

# Thoughts of Jesus

## The Courageous Jesus

THE natural meekness and humility of Jesus was not an evidence of cowardice. On many occasions He manifested great courage and boldness. He was unafraid in the presence of men, and did not hesitate to declare the truth of God in uncompromising terms when He felt it was necessary to do so.

In the early days of His ministry we find Him in the Temple court. As He stands apart from the throng He observes the noisy buying and selling in the sacred precincts. He notes the frauds and extortion perpetrated in the name of religion. He sees the priests watching the transactions from which they reap unrighteous gain.

A feeling of holy indignation rises within the heart of Jesus. His searching eyes begin to flash with the majesty of Heaven.

Unconsciously the attention of the traffickers is drawn toward Him. They begin to realize that something startling is about to happen. And they do not have long to wait. Suddenly, like the voice of doom, they hear this Stranger cry, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." The response is like the rush of men before a storm. Soon the confusion is hushed, and there is silence in the Temple courts.

This was not an easy thing for Jesus to do. Should He not have been more cautious? How did He dare strike at the heart of priestly rule? Would not His mission be hindered by such bold tactics? But no such thoughts were harbored when He had an unpleasant but righteous task to perform. It was never for personal reasons that He exercised caution.

Jesus had come to do a work of reform. Of course, He could not be running through the land at all times striking down evil with the lash as He did that day. Nevertheless, it was necessary for Him on certain occasions to reveal this holy boldness, and then He did not hesitate to do it.

We see Him again during the latter days of His work on earth, when He faced a group of scribes and Pharisees who had joined the multitude to listen to His teaching in the Temple courts. These insincere leaders of the people had been drawing Him out with questions to see whether they could trap Him, and thus have greater reason to condemn Him as a traitor to His people. For a long time the priests had tried to press Him into a corner, that they might attack Him and nullify His work.

Not for Himself did He cry out against their hypocrisy and evil deeds that day, but to expose them before the people who crowded about Him. Never has anyone uttered more scathing denunciations against a religious hierarchy still able to wield the power of life or death. But this mattered not to Jesus. He feared not to denounce their illicit traffic in souls, their oppression of the poor, their unholy pride, their blind conformity to tradition. That day was a high point in His earthly ministry. And it brought Him grief, as He knew it would.

These were strange words to come from One so humble: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto

you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold?" "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Matthew 23:13-17, 23, 24.

This was a task that Jesus did not enjoy. Much rather would He gather the little children about Him and bless them, comfort a brokenhearted mother, or teach things that pertained to eternal life.

It was with no unholy zeal that Jesus scattered His words of woe, woe, woe that day. He did not utter the words because of some personal issue. Even when He was haled before rulers and councils, and false witnesses spoke against Him, He answered not a word. But when the honor of His Father was at stake, He spoke up without thought of how it might affect His own standing.

No, it was not without soul searching and daily communion with the Father on behalf of sinners that He took up the sword to slay the unrepentant. We are told that when He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, "tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes." Steps to Christ, page 12.

Let no one who feels called to a work of reform and denunciation of wrong find comfort in the fact that Christ did a similar work.

Let all such be sure that they are as ready to go to Calvary for those whom they would condemn as Jesus was for the evildoers of His day. Not until we have learned to love the sinner as Jesus did will we be ready to reprove the erring.

But in doing this we must be like our Lord, who, though compelled to denounce sin, still loved the sinner. Zeal for the cause of God must never take the form of personal battle. Whether we personally win or lose in an argument is of little moment. The great thing that matters is whether we are advancing the cause of truth and righteousness. All thought of self must be laid aside when we rise to defend our faith. We must be sure that it is holy boldness that we are manifesting rather than an unholy rashness born of self-righteous pride.

The important thing is not that we do a good work but how we do it. An intemperate, prideful spirit has wrecked many a good cause. It was this that Jesus avoided in all His ministry, His thought being, "Not I, but the Father." Today in all our labor we too should say and feel, "Not I, but Christ."