

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE VIII. 16-21.

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth *it* under a bed; but setteth *it* on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither *any thing* hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whomever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken

even that which he seemeth to have.

19 Then came to him *his* mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20 And it was told him by *certain* which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

THESE verses form a practical application of the famous parable of the sower. They are intended to nail and clench in our minds the mighty lesson which that parable contains. They deserve the especial attention of all true-hearted hearers of the Gospel of Christ.

We learn, firstly, from these verses, that *spiritual knowledge ought to be diligently used*. Our Lord tells us that it is like a lighted candle, utterly useless, when covered with a bushel, or put under a bed,—only useful when set upon a candlestick, and placed where it can be made serviceable to the wants of men.

When we hear this lesson, let us first think of *ourselves*. The Gospel which we possess was not given us only to be admired, talked of, and professed,—but to be practised. It was not meant merely to reside in our intellect, and memories, and tongues,—but to be seen in our lives. Christianity is a talent committed to our charge, and one which brings with it great responsibility. We are not in darkness like the heathen. A glorious light is put before us. Let us take heed that we use it. While we have the light let us walk in the light. (John xii. 35.)

But let us not only think of ourselves. Let us also think of *others*. There are millions in the world who have no spiritual light at all. They are without God, without Christ, and without hope. (Ephes. ii. 12.) Can we do nothing for them?—There are thousands around us, in our own land, who are unconverted and dead in *sins*, seeing nothing and knowing nothing aright? Can we do nothing for them?—These are questions to which every true Christian ought to find an answer. We should strive, in every way, to spread our religion. The highest form of selfishness is that of the man who is content to go to heaven alone. The truest charity is to endeavour to share with others every spark of religious light we possess ourselves, and so to hold our own candle that it may give light to every one around us. Happy is that soul, which, as soon as it receives light from heaven, begins to think of others as well as itself! No candle which God lights was ever meant to burn alone.

We learn, secondly, from these verses, *the great importance of right hearing*. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to impress that lesson

deeply on our hearts. He says, “Take heed how ye hear.”

The degree of benefit which men receive from all the means of grace depends entirely on the way in which they use them. Private prayer lies at the very foundation of religion; yet the mere formal repetition of a set of words, when “the heart is far away,” does good to no man’s soul.—Reading the Bible is essential to the attainment of sound Christian knowledge; yet the mere formal reading of so many chapters as a task and duty, without a humble desire to be taught of God, is little better than a waste of time.—Just as it is with praying and Bible reading, so it is with hearing. It is not enough that we go to Church and hear sermons. We may do so for fifty years, and be “nothing bettered, but rather worse.” “Take heed,” says our Lord, “how ye hear.”

Would anyone know how to hear aright? Then let him lay to heart three simple rules. For one thing, we must hear with faith, believing implicitly that every word of God is true, and shall stand. The word in old time did not profit the Jews, “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” (Heb. iv. 2.)—For another thing, we must hear with reverence, remembering constantly that the Bible is the book of God. This was the habit of the Thessalonians. They received Paul’s message, “not as the word of men, but the word of God.” (1 Thess. ii. 13.)—Above all, we must hear with prayer, praying for God’s blessing before the sermon is preached, praying for God’s blessing again when the sermon is over. Here lies the grand defect of the hearing of many. They ask no blessing, and so they have none. The sermon passes through their minds like water through a leaky vessel, and leaves nothing behind.

Let us bear these rules in mind every Sunday morning, before we go to hear the Word of God preached. Let us not rush into God’s presence careless, reckless, and unprepared, as if it mattered not in what way such work was done. Let us carry with us faith, reverence, and prayer. If these three are our companions, we shall hear with profit, and return with praise.

We learn, finally, from these verses, *the great privileges of those who hear the word of God, and do it.* Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that He regards them as his “mother and his brethren.”

The man who hears the word of God, and does it, is the true Christian. He hears the call of God to repent and be converted, and he obeys it. He ceases to do evil, and learns to do well. He puts off the old man, and puts on the new.—He hears the call of God to believe on Jesus Christ for justification, and he obeys it. He forsakes his own righteousness, and confesses his need of a Saviour. He receives Christ crucified as his only hope, and counts all things loss for the knowledge of Him.—He hears the call of God to be holy, and he obeys it. He strives to mortify the deeds of his body, and to walk after the Spirit. He labours to lay aside every weight, and the sin that

so easily besets him.—This is true vital Christianity. All men and women who are of this character are true Christians.

Now the troubles of all who “hear the word of God and do it” are neither few nor small. The world, the flesh, and the devil continually vex them. They often groan, being burdened. (2 Cor. v. 4.) They often find the cross heavy, and the way to heaven rough and narrow. They often feel disposed to cry with St. Paul, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. vii. 24.)

Let all such take comfort in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ which we are now considering. Let them remember that the Son of God himself regards them as his own near relations! Let them not heed the laughter, and mockery, and persecution of this world. The woman of whom Christ says, “She is my mother,” and the man of whom Christ says, “He is my brother,” have no cause to be ashamed.

NOTES. LUKE VIII. 16–21.

16.—[*Under a bed.*] The word rendered “bed,” signifies “a couch,” such as was found in all sitting-rooms in eastern houses, and under which it is probable many things were put away, when not wanted.

17.—[*For nothing is secret, &c.*] The application of these words and their connection with the context are not quite clear. Their primary sense appears to be that the disciples must not suppose that our Lord’s instructions were intended to be kept secret, and reserved from the world. They were not to be confined to a few favoured hearers, like the lessons of the heathen philosophers, but to be published, proclaimed, and made known to all mankind. In this way the light given to the apostles would be “placed on a candlestick,” and not covered and hidden.

Some think that the words point to the day of judgment, and the account which will then be taken of the use which all who have seen the light of the Gospel, have made of it.

18.—[*Take heed how ye hear.*] Let it be remembered, in reading such sayings as these, that the bulk of mankind in all ages are peculiarly dependent on oral teaching. The number of those who have time and abilities for reading and private study will always be small. In the days when printing was not invented, and the writings of men were few, the lesson must have been specially important. But it will never lose its importance as long as the world endures.

[*Whosoever hath.*] This expression evidently means, “whosoever hath and makes a good use of what he hath.” The other expression in the verse “whosoever hath not,” in like manner means, “whosoever has made no use of what he has received.”

19.—[*His mother and his brethren.*] From this expression, many have concluded that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was now dead. Whether this was the case we do not know. He certainly seems to have been dead at the time of the crucifixion, from the fact of our Lord commanding His mother to the care of John. (John xix. 27.)

Who are meant by our Lord’s “brethren,” cannot now be determined. It is certain that the word so translated, does not necessarily mean the sons of our Lord’s mother. It is clear, from many passages in the Bible, that the word “brethren” has frequently a wide significance, and may mean either cousins, or mere distant relations. (Compare Gen. xxii. 46; Matt. xiii. 55; xxvii. 56; Mark iii. 18; Gal. i. 19.) Some think that these “brethren,” were sons of

Joseph by a former marriage, before he was Mary's husband. Some think that they were the sons of one of Mary's sisters. Nothing certain is known on the subject.

Whether our Lord's mother clearly saw the nature of His work on earth, at this particular time, may seriously be questioned. There is no reason to suppose that her mind was entirely free from that obscurity under which the holiest and best Jews appear to have been, about the humiliation and sufferings of Messiah.

[*Come at him.*] The word translated "come at," is only found here in the New Testament. According to Parkhurst, it simply means, "to meet with, meet, light upon, or get to." The Syriac version of this place, renders it to "speak with."