

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

*And Many Explanatory Notes.*

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LUKE IX. 23–27.

23 And he said to *them* all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

THESE words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain three great lessons for all Christians. They apply to all ranks and classes without exception. They are intended for every age and time, and for every branch of the visible church.

We learn, for one thing, *the absolute necessity of daily self-denial*. We ought every day to crucify the flesh, to overcome the world, and to resist the devil. We ought to keep under our bodies, and bring them into subjection. We ought to be on our guard, like soldiers in an enemy's country. We ought to fight a daily battle, and war a daily warfare. The command of our Master is clear and plain: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

Now what do we know of all this? Surely this is a question which ought to be asked. A little formal church-going, and a decent attendance at a place of worship, can never be the Christianity of which Christ speaks in this place.—Where is our self-denial? Where is our daily carrying of the cross? Where is our following of Christ?—Without a religion of this kind we shall never be saved. A crucified Saviour will never be content to have a self-pleasing, self-indulging, worldly-minded people. No self-denial—no real grace! No cross—no crown! "They that are Christ's," says St. Paul, "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." (Gal. v. 24.) "Whosoever will save his life," says the Lord Jesus, "shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall save it."

We learn, for another thing, from our Lord's words in this passage, *the unspeakable value of the soul*. A question is asked, which admits of only one answer—"What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away?"

The possession of the whole world, and all that it contains, would never make a man happy. Its pleasures are false and deceptive. Its riches, rank, and honours, have no power to satisfy the heart. So long as we have not got them they glitter, and sparkle, and seem desirable. The moment we have them we find that they are empty bubbles, and cannot make us feel content. And, worst of all, when we possess this world's good things, to the utmost bound of our desire, we cannot keep them. Death comes in and separates us from all our property for ever. Naked we came upon earth, and naked we go

forth, and of all our possessions we can carry nothing with us. Such is the world, which occupies the whole attention of thousands! Such is the world, for the sake of which millions are every year destroying their souls!

The loss of the soul is the heaviest loss that can befall a man. The worst and most painful of diseases—the most distressing bankruptcy of fortune—the most disastrous shipwrecks—are a mere scratch of a pin compared to the loss of a soul. All other losses are bearable, or but for a short time, but the loss of the soul is for evermore. It is to lose God, and Christ, and heaven, and glory, and happiness, to all eternity. It is to be cast away for ever, helpless and hopeless in hell!

What are we doing ourselves? Are we losing our souls? Are we, by wilful neglect or by open sin—by sheer carelessness and idleness, or deliberate breach of God's law—compassing our own destruction? These questions demand an answer. The plain account of many professing Christians is this, that they are daily sinning against the sixth commandment. They are murdering their own souls!

We learn, in the last place, from our Lord's words, *the guilt and danger of being ashamed of Christ and His words*. We read that He says—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of Him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."

There are many ways of being ashamed of Christ. We are guilty of it whenever we are afraid of letting men know that we love His doctrines, His precepts, His people, and His ordinances. We are guilty of it whenever we allow the fear of man to prevail over us, and to keep us back from letting others see that we are decided Christians. Whenever we act in this way, we are denying our Master, and committing a great sin.

The wickedness of being ashamed of Christ is very great. It is a proof of unbelief. It shows that we care more for the praise of man whom we can see, than that of God whom we cannot see.—It is a proof of ingratitude. It shows that we fear confessing Him before man who was not ashamed to die for us upon the cross. Wretched indeed are they who give way to this sin. Here, in this world, they are always miserable. A bad conscience robs them of peace. In the world to come they can look for no comfort. In the day of judgment they must expect to be disowned by Christ to all eternity, if they will not confess Christ for a few years upon earth.

Let us resolve never to be ashamed of Christ. Of sin and worldliness we may well be ashamed. Of Christ and His cause we have no right to be ashamed at all. Boldness in Christ's service always brings its own reward. The boldest Christian is always the happiest man.

NOTES. LUKE IX. 23–27.

23.—[*Will come.*] The word “will” here, and in the expression in the following verse, “*will save,*” must be interpreted as, “wills to,” or, “is willing to.” It is not a future tense, but the same Greek word that is used in John v. 40.; “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;” which means, “ye have no will, or wish to come.”

[*Take up his cross.*] Campbell remarks on this expression, “Every one condemned by the Romans to crucifixion, was compelled to carry the cross on which he was to be suspended to the place of execution. In this manner our Lord was treated.”

“As this was not a Jewish but a Roman punishment, the mention of it on this occasion may justly be looked on as the first hint given by Jesus, of the death He was to suffer. If it had been usual in the country to execute criminals in this manner, the expression might have been thought proverbial for preparing for the worst.”

Quesnel remarks on the whole verse, “Take particular notice of the three words, “to them all,” and “daily.” No person is excused, and no day is excepted. Of what therefore, do those think, and to what do they aspire, who make every day a day of pleasure, luxury, and diversion? Who has a right to shake off the yoke of the cross, but only he who designs to have a right to nothing but hell?”

24.—[*Will save his life shall lose it.*] There is here, as it were, a play upon words. He that is determined to save his life,—in the sense of keeping it and all that is good in this world connected with life,—shall lose it, shall lose that which is after all the great object of our existence, his immortal soul. It is the same use of words in two different senses that we have in the expression, “let the dead bury the dead,” which means, “let those who are spiritually dead, attend to such matters as the burial of the naturally dead.”

25.—[*Lose himself.*] Let it be noted, that our Lord speaks of this as a perfectly possible event. A man may lose or destroy himself.

26.—[*When he shall come, &c.*] This means our Lord’s second coming to judge the world. Let it be noted, that there are three kinds of glory mentioned here, as accompanying the second advent of Christ, His own, the Father’s, and the glory of the angels.

27.—[*Not taste of death till they see.*] These words are interpreted two ways. Some think that they mean “They shall not die till they see the Church of Christ established and settled on earth.” This is a very unsatisfactory explanation. The right view appears to be that which connects the verse with the transfiguration, and regards the glorious vision of the kingdom, which the transfiguration supplied, as the fulfilment of the promise of the verse. This is the view of Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and many more.

To apply the expression, as some do, to people “not dying until they are converted,” is a very unjustifiable accommodation of the words, and a most improper use of Scripture.