

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And many Explanatory Notes.

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MDCCCLIX.

MARK X. 1–12.

1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa, by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

THE opening verse of this passage shows us *the patient perseverance of our Lord Jesus Christ as a teacher*. We are told that He came “into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and as He was wont, He taught them again.”

Wherever our Lord went, He was always about His Father’s business, preaching, teaching, and labouring to do good to souls. He threw away no opportunity. In the whole history of His earthly ministry, we never read of an idle day. Of Him it may be truly said, that He “sowed beside all waters,” and that “in the morning He sowed His seed, and in the evening withheld not His hand.” (Isaiah xxxii. 20. Eccles. xi. 6.)

And yet our Lord knew the hearts of all men. He knew perfectly well that the great proportion of His hearers were hardened and unbelieving. He knew, as He spoke, that most of His words fell to the ground uncared for and unheeded, and that so far as concerned the salvation of souls, most of His labour was in vain. He knew all this, and yet He laboured on.

Let us see in this fact a standing pattern to all who try to do good to others, whatever their office may be. Let it be remembered by every minister and every missionary,—by every schoolmaster and every Sunday-school teacher,—by every district visitor and every lay agent, by every head of a house who has family prayers,—and by every nurse who has the charge of children. Let all such remember Christ’s example, and resolve to do likewise. We are not to give up teaching, because we see no good done. We are not to relax our exertions, because we see no fruit of our toil. We are to work on steadily, keeping before us the great principle, that duty is ours and results are God’s. There must be ploughmen and sowers, as well as reapers and binders of sheaves. The honest master pays his labourers according to the work they do, and not according to

the crops that grow on his land. Our Master in heaven will deal with all His servants at the last day in like manner. He knows that success is not in their hands. He knows that they cannot change hearts. He will reward them according to their labour, and not according to the fruits which have resulted from their labour. It is not “the good and *successful* servant,” but the “good and *faithful* servant,” to whom He will say, “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”¹ (Matt. xxv. 21.)

The greater portion of this passage is meant to show us *the dignity and importance of the relation of marriage*. It is plain that the prevailing opinions of the Jews upon this subject, when our Lord was upon earth, were lax and low in the extreme. The binding character of the marriage tie was not recognized. Divorce for slight and trivial causes was allowable and common.² The duties of husbands towards wives, and of wives towards husbands, as a natural consequence, were little understood. To correct this state of things, our Lord sets up a high and holy standard of principles. He refers to the original institution of marriage at the creation, as the union of one man and one woman. He quotes and endorses the solemn words used at the marriage of Adam and Eve, as words of perpetual significance, “a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.” He adds a solemn comment to these words,—“What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” And finally, in reply to the inquiry of His disciples, he declares that divorce followed by re-marriage, except for the cause of unfaithfulness, is a breach of the seventh commandment.³

¹ Some remarks of Bishop Latimer on this point are well worth reading. They occur in a passage in one of his sermons on the parable of the wedding garment. He says, “the man who had not the wedding garment was blamed because he professed one thing, and was indeed another. Why did not the king blame the preachers? There was no fault in them, they did their duties: they had no further commandment but to call men to the marriage. The garment he should have provided himself. Therefore he quarrelleth not with the preachers, ‘What doth this fellow here? why suffered ye him to enter?’ For their commission extended no further but only to call him. Many are grieved that there is so little fruit of their preaching. And when they are asked, ‘Why do you not preach, having so great gifts given you of God?’ ‘I would preach, say they, but I see so little fruit, so little amendment of life, that it maketh me weary:’ a naughty answer: a very naughty answer. Thou art troubled with that which God gave thee no charge of: and leavest undone that which thou art charged with.”—*Latimer’s Works. Parker Society. Vol. I. p. 286.*

² The extent to which the Jews allowed divorce for absurd and frivolous causes, would be almost incredible, if we had not the evidence of their own Rabbinical writings on the subject. A full account of the matter will be found in Lightfoot’s *Horæ Hebraicæ* on St. Matthew v. 31. One passage quoted by him will be sufficient to give the reader an idea of Jewish customs about divorce: “The school of Hillel saith, If the wife cooks her husband’s food ill by over-salting it, or over-roasting it, she is to be put away.”

³ I am aware that the opinions I have expressed at the close of this paragraph are contrary to that of some learned divines. I can only say that I have arrived at them deliberately, after calm investigation of the parallel passage in Matt. xix. 9, and of the

The importance of the whole subject, on which our Lord here pronounces judgment, can hardly be overrated. We ought to be very thankful that we have so clear and full an exposition of His mind upon it. The marriage relation lies at the very root of the social system of nations. The public morality of a people, and the private happiness of the families which compose a people, are deeply involved in the whole question of the law of marriage. The experience of all nations confirms the wisdom of our Lord's decision in this passage in the most striking manner. It is a fact clearly ascertained, that polygamy, and permission to obtain divorce on slight grounds, have a direct tendency to promote immorality. In short, the nearer a nation's laws about marriage approach to the law of Christ, the higher has the moral tone of that nation always proved to be.

It becomes all those who are married, or purpose marriage, to ponder well the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage. Of all relations of life, none ought to be regarded with such reverence, and none taken in hand so cautiously as the relation of husband and wife. In no relation is so much earthly happiness to be found, if it be entered upon discreetly, advisedly, and in the fear of God. In none is so much misery seen to follow, if it be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, wantonly, and without thought.—From no step in life does so much benefit come to the soul, if people marry “in the Lord.” From none does the soul take so much harm, if fancy, passion, or any mere worldly motive is the only cause which produce the union. Solomon was the wisest of men. “Nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.” (Neh. xiii. 26.)

There is, unhappily, only too much necessity for impressing these truths upon people. It is a mournful fact, that few steps in life are generally taken with so much levity, self-will, and forgetfulness of God as marriage. Few are the young couples who think of inviting Christ to their wedding! It is a mournful fact that unhappy marriages are one great cause of the misery and sorrow of which there is so much in the world. People find out too late, that they have made a mistake, and go in bitterness all their days. Happy are they, who in the matter of marriage observe three rules. The *first* is to marry only in the Lord, and after prayer

words of our Lord in Matt. v. 32. I decidedly believe that the remarriage forbidden by Christ, is re-marriage after a divorce for trivial and frivolous causes, and that His words do not apply to re-marriage after divorce on account of unfaithfulness. Re-marriage after divorce for frivolous causes is clearly adultery, for one simple reason;—the divorce never ought to have taken place, and the divorced party is still a married person in the sight of God.—Re-marriage after divorce for unfaithfulness, by the same process of reasoning, is not adultery. Unfaithfulness dissolves the marriage tie altogether, and place the husband and wife once more in the position of unmarried people, or of a widower or widow.

for God's approval and blessing. The *second* is not to expect too much from their partners, and to remember that marriage is, after all, the union of two sinners, and not of two angels. The *third* rule is to strive first and foremost for one another's sanctification. The more holy married people are, the happier they are. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might *sanctify* it."⁴ (Eph. v. 25, 26.)

⁴ There is an expression in this passage which claims special observation. The Pharisees told our Lord, that "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." The answer of our Lord is very remarkable. He says, "*For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this precept.*" And He then goes on to show that this permission to divorce was a proof that their forefathers had fallen below the original standard of marriage, and were dealt with as being in a weak and diseased state of soul. For He says, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female."

The expression throws much light on some portions of the civil law of Moses. It shows us that it was an institution which in some of its requirements was specially adapted to the state of mind in which the Israelites were, on first leaving the land of Egypt. It was not intended in all its minute particulars to be a code of perpetual obligation. It was meant to lead on to something better and higher, when the people were able to bear it. The possession of it was undoubtedly a great privilege, and one of which the Jews might justly glory. Yet in glorying they were to remember also, that their law contained some grounds for humiliation. Its very permission to obtain divorce on light grounds, was a standing witness of the hardness and cruelty of the people. It was thought better to tolerate such divorces, than to have the nation filled with murder, adultery, cruelty, and desertion. In short, the very law of which the Jew boasted, was shown by our Lord to contain permissive statutes, which were in reality written to his shame.

The expression throws light on the position of God's people in this world of sin. It shows us that there may be things *tolerated* and permitted by God, both in churches and states, not because they are the best things, but because they are the things best suited to the church or state in which they are found. It is vain to expect perfection in any government, or in any church. If we have the essentials of justice in the one, and of truth in the other. we may be content. God tolerated many things in the government of Israel, until the time of reformation. Surely we may tolerate many things too. To spend our lives in searching after an imaginary state of perfection, either civil or ecclesiastical, is at best a waste of time. If God was pleased to suffer some things in Israel "for the hardness of their hearts," we may well endure some things in churches and states which we do not quite like. There is a balance of evil in every position in the world. There are imperfections everywhere. The state of perfection is yet to come.

MARK X. 13–16.

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and <i>his</i> disciples rebuked those that brought <i>them</i> .	them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.
14 But when Jesus saw <i>it</i> , he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid	15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
	16 And he took them up in his arms, put <i>his</i> hands upon them, and blessed them.

THE scene brought before us in these four verses is deeply interesting.— We see young children brought to Christ, “that He should touch them,” and the disciples rebuking those that brought them. We are told that when Jesus saw this He was “much displeased,” and rebuked His disciples in words of a very remarkable tenor. And finally we are told, that “He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them.”

Let us learn, for one thing, from this passage, *how much attention the souls of children should receive from the Church of Christ*. The Great Head of the Church found time to take special notice of children. Although His time on earth was precious, and grown up men and women were perishing on every side for lack of knowledge, He did not think little boys and girls of small importance. He had room in His mighty heart even for them. He declared by His outward gesture and deed, His good will toward them. And not least, He has left on record words concerning them, which His Church should never forget, “Of such is the kingdom of God.”

We must never allow ourselves to suppose that little children’s souls may be safely let alone. Their characters for life depend exceedingly on what they see and hear during their first seven years. They are never too young to learn evil and sin. They are never too young to receive religious impressions. They think in their childish way about God, and their souls, and a world to come, far sooner and far more deeply than most people are aware. They are far more ready to respond to appeals to their feeling of right and wrong than many suppose. They have each a conscience. God has mercifully not left Himself without a witness in their hearts, fallen and corrupt as their natures are. They have each a soul which will live for ever in heaven or in hell. We cannot begin too soon to endeavour to bring them to Christ.

These truths ought to be diligently considered by every branch of the Church of Christ. It is the bounden duty of every Christian congregation to make provision for the spiritual training of its children. The boys and girls of every family should be taught as soon as they can learn,—should be brought to public worship as soon as they can behave with propriety,—should be regarded with affectionate interest as the future congrega-

tion, which will fill our places when we are dead. We may confidently expect Christ's blessing on all attempts to do good to children. No church can be regarded as being in a healthy state which neglects its younger members, and lazily excuses itself on the plea, that "young people will be young," and that it is useless to try to do them good. Such a church shows plainly that it has not the mind of Christ. A congregation which consists of none but grown up people, whose children are idling at home or running wild in the streets or fields, is a most deplorable and unsatisfactory sight. The members of such a congregation may pride themselves on their numbers, and on the soundness of their own views. They may content themselves with loud assertions that they cannot change their children's hearts, and that God will convert them some day if He thinks fit. But they have yet to learn that Christ regards them as neglecting a solemn duty, and that Christians who do not use every means to bring children to Christ are committing a great sin.

Let us learn, for another thing, from this passage, *how much encouragement there is to bring young children to be baptized*. Of course it is not pretended that there is any mention of baptism, or even any reference to it in the verses before us. All we mean to say is that the expressions and gestures of our Lord in this passage, are a strong indirect argument in favour of infant baptism. It is on this account that the passage occupies a prominent place in the baptismal service of the Church of England.

The subject of infant baptism is undoubtedly a delicate and difficult one. Holy and praying men are unable to see alike upon it. Although they read the same Bible, and profess to be led by the same Spirit, they arrive at different conclusions about this sacrament. The great majority of Christians hold, that infant baptism is Scriptural and right. A comparatively small section of the Protestant Church, but one containing many eminent saints among its members, regards infant baptism as unscriptural and wrong. The difference is a melancholy proof of the blindness and infirmity which remain even in the saints of God.

But the difference now referred to, must not make members of the Church of England shrink from holding decided opinions on the subject. That church has declared plainly in its Articles, that "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." To this opinion we need not be afraid to adhere.

It is allowed on all sides that infants may be elect and chosen of God unto salvation,—may be washed in Christ's blood, born again of the Spirit, have grace, be justified, sanctified, and enter heaven. If these things be so, it is hard to see why they may not receive the outward sign of baptism.

It is allowed furthermore that infants are members of Christ's visible church, by virtue of their parent's Christianity. What else can we make of St. Paul's words, "now are they holy." (1 Cor. vii. 14.) If this be so, it is difficult to understand why an infant may not receive the outward sign of admission into the church, just as the Jewish child received the outward sign of circumcision.

The objection that baptism ought only to be given to those who are old enough to repent and believe, does not appear a convincing one. We read in the New Testament that the "houses" of Lydia and Stephanas were baptized, and that the jailer of Philippi and "all his" were baptized. It is very difficult to suppose that in no one of these three cases were there any children. (Acts xvi. 15, 33. 1 Cor. i. 16.)

The objection that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself never directly commanded infants to be baptized is not a weighty one. The church of the Jews, to which He came, had always been accustomed to admit children into the church by the sign of circumcision. The very fact that Jesus says nothing about the age for baptizing, goes far to prove that He intended no change to be made.⁵

The subject may be safely left here. Few controversies have done so much harm, and led to so little spiritual fruit as the controversy about

⁵ In considering the arguments in favour of infant baptism, there are two facts which ought to be duly pondered. They are extra-scriptural facts, and I have therefore purposely omitted them in the Expository Thoughts on this passage. But they are weighty facts, and may help some minds in coming to a conclusion.

1. One fact is the testimony of history to the almost universal practice of infant baptism in the early church. The proof of this is to be found in Wall's History of Infant Baptism. If infant baptism is so entirely opposed to the mind of Christ, as some say that it is, it is at least a curious circumstance, that the early church should have been so ignorant on the subject.

2. The other fact is the notorious practice of baptizing the infant children of proselytes in the Jewish Church. The proof of this is to be found in Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebraicæ* on St. Matthew iii. 6. He says, for instance, "The Anabaptists object, 'it is not commanded to baptize infants,—therefore they are not to be baptized.' To whom I answer, 'it is not forbidden to baptize infants,—therefore they are to be baptized.' And the reason is plain. For when Pædobaptism in the Jewish Church was so known, usual and frequent in the admission of proselytes, there was no need to strengthen it with any precept, when baptism passed into an evangelical sacrament. For Christ took baptism into His own hands, and into evangelical use as He found it; this only added that He might promote it to a worthier end, and larger use. The whole nation knew well enough that little children used to be baptized: there was no need of a precept for that which had ever, by common use, prevailed."

"On the other hand, there was need of a plain and open prohibition, that infants and little children should not be baptized, if our Saviour would not have had them baptized. For since it was most common, in all ages foregoing that, little children should be baptized, if Christ had minded to abolish the custom He would have openly forbidden it. Therefore His silence and the silence of Scripture confirms Pædobaptism, and continues it unto all ages."—*Lightfoot's Works*. Vol. xi. p. 59. *Pitman's edition*.

baptism. On none has so much been said and written without producing conviction. On none does experience seem to show that Christians had better leave each other alone, and agree to differ.

The baptism that it concerns us all to know, is not so much the baptism of water as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Thousands are washed in baptismal waters, who are never renewed by the Spirit. Have we been born again? Have we received the Holy Spirit, and been made new creatures in Jesus Christ? If not, it matters little when, and where, and how we have been baptized; we are yet in our sins. Without a new birth there can be no salvation. May we never rest till we know and feel that we have passed from death to life, and are indeed born of God!

MARK X. 17–27.

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, De-fraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

THE story we have now read is recorded no less than three times in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all inspired by one Spirit to write it for our learning. There is no doubt a wise purpose in this three-fold repetition of the same simple facts. It is intended to show us that the lessons of the passage deserve particular notice from the Church of Christ.

Let us learn for one thing from this passage, *the self-ignorance of man*.

We are told of one who “came running” to our Lord, and “kneeled to him and asked” the solemn question, “what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” At first sight there was much that was promising in this man’s case. He showed anxiety about spiritual things, while most around him were careless and indifferent. He showed a disposition to reverence our Lord, by kneeling to Him, while Scribes and Pharisees despised Him. Yet all this time this man was profoundly ignorant of his own heart. He hears our Lord recite those commandments which make up our duty to our neighbour, and at once declares, “All these have I observed from my youth.” The searching nature of the moral law, its application to our thoughts, and words, as well as actions, are matters with which he is utterly unacquainted.

The spiritual blindness here exhibited is unhappily most common. Myriads of professing Christians at the present day have not an idea of their own sinfulness and guilt in the sight of God. They flatter themselves that they have never done anything very wicked.—“They have

never murdered, or stolen, or committed adultery, or borne false witness. They cannot surely be in much danger of missing heaven.”—They forget the holy nature of that God with whom they have to do. They forget how often they break His law in temper, or imagination, even when their outward conduct is correct. They never study such portions of Scripture as the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, or at any rate they study it with a thick veil over their hearts, and do not apply it to themselves. The result is that they are wrapped up in self-righteousness. Like the church of Laodicea, they are “rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” (Rev. iii. 17.) Self-satisfied they live, and self-satisfied too often they die.

Let us beware of this state of mind. So long as we think that we can keep the law of God, Christ profits us nothing. Let us pray for self-knowledge. Let us ask for the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin, to show us our own hearts, to show us God’s holiness, and so to show us our need of Christ. Happy is he who has learned by experience the meaning of St. Paul’s words, “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” (Rom. vii. 9.) Ignorance of the law and ignorance of the Gospel will generally be found together. He whose eyes have really been opened to the spirituality of the commandments, will never rest till he has found Christ.

Let us learn, for another thing, from this passage, *the love of Christ towards sinners*.

This is a truth which is brought out in the expression used by St. Mark, when in his account of this man’s story, he says, that “Jesus beholding him, loved him.” That love beyond doubt, was a love of pity and compassion. Our Lord beheld with pity the strange mixture of earnestness and ignorance which the case before Him presented. He saw with compassion a soul struggling with all the weakness and infirmity entailed by the fall,—the conscience ill-at-ease, and sensible that it wanted relief,—the understanding sunk in darkness and blinded as to the first principles of spiritual religion. Just as we look with sorrow at some noble ruin, roofless, and shattered, and unfit for man’s use, yet showing many a mark of the skill with which it was designed and reared at first, so may we suppose that Jesus looked with tender concern at this man’s soul.

We must never forget that Jesus feels love and compassion for the souls of the ungodly. Without controversy He feels a peculiar love for those who hear His voice and follow Him. They are His sheep, given to Him by the Father, and watched with a special care. They are His bride, joined to Him in an everlasting covenant, and dear to Him as part of Himself. But the heart of Jesus is a wide heart. He has abundance of

pity, compassion, and tender concern even for those who are following sin and the world. He who wept over unbelieving Jerusalem is still the same. He would still gather into his bosom the ignorant and self-righteous, the faithless and impenitent, if they were only willing to be gathered. (Matt. xxiii. 37.) We may boldly tell the chief of sinners that Christ loves him. Salvation is ready for the worst of men, if they will only come to Christ. If men are lost, it is not because Jesus does not love them, and is not ready to save. His own solemn words unravel the mystery, "Men love darkness rather than light." "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." (John iii. 19; v. 40.)

Let us learn, in the last place, from this passage, *the immense danger of the love of money*. This is a lesson which is twice enforced on our notice. Once it comes out in the conduct of the man whose history is here related. With all his professed desire after eternal life, he loved his money better than his soul. "He went away grieved."—Once it comes out in the solemn words of our Lord to his disciples, "How hard is it for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The last day alone will fully prove how true those words are.

Let us watch against the love of money. It is a snare to the poor as well as to the rich. It is not so much the having money, as the trusting in it, which ruins the soul. Let us pray for contentment with such things as we have. The highest wisdom is to be of one mind with St. Paul, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil. iv. 11.)

MARK X. 28–34.

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33 *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

THE first thing which demands our attention in these verses, is *the glorious promise which they contain*. The Lord Jesus says to His apostles, “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or, brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's; but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

There are few wider promises than this in the word of God. There is none certainly in the New Testament which holds out such encouragement for the life that now is. Let everyone that is fearful and faint-hearted in Christ's service look at this promise. Let all who are enduring hardness and tribulation for Christ's sake, study this promise well, and drink out of it comfort.

To all who make sacrifices on account of the Gospel, Jesus promises “an hundred-fold now in this time.” They shall have not only pardon and glory in the world to come. They shall have even here upon earth, hopes, and joys, and sensible comforts sufficient to make up for all that they lose. They shall find in the communion of saints, new friends, new relations, new companions, more loving, faithful, and valuable than any they had before their conversion. Their introduction into the family of God shall be an abundant recompense for exclusion from the society of this world. This may sound startling and incredible to many ears. But thousands have found by experience that it is true.

To all who make sacrifices on account of the Gospel, Jesus promises “eternal life in the world to come.” As soon as they put off their earthly tabernacle, they shall enter upon a glorious existence, and in the morning of the resurrection shall receive such honour and joy as pass man's understanding. Their light affliction for a few years shall end in an everlast-

ing reward. Their fights and sorrows while in the body, shall be exchanged for perfect rest and a conqueror's crown. They shall dwell in a world where there is no death, no sin, no devil, no cares, no weeping, no parting, for the former things will have passed away. God has said it, and it shall all be found true.

Where is the saint who will dare to say in the face of these glorious promises, that there is no encouragement to serve Christ? Where is the man or woman whose hands are beginning to hang down, and whose knees are beginning to faint in the Christian race? Let all such ponder this passage, and take fresh courage. The time is short. The end is sure. Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Let us wait patiently on the Lord.

The second thing, which demands our attention in these verses, is *the solemn warning which they contain*. The Lord Jesus saw the secret self-conceit of His apostles. He gives them a word in season to check their high thoughts. "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

How true were these words, when applied to the twelve apostles! There stood among those who heard our Lord speak, a man who at one time seemed likely to be one of the foremost of the twelve. He was one who appeared more careful and trustworthy than any. He had the charge of the bag, and kept what was put in it. And yet that man fell away and came to a disgraceful end. His name was Judas Iscariot.—Again, there did not stand among our Lord's hearers that day one who at a later period did more for Christ than any of the twelve. At the time when our Lord spoke he was a young Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and zealous for nothing so much as the law. And yet that young man in the end was converted to the faith of Christ, was not behind the chiefest apostles, and laboured more abundantly than all. His name was Saul. Well might our Lord say, "the first shall be last; and the last first."

How true were these words, when we apply them to the history of Christian churches! There was a time when Asia Minor, and Greece, and Northern Africa, were full of professing Christians, while England and America were heathen lands. Sixteen hundred years have made a mighty change. The churches of Africa and Asia have fallen into complete decay. The English and American churches are labouring to spread the Gospel over the world. Well might our Lord say, "the first shall be last, and the last first."

How true these words appear to believers, when they look back over their own lives, and remember all they have seen from the time of their own conversion! How many began to serve Christ at the same time with themselves, and seemed to run well for a season. But where are they now? The world has got hold of one. False doctrine has beguiled another.

er. A mistake in marriage has spoiled a third. Few indeed are the believers who cannot call to mind many such cases. Few have failed to discover, by sorrowful experience, that “the last are often first, and the first last.”

Let us learn to pray for humility, when we read texts like this. It is not enough to begin well. We must persevere, and go on, and continue in well-doing. We must not be content with the fair blossoms of a few religious convictions, and joys, and sorrows, and hopes, and fears. We must bear the good fruit of settled habits of repentance, faith, and holiness. Happy is he who counts the cost, and resolves, having once begun to walk in the narrow way, by God’s grace never to turn aside.

The last thing that demands our attention in this passage, is *our Lord’s clear foreknowledge of His own sufferings and death*. Calmly and deliberately He tells His disciples of His coming passion at Jerusalem. One after another He describes all the leading circumstances which would attend His death. Nothing is reserved. Nothing is kept back.

Let us mark this well. There was nothing involuntary and unforeseen in our Lord’s death. It was the result of His own free, determinate, and deliberate choice. From the beginning of His earthly ministry He saw the cross before Him, and went to it a willing sufferer. He knew that His death was the needful payment that must be made to reconcile God and man. That payment He had covenanted and engaged to make at the price of His own blood. And so, when the appointed time came, like a faithful surety, He kept His word, and died for our sins on Calvary.

Let us ever bless God that the Gospel sets before us such a Saviour, so faithful to the terms of the covenant,—so ready to suffer,—so willing to be reckoned sin, and a curse in our stead. Let us not doubt that He who fulfilled His engagement to suffer, will also fulfil His engagement to save all who come to Him. Let us not only accept Him gladly as our Redeemer and Advocate, but gladly give ourselves, and all we have, to His service. Surely if Jesus cheerfully died for us, it is a small thing to require Christians to live for Him.

MARK X. 35–45.

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us, that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, *Ye* know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I *am* baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it*

shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42 But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

LET us mark in this passage, *the ignorance of our Lord's disciples*. We find James and John petitioning for the first places in the kingdom of glory. We find them confidently declaring their ability to drink of their Master's cup, and be baptized with their Master's baptism. In spite of all the plain warnings of our Lord, they clung obstinately to the belief that Christ's kingdom on earth was immediately going to appear. Notwithstanding their many shortcomings in Christ's service, they had no misgivings as to their power to endure anything which might come upon them. With all their faith, and grace, and love to Jesus, they neither knew their own hearts, nor the nature of the path before them. They still dreamed of temporal crowns, and earthly rewards. They still knew not what manner of men they were.

There are few true Christians who do not resemble James and John, when they first begin the service of Christ. We are apt to expect far more present enjoyment from our religion, than the Gospel warrants us to expect. We are apt to forget the cross, and the tribulation, and to think only of the crown. We form an incorrect estimate of our own patience and power of endurance. We misjudge our own ability to stand temptation and trial. And the result of all is, that we often buy wisdom dearly, by bitter experience, after many disappointments, and not a few falls.

Let the case before us teach us the importance of a solid and calm judgment in our religion. Like James and John, we are right in coveting the best gifts, and in telling all our desires to Christ. Like them we are right in believing that Jesus is King of kings, and will one day reign upon the earth. But let us not, like them, forget that there is a cross to be

borne by every Christian, and that “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts xiv. 22.) Let us not, like them, be over-confident in our own strength, and forward in professing that we can do anything that Christ requires. Let us, in short, beware of a boastful spirit, when we first begin to run the Christian course. If we remember this, it may save us many a humbling fall.

Let us mark, secondly, in this passage, *what praise our Lord bestows on lowliness, and devotion to the good of others*. It seems that the ten were much displeased with James and John, because of the petition which they made to their Master. Their ambition and love of preeminence were once more excited at the idea of any one being placed above themselves. Our Lord saw their feelings, and, like a wise physician, proceeded at once to supply a corrective medicine. He tells them that their ideas of greatness were built on a mistaken foundation. He repeats with renewed emphasis, the lesson already laid down in the preceding chapter, “Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.” And He backs up all by the overwhelming argument of His own example: “Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”⁶

Let all who desire to please Christ, watch and pray against self-esteem. It is a feeling which is deeply rooted in our hearts. Thousands have come out from the world, taken up the cross, professed to forsake their own righteousness, and believe in Christ, who have felt irritated and annoyed, when a brother has been more honoured than themselves. These things ought not so to be. We ought often to ponder the words of St. Paul, “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.” (Philipp. ii. 3.) Blessed is that man who can sincerely rejoice when others are exalted, though he himself is overlooked and passed by!

⁶ The remarks of Quesnel on this passage are worth reading. He says, “The ambition of clergymen is a great scandal in the church, and is frequently an occasion of emulations, enmities, divisions, schisms, and wars; of all which the displeasure of the apostles gives us an imperfect shadow and resemblance. If apostles, trained up in the school of humility and charity, are not free from this vice, what effects will not ambition produce in souls wholly immersed in flesh and blood, which have no motion but from their passions, no law but that of their own desires?”

“Men strangely forget themselves, when, as a ministry appointed only for the sake of heaven, they are contending with the great ones of the earth in haughtiness and grandeur. It is very difficult to support equally the double character of a spiritual pastor and a temporal prince; and to join humility with grandeur, meekness with dominion, and the constant application of a pastor with the care of secular affairs.”

“The greatest prelate in the church, is he who is most conformable to the example of Christ, by humility, charity, and continual attendance on his flock, and who looks on himself as a servant to the children of God.”

Above all, let all who desire to walk in Christ's steps, labour to be useful to others. Let them lay themselves out to do good in their day and generation. There is always a vast field for doing it, if men have the will and inclination. Let them never forget, that true greatness does not consist in being an admiral, or a general,—a statesman, or an artist. It consists in devoting ourselves, body, and soul, and spirit to the blessed work of making our fellow men more holy and more happy. It is those who exert themselves by the use of Scripture means to lessen the sorrow, and increase the joy, of all around them,—the Howards, the Wilberforces, the Martyns, the Judsons of a country,—who are truly great in the sight of God. While they live they are laughed at, mocked, ridiculed, and often persecuted. But their memorial is on high. Their names are written in heaven. Their praise endureth for ever. Let us remember these things, and while we have time do good unto all men, and be servants of all for Christ's sake. Let us strive to leave the world better, holier, happier than it was when we were born. A life spent in this way is truly Christ-like, and brings its own reward.

Let us mark, lastly, in this passage, *the language which our Lord uses in speaking of His own death*. He says, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many."

This is one of those expressions which ought to be carefully treasured up in the minds of all true Christians. It is one of the texts which prove incontrovertibly the atoning character of Christ's death. That death was no common death, like the death of a martyr, or of other holy men. It was the public payment by an Almighty Representative of the debts of sinful man to a holy God. It was the ransom which a Divine Surety undertook to provide, in order to procure liberty for sinners, tied and bound by the chain of their sins. By that death Jesus made a full and complete satisfaction for man's countless transgressions. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. When He died, He died for us. When He suffered, He suffered in our stead. When He hung on the cross, He hung there as our Substitute. When His blood flowed, it was the price of our souls.

Let all who trust in Christ take comfort in the thought, that they build on a sure foundation. It is true that we are sinners, but Christ has borne our sins. It is true that we are poor helpless debtors, but Christ has paid our debts. It is true that we deserve to be shut up for ever in the prison of hell. But, thanks be to God, Christ hath paid a full and complete ransom for us. The door is wide open. The prisoners may go free. May we all

know this privilege by heartfelt experience, and walk in the blessed liberty of the children of God.⁷

⁷ The manner in which our Lord uses the word baptism in the passage now expounded, deserves careful notice. He says to two disciples, who were already baptized with water, "Can ye be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" The expression is very remarkable. It is a clear proof that in the New Testament a sacramental dipping or sprinkling with water is not always necessarily implied by the word baptism. It establishes the fact that there is such a thing as being baptized, in a certain sense, without the use of any outward ordinance at all.

This is a point that ought to be remembered in interpreting some of the passages in the Epistles where the words "baptism" and "baptized" are used. In such texts, for instance, as "baptism doth save us," (1 Peter iii. 21.) or "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. iii. 27.) it is clear that something more is contained than any mere outward ordinance. In both cases, the baptism of water is undoubtedly meant, but it is no less evident that something is implied also of deeper moment than any ordinance administered by man. In both cases it is a baptism which is accompanied by true faith, and a heart-reception of Christ, such as was the baptism of the Philippian jailer. To quote such texts in support of what is commonly called the baptismal regeneration of infants, is to wrest and pervert them from their proper meaning. The conclusion of the text in St. Peter, for example, seems to place this beyond question. He emphatically warns us not to suppose that he means nothing more than the washing of water, or bodily reception of a sacrament, by the word baptism.

It has been a wise act on the part of translators of the New Testament to adhere to the Greek words "baptize" and "baptism" in rendering the Bible into the vernacular tongue of each nation. No other words could possibly imply all that the two Greek words convey. All other expressions would either weaken the sense of the inspired writers, or convey a false impression to the mind of the reader. To take one solitary instance, what could be more meagre or unsatisfactory than to render the passage now before us in the following way, "Can ye be sprinkled with the sprinkling, or dipped with the dipping, that I am sprinkled or dipped with?"—The firmness of the British and Foreign Bible Society on this point, ought to be cause of thankfulness to all the Protestant churches. In resolving to use the Greek words "baptize" and "baptism," in all their versions, they have exercised a wise discretion.

MARK X. 46-52.

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

61 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

WE read in these verses an account of one of our Lord's miracles. Let us see in it, as we read, a vivid emblem of spiritual things. We are not studying a history which concerns us personally any more than the exploits of Cæsar or Alexander. We have before us a picture which ought to be deeply interesting to the soul of every Christian.

In the first place, we have here *an example of strong faith*. We are told that as Jesus went out of Jericho, a blind man named Bartimæus "sat by the wayside begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Bartimæus was blind in body, but not in soul. The eyes of his understanding were open. He saw things which Annas and Caiaphas, and hosts of letter-learned Scribes and Pharisees, never saw at all. He saw that Jesus of Nazareth, as our Lord was contemptuously called,—Jesus, who had lived for thirty years in an obscure Galilean village, this very Jesus was the Son of David,—the Messiah of whom prophets had prophesied long ago. He had witnessed none of our Lord's mighty miracles. He had not had the opportunity of beholding dead people raised with a word, and lepers healed by a touch. Of all these privileges, his blindness totally deprived him. But he had heard the report of our Lord's mighty works, and hearing had believed. He was satisfied from mere hear-say, that He of whom such wonderful things were reported, must be the promised Saviour, and must be able to heal him. And so when our Lord drew near, he cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Let us strive and pray that we may have like precious faith. We too are not allowed to see Jesus with our bodily eyes. But we have the report of His power, and grace, and willingness to save, in the Gospel. We have exceeding great promises from His own lips, written down for our encouragement. Let us trust those promises implicitly, and commit our souls to Christ unhesitatingly. Let us not be afraid to repose all our con-

fidence on His own gracious words, and to believe that what He has engaged to do for sinners, He will surely perform. What is the beginning of all saving faith, but a soul's venture on Christ? What is the life of saving faith, when once begun, but a continual leaning on an unseen Saviour's word? What is the first step of a Christian, but a crying, like Bartimæus, "Jesus have mercy on me?" What is the daily course of a Christian, but keeping up the same spirit of faith? "Though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." (1 Peter i. 8.)

We have, in the second place, in these verses, *an example of determined perseverance in the face of difficulties*. We are told that when Bartimæus began to cry out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," he met with little encouragement from those who were near him. On the contrary, "many charged him that he should hold his peace." But he was not to be stopped. If others did not know the misery of blindness, he did. If others did not think it worthwhile to take such trouble, in order to obtain relief, he, at any rate, knew better. He cared not for the rebukes of unfeeling bystanders. He heeded not the ridicule which his importunity probably brought on him. "He cried the more a great deal," and so crying obtained his heart's desire, and received his sight.

Let all who wish to be saved, mark well this conduct of Bartimæus, and walk diligently in his steps. Like him, we must care nothing what others think and say of us, when we seek the healing of our souls. There never will be wanting people who will tell us that it is "too soon," or "too late,"—that we are going "too fast," or "too far,"—that we need not pray so much, or read our Bibles so much,—or be so anxious about salvation. We must give no heed to such people. Like Bartimæus, we must cry the more, "Jesus, have mercy on me."

What is the reason that men are so half-hearted in seeking Christ? Why are they so soon deterred, and checked, and discouraged in drawing near to God? The answer is short and simple. They do not feel sufficiently their own sins. They are not thoroughly convinced of the plague of their own hearts, and the disease of their own souls. Once let a man see his own guilt, as it really is, and he will never rest till he has found pardon and peace in Christ. It is they who, like Bartimæus, really know their own deplorable condition, who persevere, like Bartimæus, and are finally healed.

In the last place, we have in these verses, *an example of the constraining influence which gratitude to Christ ought to have upon our souls*. Bartimæus did not return home as soon as he was restored to sight. He would not leave Him from whom he had received such mercy. At once he devoted the new powers, which his cure gave him, to the Son

of David who had worked the cure. His history concludes with the touching expression, He “followed Jesus in the way.”

Let us see in these simple words, a lively emblem of the effect that the grace of Christ ought to have on every one who tastes it. It ought to make him a follower of Jesus in his life, and to draw him with mighty power into the way of holiness. Freely pardoned, he ought to give himself freely and willingly to Christ’s service. Bought at so mighty a price as the blood of Christ, he ought to devote himself heartily and thoroughly to Him who redeemed him. Grace really experienced will make a man feel daily, “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits.” It did so for the apostle Paul: He says, “the love of Christ constraineth us.” (2 Cor. v. 14.) It will do so for all true Christians at the present day. The man who boasts of having an interest in Christ, while he does not follow Christ in his life, is a miserable self-deceiver, and is ruining his own soul. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they,” and they only, “are the sons of God.” (Rom. viii. 14.)

Have we had our eyes opened by the Spirit of God? Have we yet been taught to see sin, and Christ, and holiness, and heaven, in their true light? Can we say, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see? If so, we shall know the things of which we have been reading by experience. If not, we are yet in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, and have everything to learn.