good or harm to one another’s souls.

Let all who are married, or think of being married, ponder these things well. Let them take example from the conduct of Joseph and Mary, and resolve to do likewise. Let them pray together, and read the Bible together, and go to the house of God together, and talk to one another about spiritual matters. Above all, let them beware of throwing obstacles and discouragements inone another’s way about means of grace. Blessed and asking them questions are those husbands who say to their wives as Elkanah did to Hannah, “Do all that is in thy heart.” Happy are those wives who say to their husbands as Leah and Rachel did to Jacob, “Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.” (1 Sam. i. 23; Gen. xxxi. 16.)

Let us, secondly, draw from the passage, *an* *example for all young persons.* We have it in the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was left by Himself in Jerusalem at the age of twelve years. For four days He was out of sight of Mary and Joseph. For three days they “sought Him sorrowing,” not knowing what had befallen Him. Who can imagine the anxiety of such a mother at losing such a child?—And where did they find Him at last? Not idling His time away, or getting into mischief, as many boys of twelve years old do. Not in vain and unprofitable company. “They found Him in the temple of God,—sitting in the midst” of the Jewish teachers, “hearing” what they had to say, and “asking questions” about things He wished to be explained.

So ought it to be with the younger members of Christian families. They ought to be steady and trust­worthy, behind the backs of their parents as well as before their faces. They ought to seek the company of the wise and prudent, and to use every opportunity of getting spiritual knowledge, before the cares of life come on them, and while their memories are fresh and strong.

Let Christian boys and girls ponder these things well, and take example from the conduct of Jesus at the age of only twelve years. Let them remember, that if they are old enough to do wrong, they are also old enough to do right; and that if able to read story books and to talk, they are also able to read their Bibles and pray. Let them remember that they are accountable to God, even while they are yet young, and that it is written that God “heard the voice of a lad.” (Gen. xxi. 17.) Happy indeed are those families in which the children “seek the Lord early,” and cost their parents no tears. Happy are those parents who can say of their boys and girls, when absent from them, “I can trust my children that they will not wilfully run into sin.”

Let us, in the last place, draw from this passage, *an example for all true Christians.* We have it in the solemn words which our Lord addressed to His mother Mary, when she said to Him, “Son, why hast thou dealt with us thus?”—“Wist ye not,” was the reply, “that I must be about my Father’s business?” A mild reproof was evidently implied in that reply. It was meant to remind His mother that He was no common person, and had come into the world to do no common work. It was a hint that she was insensibly forgetting that He had come into the world in no ordinary way, and that she could not expect Him to be ever dwelling quietly at Nazareth. It was a solemn remembrancer that, as God, He had a Father in heaven, and that this heavenly Father’s work demanded His first attention.

The expression is one that ought to sink down deeply into the hearts of all Christ’s people. It should supply them with a mark at which they should aim in daily life, and a test by which they should try their habits and conversation. It should quicken them when they begin to be slothful. It should check them when they feel inclined to go back to the world.—“Are we about our Father’s business? Are we walking in the steps of Jesus Christ?—Such questions will often prove very hum­bling, and make us ashamed of ourselves. But such questions are eminently useful to our souls. Never is a Church in so healthy a condition as when its believing members aim high, and strive in all things to be like Christ.

NOTES. LUKE II. 41-52.

42.—[*Twelve* *years old*]This age appears to have been re­garded by the Jews as a kind of turning point out of the state of childhood. Lightfoot quotes a saying from one of the Rabbinical writers: “Let a man deal gently with his son, till he comes to be twelve years old; but from that time let him descend with him into his way of living,— that is, let him diligently keep him close to that way, rule, and act, by which he may get his living.”

44.—[*Company.*]The word so translated is only used in this place. It specially means a company of persons on a journey.

[*Supposing...went a day’s journey.*]An explanation of this is given by Bede, in a passage quoted by Corderius. He says it was the custom in going to and returning from Jewish feasts, for the men to walk by themselves, and the women by themselves. In this way Joseph might easily “suppose” that Jesus was with Mary, and Mary “suppose” that He was with Joseph.

46.*—*[*After three days.*]Bishop Hall remarks, “Where wert thou, O blessed Jesus, for the space of these three days? Were didst Thou bestow thyself, or who tended Thee while Thou wert thus alone in Jerusalem?—Whether it pleased Thee to exercise thyself thus early with the difficulties of a stranger, or to provide miraculously for thyself, I inquire not, since Thou revealest not. Only this I know, that hereby Thou in­tendest to teach Thy parents that Thou couldest live without them, and that not out of any indigency, but out of a gracious dispensation, Thou wouldest ordinarily depend upon their care.”

[*Sitting in...midst of...doctors, &c.*]The common expres­sion, “Christ disputing with the doctors,” is utterly destitute of foundation in this passage. It conveys an improper and incorrect idea, and ought to be discouraged among Christians. There is not the slightest trace in the account before us of any “dispute” at all.

48.—[*Why hast thou dealt with us thus?*]There is evidence of infirmity in this language of the Virgin Mary to our Lord. She seems here, as on other occasions, to have shown herself to be like other holy women,—a being who needed a Saviour herself, and therefore unable to save others.

49.—[*About my Father’s business.*]These words so translated would admit of being rendered, “in my Father’s house,” and many commentators are strongly in favour of that sense being given to them. But, on the whole, our own English translation seems the best and most comprehensive. The proposed trans­lation cramps and limits our Lord’s words, by confining their application to one thing, “my Father’s house.” The transla­tion “my Father’s business” embraces a far wider range of thought, and is more in keeping with the general depth and fullness of our Lord’s sayings.

51.—[*Was* *subject.*]The words imply a continual habit during His residence at Nazareth, and not a single isolated act.

52.—[*Increased in wisdom and stature.*]A sentence from Poole’s Annotations on this subject, is worth reading: “If any ask how He who was the eternal wisdom of the Father, who is the only one God, increased in wisdom, they must know that all things in Scripture which are spoken of Christ, are not spoken with respect to His entire Person, but with respect to the one or other nature united in that Person. He increased in wis­dom, as He did in age or stature, with respect to His human, not His divine nature. And as God daily magnified His grace and favour towards Him, so He gained Him favour with the unrighteous and people of Galilee.”