

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE VI 12–19

<p>12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.</p> <p>13. And when it was day, he called <i>unto him</i> his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;</p> <p>14. Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,</p> <p>15. Matthew and Thomas, James the <i>son</i> of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes,</p> <p>16. And Judas <i>the brother</i> of James, and</p>	<p>Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.</p> <p>17. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;</p> <p>18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.</p> <p>19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed <i>them</i> all.</p>
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THESE verses describe the appointment of our Lord Jesus Christ’s twelve apostles. That appointment was the beginning of the Christian ministry. It was the first ordination, and an ordination conducted by the Great Head of the Church Himself. Since the day when the events here recorded took place, there have been many thousand ordinations. Myriads of bishops, elders, and deacons have been called to the office of the ministry, and often with far more pomp and splendour than we read of here. But never was there so solemn an ordination as this. Never were men ordained who have done so much for the church and the world as these twelve apostles.

Let us observe, firstly, in these verses, that *when our Lord ordained His first ministers, He did it after much prayer*. We read that He “went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.”

We need not doubt that there is a deep significance in this special mention of our Lord’s praying upon this occasion. It was intended to be a perpetual lesson to the Church of Christ. It was meant to show the great importance of prayer and intercession on behalf of ministers, and particularly at the time of their ordination. Those to whom the responsible office of ordaining is committed, should pray that they may “lay hands suddenly on no man.” Those who offer themselves for ordination, should pray that they may not take up work for which they are unfit, and not run without being sent. The lay members of the Church, not least, should pray that none may be ordained, but men who are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost.—Happy are those ordinations, in which all concerned have the mind that was in Christ, and come together in a prayerful spirit!

Do we desire to help forward the cause of pure and undefiled religion in the world? Then let us never forget to pray for ministers, and especially for young men about to enter the ministry. The progress of the Gospel, under God, will always depend much on the character and conduct of those who profess to preach it. An unconverted minister can never be expected to do

good to souls. He cannot teach properly what he does not feel experimentally. From such men let us pray daily that the Church may be delivered. Converted ministers are God's special gift. Man cannot create them. If we would have good ministers, we must remember our Lord's example, and pray for them. Their work is heavy. Their responsibility is enormous. Their strength is small. Let us see that we support them, and hold up their hands by our prayers. In this, and in too many other cases, the words of St. James are often sadly applicable, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James iv. 2.) We do not ask God to raise up a constant supply of converted young men to fill our pulpits, and God chastises our neglect by withholding them.

Let us observe, secondly, *how little we are told of the worldly position of the first ministers of the Christian Church*. Four of them, we know, were fishermen. One of them, at least, was a publican. Most of them, probably, were Galileans. Not one of them, so far as we can see from the New Testament, was great, or rich, or noble, or highly connected. Not one was a Pharisee, or Scribe, or Priest, or Ruler, or Elder among the people. All were, apparently, "unlearned and ignorant men." (Acts iv. 13.) All were poor.

There is something deeply instructive in the fact which is now before us. It shows us that our Lord Jesus Christ's kingdom was entirely independent of help from this world. His Church was not built by might, or by power, but by the Spirit of the living God. (Zech. iv. 6.)—It supplies us with an unanswerable proof of the divine origin of Christianity. A religion which turned the world upside down, while its first preachers were all poor men, must needs have been from heaven. If the apostles had possessed money to give their hearers, or been followed by armies to frighten them, an infidel might well deny that there was anything wonderful in their success. But the poverty of our Lord's disciples cuts away such arguments from beneath the infidel's feet. With a doctrine most unpalatable to the natural heart,—with nothing whatever to bribe or compel obedience,—a few lowly Galileans shook the world, and changed the face of the Roman empire. One thing only can account for this. The Gospel of Christ, which these men proclaimed, was the truth of God.

Let us remember these things, if we ever strive to do any work for Christ, and beware of leaning on an arm of flesh. Let us watch against the secret inclination, which is natural to all, to look to money, or learning, or high patronage, or great men's support, for success. If we want to do good to souls, we must not look first to the powers of this world. We should begin where the Church of Christ began. We should seek agents filled with the Holy Ghost.

Let us observe, lastly, in these verses, *that one whom our Lord chose to be an apostle, was a false disciple and a traitor*. That man was Judas Iscariot.

We cannot for a moment doubt, that in choosing Judas Iscariot, our Lord Jesus knew well what He was doing. He who could read hearts, certainly saw from the beginning that, notwithstanding his profession of piety, Judas was a graceless man, and would one day betray Him. Why then did He appoint him to be an apostle? The question is one which has perplexed many. Yet it admits of a satisfactory answer. Like everything which our Lord did, it was done advisedly, deliberately, and with deep wisdom. It conveyed lessons of high importance to the whole Church of Christ.

The choice of Judas was meant to teach ministers humility. They are not to suppose that ordination necessarily conveys grace, or that once ordained they cannot err. On the contrary, they are to remember, that one ordained by Christ Himself was a wretched hypocrite. Let the minister who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

Again, the choice of Judas was meant to teach the lay-members of the Church, not to make idols of ministers. They are to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, but they are not to bow down to them as infallible, and honour them with an unscriptural honour. They are to remember that ministers may be successors of Judas Iscariot, as well as of Peter and Paul. The name of Judas should be a standing warning to "cease from man." Let no man glory in men. (1 Cor. iii. 21.)

Finally, our Lord's choice of Judas was meant to teach the whole Church, that it must not expect to see a perfectly pure communion in the present state of things. The wheat and the tares,—the good fish and the bad,—will always be found side by side, till the Lord comes again. It is vain to look for perfection in visible churches. We shall never find it. A Judas was found even among the apostles. Converted and unconverted people will always be found mixed together in all congregations.

NOTES. LUKE VI. 12–19.

12.—[*In prayer to God.*] The peculiarity of the Greek words here has made some think that the meaning should have been rendered, He continued all night "in a house of prayer," a place set apart for prayer to God. That the Jews had such praying-houses, is undeniable. But whether such a house is referred to here, is very doubtful. Out of the thirty seven places in which the Greek word occurs in the New Testament, there is only one other where it could be interpreted "a place of prayer," Acts xvi. 13, and even there it is a disputed point. There seems no necessity for leaving the sense given by our translators. Barradius remarks, that the expression which we translate, "prayer to God," is a Hebraism, meaning "most fervent and earnest prayer," just as "mountains of God," and "cedars of God," in the Old Testament, mean "lofty" mountains, and "high" cedars. (Psalm xxxvi. 6; lxxx. 10.)

Isidore Glarius, in his orations on St. Luke, published at Venice in 1565, has some striking remarks on the disgraceful contrast between the manner in which the apostles were called to their office after a night spent in prayer, and the manner in which ecclesiastical offices were filled up in Italy in his own day. He exposes the system of jobbing, nepotism, corruption, and covetousness, which universally prevailed on such occasions, and enters a

faithful protest against it.

It is singular enough that the tone of Stella, the Spanish commentator on St. Luke, in expounding this passage is precisely similar to that of Clarius.

- 13.—[*Chose twelve...named apostles.*] Corderius gives a curious passage from Rabanus Maurus on the number twelve, bringing together the instances of that number being specially chosen in the Bible. He says, “The number twelve, which consists of three times four, points out that the apostles would preach the faith of the Holy Trinity throughout the four quarters of the world. The number is prefigured in the Old Testament by many examples,—by the twelve sons of Jacob,—the twelve princes of the children of Israel,—the twelve fountains in Elim,—the twelve stones in Aaron’s breast-plate,—the twelve loaves of show-bread,—the twelve spies sent forth by Moses,—the twelve stones of which the altar was made,—the twelve stones taken out of Jordan,—and the twelve oxen which supported the brazen laver. In the New Testament, the number is shown in the twelve stars on the crown of the woman in Revelation,—and the twelve foundations, and twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, seen by John.”

It is interesting to remark, that out of the twelve apostles, we have no less than three pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Jude and James the son of Alphæus.

- 14.—[*Bartholomew.*] It is thought by many that Bartholomew is Nathanael, whom we read of in the first chapter of John. Jansenius, Montanus, and Ferus maintain this. But there seems no warrant for the conjecture, except it be the fact that we find Bartholomew always mentioned in close connection with Philip, who called Nathanael to Christ.
- 15.—[*James the son of Alphæus.*] This appears to be that James whom St. Paul calls the “Lord’s brother.” (Gal. i. 19.) The fact that he is here called the “son of Alphæus,” goes far to prove that the word “brother” in the New Testament must not be taken too literally, and admits of being understood as “cousin” The Alpheus here mentioned must either be a different person from the father of Matthew, or else Matthew must have been brother of James and Jude. St. Mark says, that Matthew or Levi was the son of Alphæus.

It was this James who took the lead in the council, (Acts xv. 19) and seems to have been regarded as the moderator or chief of the apostles in Jerusalem. He was also the writer of the Epistle which bears his name. It is remarkable that like Matthew and Simon the Canaanite, we never read of his saying anything, or coming forward in any way, while our Lord lived. Yet, after our Lord’s ascension, none seems to have had so prominent a position in the Church.

- 16.—[*Judas the brother of James.*] This apostle is remarkable for having had three names, Jude, Lebbaeus, and Thaddæus. He it was who wrote the epistle which bears his name.

[*Iscariot.*] Many conjectures have been made as to the meaning of this name. None of them are satisfactory. Some think that it means that he was a man of the tribe of Issachar,—some that he was a man of Kirioth, a small town in Judah, or Carioth, a town of Ephraim. Nothing certain is known about the subject

Let it be noted, among other reasons for our Lord’s choice of a traitor to be an apostle, that the choice finally supplied a powerful indirect evidence of the purity, blamelessness, and faultlessness of our Lord’s conduct and ministry. When our Lord was accused before the High Priest and Pontius Pilate, if anything could have been proved against Him, the traitor Judas Iscariot was exactly the witness who would have proved it. The mere fact that Judas never came forward to give evidence against our Lord, is a convincing evidence that nothing could be proved against Him. No man is so well qualified to expose another’s faults and inconsistencies, if they really exist, as one who has been on intimate terms with

him. Judas never appeared against our Lord, because he could not allege anything to his disadvantage. Ford quotes a passage from Anselm, on this point: "Judas is chosen that the Lord might have an enemy among his domestic attendants, for that man is perfect, who has no cause to shrink from the observation of a wicked man, conversant with all his ways."

- 18.—[*Stood in the plain.*] This expression should be noted. It shows that the discourse which follows is different from that called "the sermon on the mount."
- 19.—[*Virtue.*] The word so translated is generally rendered "power," or "strength," and must not be taken as a moral quality here.

