

J. C. Ryle Quotations Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 1, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us and Happy New Year! Whether you are here in person or online you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time. Before we dismiss the children and ministry volunteers...

NOTE – The 2022 ABM will take place on Sunday, January 22, 2023, following the Sunday Morning Service (January 29 in case of inclement weather). A slate of candidates qualified to stand for election—for the Offices of Deacon and Trustee—has been posted in the Fellowship Hall. If your name appears, notify the Pastor of your intentions. Lastly, today is the deadline for the submission of Ministry Leader Reports.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

The person you are to become is heavily influenced by two factors: **a)** the people you surround yourself with; and **b)** the books that you read. Let us place emphasis upon the latter portion of this statement as we enter into 2023.

NOTE 1 – Over the years I have come to esteem or regard certain Christian authors—authors who both knew Scripture and the One Who inspired it. In full disclosure, the vast majority of my favorite authors are from generations past and are long dead (i.e., for several reasons)...

- 1) Firstly, I find authors from previous centuries to be better writers and deeper thinkers.
- 2) Secondly, the legacy of their writings are less likely to be tarnished or diminished by scandal.
- 3) The wisdom we need for the present and future is often to be found in the musing(s) of the past.

NOTE 2 – Thus said, I can think of no better way to begin 2023 than by introducing you to a personal favorite...

J. C. Ryle – **SLIDE**

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Q. Who is (i.e., was) J. C. Ryle?

A. John Charles Ryle (May 10, 1816 – June 10, 1900) was an English evangelical Anglican bishop whose writings remain in print and available today. Please allow me to offer the following summation of his life and Christian ministry.

QUOTE – Ryle was born in Macclesfield of the United Kingdom in May of 1816. He “came to faith in Christ while at Oxford, as he turned to the Bible during his recovery from a chest infection. He was an outstanding athlete at Oxford and then went on to study law in London with the intention of a run for Parliament. However, the smog in London exacerbated earlier health problems, and then his father suffered financial ruin, which meant that Ryle would not have the necessary financial backing for a political career. Instead, he turned to the ministry and was ordained in the Church of England.

Ryle started his ministry as a curate (ministerial assistant) and then became rector, serving at two different churches in succession. During this time he was married and widowed twice. He also began publishing tracts (eventually over 200 with a circulation of over 2 million and translations into other languages) and a series on “Expository Thoughts” on the Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In 1861, he became vicar of All Saints Church in Suffolk. There, “he became known nationally for his straightforward preaching and firm defense of evangelical principles.” He also finished his “Expository Thoughts” on John, which completed the Gospels series. In 1869 he married his third wife, Henrietta, who lived until 1889.

In 1880, Ryle became the first bishop of Liverpool. He retired in 1900 and died later that year at the age of 83.

After Ryle’s death, a contemporary pastor had this to say about him: ‘He [J.C. Ryle] was great through the abounding grace of God. He was great in stature; great in mental power; great in spirituality; great as a preacher and expositor of God’s most holy Word; great in hospitality; great as a writer of Gospel tracts; great as a Bishop of the Reformed Evangelical Protestant Church in England, of which he was a noble defender; great as first Bishop of Liverpool. I am bold to say, that perhaps few men in the nineteenth century did as much for God, for truth, and for righteousness, among the English speaking race, and in the world, as our late Bishop.’

Ryle is best known today for his writings.”

NOTE 1 – Consider the purpose(s) for which J. C. Ryle wrote...

QUOTE – “My chief desire in all my writings, is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and make Him beautiful and glorious in the eyes of people; and to promote the increase of repentance, faith, and holiness upon earth.”

NOTE 2 – Ryle has much to say on each of these topics (e.g., repentance, faith, holiness) and more. I would like to spend several weeks considering excerpts and selections from his writings (i.e., both long and short) accordingly. May the Lord use our time to shape the trajectory of our New Year and beyond!

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

J. C. Ryle often addressed the nature of gen. faith and repentance, and their impact on how we live in the earth. He was dubious of any form of Christianity which did not produce a demonstrable change in daily life and living. In our age of immorality and shallow confessions of Christ, we do well to heed his words...

QUOTE – “Let us beware of repentance without evidence.”

Q. How can you claim a change of heart which precipitates a change in lifestyle w/out the change of lifestyle?

QUOTE – “The faith that has not a sanctifying influence on the character is no better than the faith of devils.”

QUOTE – “Let us pray that we may be delivered from a cold, speculative, unsanctified head-knowledge of Christianity. It is a rock on which thousands make shipwreck to all eternity. No heart becomes so hard as that on which the light shines, but finds no admission. To be an ignorant heathen, and bow down to idols and stones, is bad enough. But to be called a Christian, and know the theory of the Gospel, and yet cleave to sin and the world with the heart, is to be a candidate for the worst and lowest place in hell. It is to be as like as possible to the devil.”

KEY 1 – These remarks should cause us to consider the following scriptural precepts...

NOTE 1 – We are saved by grace through faith alone and not by our works. This is a key premise of the gospel...

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NIV)

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

NOTE 2 – Yet genuine faith and repentance manifest in a changed character and life abounding in good works...

Ephesians 2:8–10

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Titus 2:11–14

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

NOTE 3 – Any profession of faith that is unaccompanied by a changed life and good works cannot be legitimized...

James 2:14, 17b–24, 26

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? . . . 17 . . . faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless [“dead”]? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered [i.e., “show to be”] righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” [Gen. 15:6] and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. . . . 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

KEY 2 – I agree with Ryle in this summarizing excerpt...

QUOTE – “Something of ‘the image of Christ’ must be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings.” Otherwise, our profession of Christ is mere talk and should not be expected to save!

THE PRESENTATION AND PERIL OF SIN

J. C. Ryle, like all great teachers of Scripture, continually warned against the operation, power and peril of sin. We have touched upon such themes in recent months, but the following deserve mention as we enter into 2023.

NOTE 1 – Firstly, Ryle notes that sin often lulls you in by its unassuming and endearing invitation...

QUOTE – “Sin will not come to you saying, 'I am sin.' It would do little harm if it did. Sin always seems 'good, pleasant and desirable' at the time of arrival.”

NOTE 2 – Sin will never present you w/ its inevitable consequence; only the gratification of yielding to the flesh...

ILL 1 – Sin will tempt you with the elation associated with passing on a word of gossip, because who does not feel good elevating themselves at the expense of another? However, it will never show you the pain of a broken heart, a ruined reputation or a confidence lost.

ILL 2 – Sin will tempt you with the release available through pornography. It will never show you the pain or mistrust developing in the heart of your spouse or the fact that the person you are lusting over is a lost sinner in need of the very grace you claim to have received.

ILL 3 – Sin will entice you with the pleasures of promiscuity and fornication. After all, everyone is doing it and you are so lonely! However, it will never take the time to show forth the sexually transmitted disease, unplanned pregnancy or the void of love that exists the morning after.

ILL 4 – Sin will tempt men, women and children with the escape available through addiction, but never touch upon the brokenness that invariably follows (e.g., the car wreck, jail, loss of marriage and children, poverty, physical ailment, death, etc.). No one intends to become an addict.

NOTE 3 – Open your eyes to the operation and presentation of sin, always remembering this scriptural maxim...

Proverbs 14:12

12 There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

NOTE 4 – Secondly, Ryle speaks to the deadening impact of sin upon the human heart and condition...

QUOTE – “Every fresh act of sin lessens fear and remorse, hardens our hearts, blunts the edge of our conscience, and increases our evil inclination.”

NOTE 5 – Those who yield to sin must consider that each surrender makes sin that much harder to overcome...

Proverbs 5:22

22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them;
the cords of their sins hold them fast.

FYI – It is so painful as a minister to deal with those who are enslaved by sinful passions. They have fed the carnal and fleshly aspect of their being for so long, they cannot even imagine being free of the impulse or inclination to do that which is evil in the eyes of Christ. However, there is deliverance in and through Him...

ON OVERCOMING SIN PT. 1

This being said, Ryle offers much insight to those who would be free of the enslaving influence of sin...

QUOTE – “Hate sin! Instead of loving it, cleaving to it, excusing it, playing with it, we ought to hate it with a deadly hatred.”

NOTE 1 – Those who would be free of sin must begin by adopting a biblical mindset re: sin. Sin is not something that is to be welcomed, adored, clung to, excused, justified, etc., but spurned, despised and hated! Without exception, every person I have ever counseled concerning habitual sin has made every excuse for its ongoing presence and operation in their lives. Such will never be free!

Q. To what degree have you, if you struggle, executed this command of Christ?

Mark 9:43, 45, 47–48

43 “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. . . . 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. . . . 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where

‘the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.’” [Isa. 66:24]

Hebrews 12:4

4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Q. To what degree are you pursuing habits or disciplines that precipitate freedom?

NOTE 2 – Ryle notes the following concerning the dynamic nature of Christianity and the habits we entertain...

QUOTE – “Believe me, you cannot stand still in your souls. Habits of good or evil are daily strengthening in your hearts. Every day you are either getting nearer to God, or further off. Every year that you continue unrepentant, the wall of division between you and heaven becomes higher and thicker, and the gulf to be crossed deeper and broader. Oh, dread the hardening effect of constant lingering in sin!”

NOTE 3 – I find that the remarks of Ryle re: the heart particularly insightful on such matters...

QUOTE – “Imagination is the hotbed where sin is too often hatched. Guard your thoughts, and there will be little fear about your actions.” . . . “Sin and the devil will always find helpers in our hearts.”

QUOTE – “Let us never forget that our chief danger is from within. The world and the devil combined, cannot do us as much harm as our own hearts will, if we do not watch and pray.”

QUOTE – “The Christian who keeps their heart diligently in little things shall be kept from great falls.”

Proverbs 4:23

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

ON OVERCOMING SIN PT. 2

Ryle also notes the following for all who would pursue a life of holiness before the Lord...

NOTE 1 – Firstly, stop putting off until tomorrow what must be begun today...

QUOTE – “Tomorrow is the devil’s day, but today is God’s. Satan does not care how spiritual your intentions are, or how holy your resolutions, if only they are determined to be done tomorrow.”

2 Corinthians 6:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1 As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. 2 For he says,

“In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.” [Isa. 49:8]

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now [i.e., **today**] is the day of salvation.

NOTE 2 – Secondly, Ryle identifies one major key to unlocking true spiritual vitality in Christ Jesus...

QUOTE – “Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin will choke prayer.”

QUOTE – “Hearken, my believing reader. What is the cause of your weakness? Is it not because the fountain of life is little used? Is it not because you are resting on old experiences, and not daily gathering new manna—daily drawing new strength from Christ?”

John 15:5–6, 8

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain [i.e., abide] in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. . . . 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

NOTE 3 – Thirdly and ultimately, Ryle speaks to the true secret to living a life of faith-filled obedience...

QUOTE – “The fear of punishment, the desire of reward, the sense of duty, are all useful arguments, in their way, to persuade people to holiness. But they are all weak and powerless, until a person loves Christ.”

John 14:15

15 “If you love me, keep my commands.”

1 John 5:3 (Emphasis Mine)

3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands **are not burdensome**.

KEY – Stop telling me how difficult it is to serve the Lord while living under the crippling effects of sin and evil...

Matthew 11:28–30 (Emphasis Mine)

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my **yoke is easy** and my **burden is light**.”

A FINAL NOTE

Ryle posited an abiding connection between public folly and private spiritual negligence. For those who would avoid the shame, embarrassment and disrepute that accompanies sin, heed the following bit of timeless and timely wisdom...

QUOTE – “You may be very sure people fall in private long before they fall in public. They are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world.”

SUMMATIONS

As we enter 2023, let us consider these words of Ryle re: faith, repentance, the place of good works and holiness. Those who reflect upon them will find them scripturally sound and full of insight. Thus said, I will say that this is by no means an easy message or a pleasant way to begin the New Year. Talk of sin and holiness is by no means fun, but it is fundamental to those who would follow Christ.

KEY 1 – Thus said, the following remark both resonates with and expresses my heart toward you this morning...

QUOTE – “If I say hard things, it is not because I do not love you. I write [speak] as I do, because I desire your salvation. He is your best friend who tells you the most truth. Truth must be spoken, however condemning [unpleasant] it may be.”

Q. Would you stand with me as we close our service?

KEY 2 – We are going to close with worship. This is your opportunity to commit or recommit to the Lord.

POST (P.W.) – Those who wish to linger or receive prayer may feel free to do so. As we depart from this place...

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org

NOTE 2 – Feel free to participate in our “beyond-Sunday” ministries (MM, WM, CYC, Study)

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.