

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 IV. 22–32.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land

26 But, unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a *city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that* was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.

THREE great lessons stand out on the face of this passage. Each deserves the close attention of all who desire spiritual wisdom.

We learn for one thing, *how apt men are to despise the highest privileges, when they are familiar with them.* We see it in the conduct of the men of Nazareth when they had heard the Lord Jesus preach. They could find no fault in His sermon. They could point to no inconsistency in His past life and conversation. But because the Preacher had dwelt among them thirty years, and His face, and voice, and appearance were familiar to them, they would not receive His doctrine. They said to one another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Is it possible that one so well-known as this man can be the Christ?—And they drew from our Lord's lips the solemn saying, "No prophet is accepted in his own country."

We shall do well to remember this lesson in the matter of ordinances and means of grace. We are always in danger of undervaluing them when we have them in abundance.. We are apt to think lightly of the privilege of an open Bible, a preached Gospel, and the liberty of meeting together for public worship. We grow up in the midst of these things, and are accustomed to have them without trouble. And the consequence is that we often hold them very cheap, and underrate the extent of our mercies. Let us take heed to our own spirit in the use of sacred things. Often as we may read the Bible, let us never read it without deep reverence. Often as we hear the name of Christ, let us never forget that He is the One Mediator in whom is life. Even the manna that came down from heaven was at length scorned by Israel, as "light bread." (Num. xxi. 5.) It is an evil day with our souls, when Christ is in the midst of us, and yet, because of our familiarity with His name, is lightly esteemed.

We learn for another thing, *how bitterly human nature dislikes the doc-*

trine of the sovereignty of God. We see this in the conduct of the men of Nazareth, when our Lord reminded them that God was under no obligation to work miracles among them. Were there not many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah? No doubt there were. Yet to none of them was the prophet sent. All were passed over in favour of a Gentile widow at Sarepta.—Were there not many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha? No doubt there were. Yet to none of them was the privilege of healing granted. Naaman the Syrian was the only one who was cleansed.—Such doctrine as this was intolerable to the men of Nazareth. It wounded their pride and self-conceit. It taught them that God was no man's debtor, and that if they themselves were passed over in the distribution of His mercies, they had no right to find fault. They could not bear it. They were "filled with wrath." They thrust our Lord out of their city, and had it not been for an exercise of miraculous power on His part, they would doubtless have put Him to a violent death.

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty. To be told that God is great, and just, and holy, and pure, man can bear. But to be told that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy,"—that He "giveth no account of His matters,"—that it is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,"—these are truths that the natural man cannot stand; they often call forth all his enmity against God, and fill him with wrath. Nothing, in short, will make him submit to them but the humbling teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Let us settle it in our minds that, whether we like it or not, the sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and a fact clearly to be seen in the world. Upon no other principle can we ever explain why some members of a family are converted, and others live and die in sin,—why some quarters of the earth are enlightened by Christianity, and others remain buried in heathenism. One account only can be given of all this: all is ordered by the sovereign hand of God. Let us pray for humility in respect of this deep thing. Let us remember that our life is but a vapour, and that our best knowledge, compared to that of God, is perfect folly. Let us be thankful for such light as we enjoy ourselves, and use it diligently while we have it. And let us not doubt that at the last day the whole world shall be convinced that He who now "gives no account of His matters" has done all things well.

We learn, lastly, from this passage, *how diligently we ought to persevere in well doing, notwithstanding discouragements.* We are doubtless meant to draw this lesson from the conduct of our Lord, after His rejection at Nazareth. Nothing moved by the treatment He received, He patiently works on. Thrust out of one place, He passes on to another. Cast forth

from Nazareth He comes to Capernaum, and there “teaches on the sabbath days.”

Such ought to be the conduct of all the people of Christ. Whatever the work they are called to do, they should patiently continue in it, and not give up for want of success. Whether preachers, or teachers, or visitors, or missionaries, they must labour on and not faint. There is often more stirring in the hearts and consciences of people than those who teach and preach to them are at all aware of. There is preparatory work to be done in many a part of God’s vineyard, which is just as needful as any other work, though not so agreeable to flesh and blood. There must be sowers as well as reapers. There must be some to break up the ground and pick out the stones, as well as some to gather in the harvest. Let each labour on in his own place. The day comes when each shall be rewarded according to his work. The very discouragements we meet with enable us to show the world that there are such things as faith and patience. When men see us working on, in spite of treatment like that which Jesus met at Nazareth, it makes them think. It convinces them that, at all events, we are persuaded that we have truth on our side.

NOTES. LUKE IV. 22-32.

- 22.—[*Bear him witness.*] The meaning of this appears to be that they could not deny the truth, correctness, and reasonableness of what He said.
- [*Joseph’s son.*] This expression shows us in what light our Lord was regarded at Nazareth, and how little the miraculous circumstances of His conception and birth were generally known.
- 23.—[*This proverb.*] Let it be noted here that our Lord answers one proverb by another. It is a singular peculiarity about proverbs, that they can generally be found in defence of either side of a question. The men of Nazareth were ready to quote a proverb to prove that our Lord should work miracles first at home. Our Lord reminds them that there was another proverb, which taught that teachers were more valued anywhere rather than at home.
- 25.—[*Days of Elias.*] Let us not fail to note that our Lord speaks of the times of Elijah, and the events which happened in them, as realities. His language is one among many strong arguments to prove that the historical books of the Old Testament are authentic, and not mere collections of instructive fables, as some have dared to assert.
- 28.—[*Filled with wrath.*] Two reasons may be assigned for the violent anger of the men of Nazareth. One was the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in saving sinners. The other was the favour shown to Gentiles instead of Jews, of which our Lord reminded them, with an evident intention of warning them that the same thing would happen again.
- 30.—[*Passing through the midst of them.*] That this was a miracle is clear. In what way it was effected we are not told. Enough for us to know that His enemies could not lay hands upon Him against His will, and that when finally He was delivered up to be crucified, it was only because He was willing to allow Himself to be slain.