

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE IV. 33–44.

33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34 Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word *is* this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

38 And he arose out of the synagogue and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

WE should notice, in this passage, *the clear religious knowledge possessed by the devil and his agents*. Twice in these verses we have proof of this. "I know Thee who thou art, the holy one of God," was the language of an unclean devil in one case.—"Thou art Christ the Son of God," was the language of many devils in another.—Yet this knowledge was a knowledge unaccompanied by faith, or hope, or charity. Those who possessed it were miserable fallen beings, full of bitter hatred both against God and man.

Let us beware of an unsanctified knowledge of Christianity. It is a dangerous possession, but a fearfully common one in these latter days. We may know the Bible intellectually, and have no doubt about the truth of its contents. We may have our memories well stored with its leading texts, and be able to talk glibly about its leading doctrines. And all this time the Bible may have no influence over our hearts, and wills, and consciences. We may, in reality, be nothing better than the devils.

Let it never content us to know religion with our heads only. We may go on all our lives saying, "I know that, and I know that," and sink at last into hell, with the words upon our lips. Let us see that our knowledge bears fruit in our lives. Does our knowledge of sin make us hate it? Does our knowledge of Christ make us trust and love Him? Does our knowledge of God's will make us strive to do it? Does our knowledge of the fruits of the Spirit make us labour to show them in our daily behaviour? Knowledge of this kind is really profitable. Any other religious knowledge will only add to our condemnation at the last day.

We should notice, secondly, in this passage, *the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We see sicknesses and devils alike yielding to His command. He rebukes unclean spirits, and they come forth from the unhappy people whom they had possessed. He rebukes a fever, and lays His hands on sick people, and at once their diseases depart, and the sick are healed.

We cannot fail to observe many like cases in the four Gospels. They occur so frequently that we are apt to read them with a thoughtless eye, and forget the mighty lesson which each one is meant to convey. They are all intended to fasten in our minds the great truth that Christ is the appointed Healer of every evil which sin has brought into the world. Christ is the true antidote and remedy for all the soul-ruining mischief which Satan has wrought on mankind. Christ is the universal Physician to whom all the children of Adam must repair, if they would be made whole. In Him is life, and health, and liberty. This is the grand doctrine which every miracle of mercy in the Gospel is ordained and appointed to teach. Each is a plain witness to that mighty fact, which lies at the very foundation of the Gospel. The ability of Christ, to supply to the uttermost every want of human nature, is the very corner-stone of Christianity. Christ, in one word, is "all." (Coloss. iii. 11.) Let the study of every miracle help to engrave this truth deeply on our hearts.

We should notice, thirdly, in these verses, *our Lord's practice of occasional retirement from public notice into some solitary place*. We read, that after healing many that were sick and casting out many devils, "He departed and went into a desert place." His object in so doing is shown by comparison with other places in the Gospels. He went aside from His work for a season, to hold communion with His Father in heaven, and to pray. Holy and sinless as His human nature was, it was a nature kept sinless in the regular use of means of grace, and not in the neglect of them.

There is an example here which all who desire to grow in grace and walk closely with God would do well to follow. We must make time for private meditation, and for being alone with God. It must not content us to pray daily and read the Scriptures,—to hear the Gospel regularly and to receive the Lord's Supper. All this is well. But something more is needed. We should set apart special seasons for solitary self-examination and meditation on the things of God. How often in a year this practice should be attempted each Christian must judge for himself. But that the practice is most desirable seems clear both from Scripture and experience. We live in hurrying bustling times. The excitement of daily business and constant engagements keep many men in a perpetual whirl, and entails great peril on souls. The neglect of this habit of withdrawing occasionally from worldly business is the probable cause of many an inconsistency or backsliding which

brings scandal on the cause of Christ. The more work we have to do, the more we ought to imitate our Master. If He, in the midst of His abundant labours, found time to retire from the world occasionally, how much more may we? If the Master found the practice necessary, it must surely be a thousand times more necessary for His disciples.

We ought to notice, lastly, in these verses, *the declaration, of our Lord as to one of the objects of His coming into the world.* We read that He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

An expression like this ought to silence for ever the foolish remarks that are sometimes made against preaching. The mere fact that the eternal Son of God undertook the office of a preacher, should satisfy us that preaching is one of the most valuable means of grace. To speak of preaching, as some do, as a thing of less importance than reading public prayers or administering the sacraments, is, to say the least, to exhibit ignorance of Scripture. It is a striking circumstance in our Lord's history, that although He was almost incessantly preaching, we never read of His baptizing any person. The witness of John is distinct on this point: "Jesus baptized not." (John iv. 2.)

Let us beware of despising preaching. In every age of the Church it has been God's principal instrument for the awakening of sinners and the edifying of saints. The days when there has been little or no preaching have been days when there has been little or no good done in the Church. Let us hear sermons in a prayerful and reverent frame of mind, and remember that they are the principal engines which Christ Himself employed, when He was upon earth. Not least, let us pray daily for a continual supply of faithful preachers of God's Word. According to the state of the pulpit will always be the state of a congregation and of a Church.

NOTES. LUKE IV. 33–44.

- 33.—[*An unclean devil.*] This expression is one which occurs frequently in the Gospels. It is probably intended to teach the awful truth that works of uncleanness, in breach of the seventh commandment, are works which Satan especially labours to promote. It may also teach us that those who were given over to Satanic possession were often people who had been specially addicted to sins of uncleanness and impurity.
- 34.—[*What have we to do with thee?*] The words so translated are the same expression that we find used by our Lord to His mother at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. (John ii. 4.) It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that they imply something of rebuke.
- 35.—[*Hold thy peace.*] The literal meaning of the words so translated is, "Be muzzled." (1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18.) It is the same expression that our Lord addresses to the stormy sea (Mark iv. 39), where it is rendered "Be still."
- [*Thrown him into the midst*] This is one of those expressions in the Gospels, which show clearly that Satanic possession was a distinct thing from lunacy, epilepsy, or any other common form of mental or physical disease.
- 36.—[*All amazed.*] The word would be translated more literally, "amazement was upon all."

The expression is one peculiar to St. Luke (Luke v. 9; Acts iii. 10), and specially describes that state of mind which is produced in people by the sight of something supernatural or divine.

[*What a word is this.*] Scholefield says that this would be better translated, "What is this word?"

37.—[*The fame.*] The word so rendered is translated in the only other places where it is used, "the sound." "A sound from heaven" (Acts ii. 2), and the "sound of a trumpet." (Heb. xii. 19.)

38.—[*Simon's wife's mother.*] Let it be carefully noted here that the Apostle Simon Peter was a married man. The Romish doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy finds no countenance in the Bible.

39.—[*Stood over.*] The word so rendered is more commonly translated "coming in," "coming upon," and "standing by." (Luke ii. 9, 38, and Acts xxii. 20, and xxiii. 11.) The present is the only place where it is translated, "standing over."

[*Immediately she arose and ministered.*] The completeness of our Lord's cures is shown in this expression. It is notorious that fevers leave people too weak for any exertion, even when they begin to recover and are out of danger.