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## SERMON XXV.

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### THE DIGNITY AND DUTIES OF THE MINISTRY.\*

ROMANS 11:13. *I magnify mine office.*

It will not be alleged by any one acquainted with the character of Paul, that this was the language of ostentation or self-importance. Distinguished as he was, by his transcendent talents, his literary attainments, his ardent piety, his labors, privations and sufferings, and by his unparalleled success in preaching the gospel; nevertheless, in his own view he was "less than the least of all saints," and "not worthy to be called an apostle." Under a deep and humbling sense of his own unworthiness, he is overwhelmed with the condescension of God in "in putting him into the ministry." It is in view of the dignity, the honor and importance of the *office* to which he was called, that he utters the language of the text. "I magnify mine office." I glory in it; I esteem it my highest honor. However others might despise, or hate, or account the preaching of the cross as "foolishness," he was not ashamed of it, but gloried in the blessed employment.

The words suggest, for our consideration,

I. The *dignity* and *importance* of the ministerial office.

II. The corresponding *qualifications* and *duties*.

I. The *dignity* and *importance* of the ministerial office may appear, from the several *names* and *titles* by which it is designated in the word of God. They who bear the sacred office are styled *ministers*, because they are the servants of God, and of the church. Bishops or *pastors*, because they are called to perform the duties of the pastoral or shepherd's office. They are styled *ambassadors*, because they are the representatives of the King of Heaven, authorized to negotiate between rebels and their offended sovereign; and in "Christ's stead," to propose to their fellow-sinners a treaty of peace, written with his hand,

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and sealed with his blood. They are called *stewards* of the mysteries of God, because intrusted with the keys of knowledge and discipline; authorized to dispense divine ordinances, and to bring forth out of their treasures "things new and old." They are called *watchmen* on the walls of Zion, because they are to sound the alarm of danger, and to watch for souls, "as they that must give account." *Angels* of the churches, because they bear the messages of the living God to dying men. O, how important is this relation! How unspeakable the honor of such an office!

The honor of this office, however, is not of this world. It is not such as worldly men either covet or appreciate. It consists not in external pomp, or splendor, or wealth; not in dignities and titles derived from an unhallowed alliance with secular power; not in shining in the circles of fashion; not in filling the "uppermost rooms at feasts," nor receiving "greetings in the market," nor in being "called of men, *Rabbi*." No; the honor of the faithful ambassador, is of a higher and nobler kind. It consists in bearing a resemblance to his blessed Master, who "went about doing good." His laurels consist in conversions, and the jewels which shall decorate his crown, are souls saved by his instrumentality, who shall shine as stars, when all earthly honors shall have vanished forever.

2. The importance of the ministerial office is manifest, from its *powerful influence on all the best interests of man, for time and eternity.*

An enlightened, pious and devoted ministry, such as the gospel requires, always has had, and always must have, the happiest influence on human society. Look the world around, and you will find the state of society elevated or degraded, according to the character of the ministers of religion. "Like priest, like people," is a proverb founded on just observation of facts. What nations or communities are most distinguished for civilization, intelligence and refinement? for domestic virtue and social order, and every improvement adapted to promote the happiness of man? Where is knowledge most generally diffused? Where do common schools, and academies, and colleges most generally flourish? Where are liberty and the rights of man best understood and maintained? Precisely in those nations or communities where the people are, or have been, favored with an enlightened and faithful ministry.

It is the *peculiar* glory and excellence of the religion of the bible, that it provides for the instruction of the *mass of the people*. The dogmas of the heathen were confined to their philosophers and priests, while no provision was made for general instruction. But "the poor have the gospel preached to

them." It provides a Sabbath of rest, as a stated season for universal instruction. The whole community is converted into a school. A class of men are set apart as instructors, and are *required* to "preach the gospel to every creature." The sacred treasures of divine truth are not to be locked up from the common people—but all classes are permitted and required to hear and read the oracles of God. And while the stated assembling of the people of every class, in a manner solemn, decent and orderly, naturally tends to refine their taste, to cherish the social affections and to promote morality, at the same time opportunity is afforded of communicating the most important instruction to a mass of mind, with a facility and cheapness, impracticable on any other plan. The effect has been such as might be expected. Look at Scotland, and the "land of the pilgrims," as contrasted with pagan nations, and with nations *nominally* christian, but destitute of a pure, enlightened, faithful ministry, where "ignorance is the mother of devotion!"

But it is *principally* from its influence on the *spiritual* and *eternal* welfare of mankind, that the gospel ministry derives its importance. It has pleased God, by the "foolishness of *preaching*, to save them that believe." The glory of God, in the salvation of the soul, is the great, the supreme object of the sacred office. And who can compute the worth of the soul—endless in its existence—boundless in its capacity of improvement—destined to ceaseless progression in happiness, or in woe! "The redemption of the soul is," indeed, "precious." For this, the Son of God came down from heaven, and expired on the cross. We are "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ." But this redemption will avail only to those who believe. And "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" However useful and indispensable other instrumentalities may be, the *living* teacher must accompany them, to give energy, and action, and direction to the whole.

3. The *employment itself*, is one of the most interesting and delightful, in which we can be engaged. It is adapted to call forth into vigorous action, all our intellectual powers, to exercise every grace, and virtue, and generous affection of the heart: and amidst all the difficulties, toils, privations and sorrows which attend it, there are *pleasures* which the world "cannot give nor take away." Even in the most painful, and self-denying labors of his office, in scenes which present to the eye of a common observer, nothing but what is repulsive, the minister finds some of his purest satisfaction. When, like an angel of mercy, he visits the abodes of poverty, disease and affliction,

ministering consolations to the distressed, he enjoys a luxury which "strangers intermeddle not with;" the luxury of sympathetic affections—the luxury of "doing good." He need not resort to the fictions of fancy, "for the lovely joy of tears." The miseries of *real* life afford abundant occasion for the exercise of tender sympathies, not to vanish with the momentary scenes of fictitious distress, leaving the heart more cold and *callous* than before, but to be succeeded by the lasting pleasures of active benevolence. His resort is not to scenes of gayety and jovial mirth, but to scenes of suffering; to families in affliction; to beds of agony and death: and how delightful to apply the healing balm to the wounded spirit; to comfort the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and pour into the agonized soul the consolations of the gospel.

With regard to the exercises of the *pulpit*, there is surely no employment which can furnish greater scope for every power of the soul. Every department of literature may be made subservient to the pulpit, while its more immediate and appropriate subjects are the most interesting which can be conceived. What subjects can there be, in themselves so grand, and to human sinners so worthy of their deepest consideration, as those presented in the sacred volume? The existence and attributes of the great *Jehovah*; the awful realities of eternity; the infinitely important relations of men; the resurrection and the judgment; the glories of heaven, and the terrors of hell; above all, the wondrous scheme of redemption, through the incarnation, agony and death of God's eternal *Son*?

Here are themes for reasoning, the most profound, and eloquence the most pathetic and sublime. Here, if any where, the orator may put forth the utmost energies of his soul. Here he may indulge his imagination in its loftiest darings, and infuse into his subject all the affections of his heart, without extravagance or excess.

His range is not confined to the paltry concerns of property, the petty conflicts of individual interests, or the more important concerns of nations. He pleads the cause of God. His object is the advancement of a kingdom which will survive the wreck of every other kingdom. "He pleads not for the property, or life, or liberty of his fellow-men, but for the eternal salvation of their *souls* and bodies; their deliverance from eternal bondage, infamy and torment; and their advancement to glory, honor and immortality."\*

And when God is pleased to bless the labors of a minister—"to pour out his Spirit," and accompany the word with almighty power, with what intense interest does he witness a "shaking

\* Dr. Gray.

among the dry bones;" stubborn sinners, pierced with the arrows of conviction, crying what shall we do? anxious crowds thronging the gates of Zion, "weeping as they go;" and with what thrilling delight does he share in the joy of angels, rejoicing over the conversion of sinners!

II. We are now to consider the *corresponding qualifications and duties of the ministerial office.*

On a subject of such variety and extent, our remarks must be limited to a few topics. The *qualifications* may all be included in two particulars, *cultivated talent*, and *piety*. It is required that this trust be committed "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others." A good measure of natural talent is obviously indispensable. Neither education, nor grace, nor both combined, can supply a radical defect of genius. Talent, to be useful, must be *cultivated*. The mind must be trained, and disciplined, and furnished with an appropriate fund of knowledge, to "be able to teach others."

It seems now to be generally admitted, that literature is desirable, if not necessary, to a minister of the gospel. There is no branch of knowledge which may not be useful to him, and there is much that is indispensable. Studies, apparently the most remote from theology, have afforded assistance in solving difficulties in the sacred scriptures, or in repelling the assaults of adversaries. He, who is "set for the defense of the gospel," should be acquainted especially with the languages in which the scriptures were originally written, with antiquities and oriental customs, to which there are so many allusions in the sacred writings. He should be well versed in the history of the world, and of the church, to illustrate the wonderful providence of God, and the exact fulfilment of prophecy. He should have a comprehensive knowledge of the phenomena of nature, as exhibiting the wonderful perfections of God, and he should certainly not be ignorant of the philosophy of mind, as unfolding the intellectual powers of man and his infinitely important relations as a moral and social being; especially should he be well versed in theology, in all its branches, that he may be prepared to maintain the truth and meet the objections of infidelity, scepticism and heresy in all their varied forms: and that he may be "apt to teach," and communicate his thoughts with interest and effect, he should possess and cultivate a taste for style, composition and oratory.

He who would approve himself as a scribe, richly furnished and prepared to bring forth out of his treasures "things new and old," must be a *student*, a diligent, persevering student, to the end of life. Paul himself, though a giant in intellect, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and well versed in the literature of his time, did not remit study, even in his old age. We

find him, when a prisoner at Rome, near the close of his life, sending for his "books, but especially the parchments;" and he exhorts Timothy, who had been well instructed from his infancy, and then upwards of thirty years of age, to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," to "meditate on these things" and give himself "wholly to them." And it is certain, that those who have entered the ministry, and depend on the resources they have already acquired, without diligence to replenish their minds with fresh acquisitions, will not magnify their office. Their pulpit exhibitions will be little more than a stale repetition of old ideas, often heard and little regarded, and thus they will expose themselves and their office to neglect and contempt.

*Piety*, however, is the most excellent and indispensable of all ministerial qualifications. I speak not here of it *merely* as a *personal* concern of the deepest interest, nor of the meanness and drudgery, and wickedness of hypocritical services, nor of the dreadful condition of that man, who, after preaching to others, shall himself be cast away for ever—I speak of it as a *qualification for the ministerial office*. Without this, how can he speak or act for God? How feel for the glory of Christ, or take a lively interest in the salvation of souls? Can he be concerned for the salvation of others who neglects his own? How *difficult* as well as dreadful to preach an unknown Savior? He may study and understand the doctrines of religion as a *science*. He may defend the truth against its adversaries. He may expound the scriptures as a biblical critic. He may make a display in the pulpit as "one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." He may even exhibit a zeal and excitement from mere *sympathetic* influences, which may be mistaken for the renewing and quickening influences of the Holy Ghost. But how can he give to every one a "portion in due season?" How can he preach with interest, truths, which he does not practically *believe*, or urge motives which he does not *feel*? How can he who has had no experience of the power of religion in his own soul, understand the experience of others? How shall he direct the anxious, the inquiring, the doubting? How feed the sheep and the lambs? How comfort others with the consolations whereof he not is himself comforted of God?

Nor is it enough for a minister to be a man of piety; he ought to be a man of fervent, eminent piety—burning with zeal for his Master, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost."

The tone of piety in the church, will usually accord with that of its ministers. There cannot be a greater curse to the church and to society, than a lifeless, ungodly ministry. Wherever it is found, a blighting and withering influence attends it. A minister

destitute of piety, though restrained from immoral practices, tangible by the discipline of the church, and though he may contend zealously for punctilios and forms, and the "shibboleths" of a party, yet will usually create around him an "atmosphere in which the flame of piety will not burn."

Piety is necessary to secure that consistent *example*, which all acknowledge to be indispensable in ministers of the gospel. They are to be examples to the flocks, and are expected to exhibit in *living* beauty the reality and excellence of the doctrines which they preach. This is a language which all can understand; a language which speaks to the heart and flashes conviction on the conscience, and must have a powerful influence. Julian, the apostate, was so sensible of this, that he thought he could make the false religion prevail over the true, if he could only induce the pagan priests to be as holy and exemplary as the Christians; justly ascribing the influence of the latter to their strictness and sanctity. On every thing belonging to a minister of Christ, should be inscribed, holiness to the Lord. "Like the star of Bethlehem, he should not only light, but lead his people to Jesus."

In a variety of ways, personal religion is necessary to ministerial *usefulness*. We do not say that in every case success is the measure of piety. But, as a general rule, other things being equal, a minister's usefulness will be proportionate to his piety. Genuine holiness is naturally connected with the use of appropriate means, whilst it invigorates in the prosecution of them. It assists in private study; fixes the attention on divine truth; seizes the strongest thoughts; suggests means of usefulness, and prompts to benevolent exertion. It is also one of the best preservatives against *heresy* in doctrine and practice. Where there is holiness of heart, there will be an honest desire to know what is truth, and what is duty; and they who honestly desire and seek after truth will not seek in vain. "If any man will do his will," we are assured "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." He has an unction from the Holy One, and knows all things. His own experience is in accordance with the doctrines of the gospel; and as the natural taste, when not vitiated, distinguishes wholesome food, so the spiritual taste of the renewed soul, has an intuitive perception of the reality and beauty of the truth, as it is in Jesus.

Above all, piety is necessary to prayer,—believing, importunate prayer. All success depends on God. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit, all efforts and means will be utterly vain; but this influence is given only in answer to prayer. The faithful and successful minister must be a man of prayer, wrestling mightily with God continually for *grace*, to cheer and sustain his own

soul, amidst his labors and trials, and especially for the blessing of God, to give success to the means of his own appointment.

With regard to the various *duties* of this sacred office, our remarks shall be confined, principally, to the great duty of *preaching*. This is no doubt the most important work of a minister of Christ.

1. The *subject* is the *gospel*. "Go ye,—and preach the gospel." This may be considered as including the whole of revelation, because every part of the scriptures has a relation to the "good news" of salvation by Jesus Christ.

The command is, "preach the word," not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Ambassadors must be governed by their *instructions*. The ambassadors of Christ have no authority to propose any other terms than those which God has given. They are to publish the messages of Jehovah, to "hold forth the word of life," relying on the power and promise of God to make it effectual. The word of God is the grand instrument of salvation. It is this alone which God will bless and make effectual for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of his people. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword." "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word* of God." "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

As then the *truth*, the *word* of God, delivered in his name, and by his authority, is the appointed means of salvation—how vain and how wicked to substitute any thing else in its place! How vain are mere human authorities and reasonings, and metaphysical dogmas, when substituted in place of the word of God, "the sword of the Spirit." Great advantages may be derived from reasoning, and the lights of philosophy and literature, in proving the *inspiration* of the scriptures, in ascertaining their meaning, and in the illustration and application of the truth; but when adduced as *authority*, to aid the authority of the divine word, they are worse than useless. When men desert the testimony of Jesus, and take upon them to prove the doctrines of the bible from mere natural religion and philosophy, it is an acknowledgment, that they themselves do not confide in the scripture report; and others are thereby taught to doubt and despise it. This is bringing a taper to aid the light of the sun amidst the splendors of noon-day. It is to abandon the weapons of celestial temper, which are "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds;" for the paltry weapons of carnal wisdom.



2. As we are to preach the *truth* on the authority of God, so we are to preach the *whole truth*, and nothing but the *truth*. Of "all the words that I command thee," saith God, "diminish not a word." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction." We ought therefore to imitate the example of Paul, who could appeal to the Ephesians, that he *had kept back* nothing, nor *shunned* to declare the *whole counsel* of God. The gospel revelation is a grand, harmonious system of truth, in which the several parts are intimately connected, and necessary to illustrate and enforce each other. If we then voluntarily withhold any doctrine, because it is unpopular or offensive to the carnal mind; or because it is mysterious and *above* our comprehension; or because we may not be able to reconcile it with a favorite *theory*; or because in our estimation it is unnecessary or injurious; we pretend to be wiser than God, and are justly chargeable with treachery to his authority.

It is not only by preaching *false* doctrines, that others may be led to adopt ruinous errors; the same may be effected, by neglecting to declare the *whole* truth. If for example, we present and urge exclusively, or principally the *precepts* and *duties* of *morality*, to the neglect of the *doctrines* of the gospel, the consequence will be, that doctrines will be considered of little importance, and ignorance and error on radical points, a matter of indifference. On the contrary, if preaching consist altogether in *doctrinal* discussions, to the neglect of experimental and practical piety; then the latter will be disregarded, sinners will be led to consider religion as requiring nothing more than a *speculative assent* to the truth—a mere dead faith which has no influence on the heart and life.

It is an old remark, that we are prone to extremes, and in avoiding one evil, we are in danger of its opposite! To avoid the errors of *Arminianism*, we may be in danger of the no less ruinous tendency of *Antinomian* errors. Because some have dwelt too exclusively on the sinner's duty and guilt, and his obligation to believe and repent, without bringing into prominent view his total depravity and helplessness, and absolute need of sovereign grace; others have too *exclusively* held forth the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and human inability, in such a manner, as to leave the sinner to draw the fatal conclusion that there is nothing for him to do.

Each extreme is alike dangerous, and leads to the same result. The sinner who is confident in his own ability, independent of sovereign grace, will remain secure, and postpone to a future period that which may be accomplished so easily, and at any time. And the Antinomian, or fatalist, who is persuaded

that he has nothing to do, or can do nothing—that he is alike destitute of all ability, physical and moral, will sit down as thousands have done, in indolent security; will consider his inability as his *misfortune*, and not his *crime*; and instead of attaching blame to his own wicked heart, for his impenitence and unbelief, he will cast the blame on God, or sit down in undisturbed indolence pretending to “wait God’s time.”

Such was not the manner of Paul. He could appeal to his hearers, that he was “free from the blood of all men”—that he *kept back* nothing, nor “shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.” Whilst he held forth, with all plainness and honesty, the sovereignty of God in the eternal purpose and plan of redemption—in the selection of the objects of his eternal love—in the application of it by the power of the Holy Ghost—the total depravity of human nature—the absolute need of salvation by grace, through the imputed righteousness of Christ; he at the same time urged on the sinner, his guilt, his inexcusableness, his obligation to repent, believe and obey, without a moment’s delay; and instead of encouraging indolence and inaction from the doctrines of grace, he used these very doctrines, as the most potent argument to urge the sinner to action. “Work out,” says he, “your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Let us go and do likewise. Let us never separate what God has joined to gether. Let us declare the whole counsel of God to men, trusting to his almighty power to give it effect.

3. The truths of the gospel should be preached in *due proportion*, *seasonably*, and with *suitable variety* and *adaptation* to the circumstances and characters of men. We should give to each subject, that degree of weight and importance which is given to it in the word of God. There are some subjects which are evidently of primary and fundamental importance; these ought to occupy that prominence in our sermons which they do in the sacred scriptures. And as in every audience there may be some, who, for the first or the last time, hear the gospel preached, it would be well if every sermon contained so much of gospel truth, as to point the sinner to Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Preaching should be *seasonable*. There are occasions and circumstances which demand *special* attention. The prevalence of particular sins; the danger of particular errors; prevalent ignorance on subjects of duty, or doctrine, or providential dispensations, may require special and appropriate instruction or warning. Unseasonable preaching is not only unprofitable, but calculated to be injurious. When, for example, the Spirit of God is poured out, and sinners awakened and inquiring the way of salvation, how *pernicious* would be any discussions,

calculated to divert the anxious soul from the great question of salvation through Christ, to rites and forms, and points of doubtful disputation! Discussions on the subject of *baptism*, for instance, have been often the occasion of "quenching the Spirit," destroying the convictions of sinners, and putting an end to a revival of religion. And when a people are cold, and lifeless in religion, what should we say of the minister, who, instead of warning them of their dangerous state, should deliver from Sabbath to Sabbath, lectures on the dangers of *enthusiasm*, and instead of pouring down upon them the truths of God, nor from heaven, should let fall upon his freezing audience, a shower of words cold as a "December snow?"

The word of God should also be preached in all its admirable *variety*, so as to give every one his "portion in due season." The law and the gospel, the doctrines and the precepts, the promises and threatenings, or whatever may be profitable for instruction, reproof, for warning or consolation, are all to be presented in suitable proportion. Careless sinners are to be awakened and alarmed; anxious souls to be directed to the Lamb of God; deceived souls to be *searched* out and driven from refuges of lies; backsliders to be reclaimed; disconsolate souls to be comforted; milk must be furnished for "babes" in Christ, and strong meat for those of mature age.

As to the *manner*.

1. The gospel ought to be preached with all *plainness*, so as to be level to the capacity of every hearer. Perspicuity is not a mere negative quality, but a positive quality of great excellence. It is consistent with the utmost purity, propriety and elegance of style. The most eloquent men, at the present time, in our public councils, are the most plain, and easily understood. In addressing a mixed audience, especially, every thing should be avoided, unfavorable to plainness and perspicuity.

Of this kind are technical and scientific words and phrases, scholastic distinctions, metaphysical reasonings professing great profundity, pedantic allusions and quotations, and all figures and ornaments for mere display, which, "like painted windows, keep out the light." In this particular, as in every other, we find the best models in the sacred writings, and especially in the sermons of Christ and his apostles. The manner ought also be *pointed* and *special*. We should not deal in abstractions or generalities, but endeavor to present truth so as to reach the conscience and the heart.

2. The manner should be *solemn*. Every thing demands this. The place, the subject, the relation of the speaker to God and his audience. If he recollects that he speaks in God's name, and his own dread responsibility, and the eternal results of what

he is about to say on the destiny of his hearers, he *must* be solemn. It is said of Luther, that with these impressive views, he never entered the pulpit without trembling. In close connection with solemnity is *earnestness*. The truths of the gospel are of such awful moment, as to render it impossible, for any man who cordially believes them, not to be interested: and such is the connection between the sentiments of the heart and the outward expression, that to appear earnest and interested, we must be so in reality. The true secret of an earnest, persuasive and impressive address, is to believe and feel the truths we utter.

3. We should speak with *tenderness* and *affection*. "Speak the truth in love." This is of great importance. An affectionate manner is, in itself, amiable and engaging; and words, uttered from a heart warmed with love and compassion, will more readily reach the hearts of others. The occasion also demands it. There is no employment, calculated to awaken the tender affections, more than that of a preacher. He comes to his fellow-men on an errand full of love. Naturally involved in the same condemnation with themselves, he comes to disclose the boundless mercy of God, in the redemption of sinners, by the death of his own Son. In the name of Christ, he offers salvation to his fellow sinners, guilty, and ruined, and exposed to endless misery: and as an ambassador of Christ, he is to *beseech* sinners to be reconciled to God. In this *also*, we have an impressive model in the great apostle of the Gentiles. It would appear as if all his epistles had been written with *tears*, and he appeals to the Ephesians; "Ye know,—after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility,—the with many tears." And again he says, "remember that by and space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears." And here we may see the necessity of piety, deep and ardent piety, to produce that genuine pathos and *unction*, which is the soul of pulpit eloquence. There is a language of the heart, which goes directly to the heart. It produces effects peculiarly its own. "It shines in the countenance; it glitters in the unaffected tear; it is heard in the fervent prayer; felt in the deep and mellowed tones of strong emotion." It is perfectly simple and artless; the most accomplished actor cannot successfully counterfeit it; and all attempts to imitate it in the pulpit, by those who have it not, are unnatural, hypocritical and disgusting.

By confining these remarks principally to the **PREACHING** of the gospel, it is by no means intended to undervalue other parts of ministerial duty. They are all important, intimately connected and mutually beneficial. *Catechising* and *pastoral visit-*

*ation*, especially, appear to be indispensable to the successful discharge of the pastoral office. By these exercises, a pastor is enabled to ascertain the condition of his flock; to know the character and the wants of families and individuals, so as to "speak a word *in season*." He has opportunity of bringing home the truth to the heart and conscience, with a particularity impracticable in a public address. By "teaching from house to house," by conversing solemnly and tenderly with families and individuals, and pouring out his prayers for them, he secures their affection and their confidence in him, as one who really "*cares for their souls*." By an intimate acquaintance with his people, he can sympathize with them in their varied trials, and as their intercessor, present their individual cases at a throne of grace. It is also one of the best means of preparing for the pulpit, as suggesting appropriate and interesting matter, to be delivered with a feeling and impressiveness not otherwise to be attained.

Catechetical instruction, too, has also *its peculiar* advantages. It is necessary to prepare the minds of the young for attending with profit on public instruction, without which, they will not even understand the terms in which it is conveyed. It is necessary to a correct knowledge of the doctrines of religion as a *system*, so as to fortify the mind against the specious seductions of error. Although very important auxiliaries are afforded by Sabbath schools and bible classes, these will require the careful supervision of the pastor; nor ought they entirely to supersede this important part of ministerial duty. All experience has shown that pastoral visitation and catechetical instruction are essential to the purity, and life, and *permanent* prosperity of the church. When a minister appears before his people *only* in the pulpit and on the Sabbath day, a blighting and withering influence will soon be visible among them. Vital piety will decline. Torpor and inactivity will prevail. Or, if any excitement should take place, ignorant and uninstructed, they will be tossed *to and fro* by every wind of doctrine; liable to be carried away by the wildest fanaticism.

In review of this subject, we may remark—how solemn the situation! how great the work! how dreadful the responsibility of a minister of the gospel! Who does not tremble at God's alarming charge to Zion's watchmen, and the woes and curses denounced against those that are unfaithful? "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his *blood* will I require at the watchman's hand." Ez. 33: 6.

“Woe unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. Woe unto the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing. Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, who have fed themselves, and fed not the flock. Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock. *Cursed* be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and *cursed* is he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” “If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be *accursed*.” O what need for serious self-examination and searching of hearts! What need for watchfulness and diligence, and constant, prayerful dependance on God! Do any ask, with trembling anxiety, “Who is sufficient for these things?” To the sincere and faithful, the answer is, “my grace is sufficient for thee.” Many and powerful are the motives to cheer and animate the faithful ambassadors of Christ. Besides the pleasures and consolations attending their employment, already noticed, brighter scenes and higher enjoyments await them. Here they are often neglected, despised and persecuted. Their portion is, reproach, poverty and tears. But in the great day of retribution, these sorrows, and privations, and labors, will be graciously remembered, and meet with a glorious reward. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, forever and ever.”

In conclusion. We infer the duty of a people to the servants of Christ. The duties and responsibilities of the ministers of the gospel involve corresponding duties and responsibilities on the part of the people. They come clothed with a commission from God. As ambassadors of Christ, they represent his person; they speak in his name, and the messages they bear are attended with this awful sanction: “He that receiveth you, receiveth me; he that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.” If it is their duty to minister in holy things, it is the duty of the people to attend on their ministry, to hear the word, and to take heed *how* they hear; to receive it as the word of God; to believe and obey. The word preached, will prove either a savor of life or death. Sinners, therefore, ought immediately to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus, for, “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” And how aggravated will be that condemnation to such as choose darkness, while the blessed gospel sheds its glorious light around them. The professing people of God should remember their obligation to honor his servants, to “obey them that have the rule over them,” and to “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake;” to provide liberally for their accommodation, that they may give themselves “wholly to these things”—that they may be free from distracting worldly cares—and that

they may not degrade nor lessen the usefulness and dignity of their office, by engaging in secular concerns. Ministers ought not to be left to labor alone. Their people ought to co-operate in every good work, to hold up their hands, and encourage their hearts, to bear with their infirmities; to defend their characters against the shafts of enemies; and by their kindness and counsels, and especially their fervent prayers, to guide and sustain them in their arduous labors. The kind attention shown to his servants, the Lord Jesus will consider as shown to himself. These labors of love will not be forgotten. He will remember them in the great day, when ministers and people shall be presented together at the bar of God. "Inasmuch, as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me."

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To fill up a vacant page the following remarks on ministerial support were sent by the author. The Rev. Dr. Bennett, (a Baptist and President of the College at Bristol, England,) wrote a necessary tract on this subject. Both he and our author, not relying on a congregation for support, may say in the language of St. Paul, when writing on the same subject, "*neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me.*" 1 Cor. 9:15.—Ed.

When men consecrate themselves to the ministry, and are thereby excluded from the opportunity afforded to all others, of providing for themselves and their families, their claim to a competent support, at least, is not a claim of mere *charity*. It is a claim of *right, of justice, and common honesty*. It is also the express command of God, that they "who preach the gospel, should live by the gospel." It is, however, too evident, that on this subject there is great negligence and guilt in many of the churches. It is a fact, notorious as it is disgraceful to professed christians, that no class of men among us are so badly remunerated for their services, as ministers of the gospel. If we except a few who are located in cities and large towns, scarcely can an individual be found, who could sustain himself and family by the support he receives from his people, independent of other resources. The tendency of this is to discourage young men of respectable talents from entering the ministry, with the prospect of being doomed to starvation. It also tends greatly to injure the usefulness of those who have already entered, by obliging them to engage in secular concerns. They must engage in some secular employment or starve. The consequences are, study is neglected; the stock of knowledge already acquired is soon exhausted; their ministry is barren. By engaging frequently in worldly transactions, the minister is merged in the man of business: and if he should be so fortunate as to save his family from absolute want, he will be *charged with worldly-mindedness*, perhaps by the *very men* whose niggardliness has imposed on him the necessity of laboring with his own hands at something worse than "making tents." These things ought not so to be.

The *slang* which is so often heard about *salary men*, and *preaching for money*, is what might be expected from profane wittlings and infidel scoffers. But when such language is reiterated by professors of religion, and sanctioned by ministers of the gospel, who themselves are better provided for than their neighbors, by fixed salaries, *indirectly* derived from their people, this is difficult to be borne with patience. Never was there a more ungenerous slander against ministers of the gospel, especially Presbyterians, and such others as have received a liberal education. That young man must be a consummate *fool*, as well as a knave and hypocrite, who, after spending seven years of his precious time, and probably all

his pecuniary resources, enters the sacred office for the sake of *money* and worldly advantages; when it is obvious, that by that very act, he excludes himself from the opportunities open to every other class. It is true, that in the face of all this discouragement, in the certain prospect of poverty, and toil, and persecution, there have not been wanting many who are willing to make the sacrifice. Among them, too, men of the first talents and literature in the land. Men qualified to rise to the highest worldly distinctions. These prospects they have renounced. They have literally sacrificed their worldly all, to preach *salvation* to dying sinners.

This is the case with *all foreign missionaries* under the direction of missionary societies. They receive nothing but their food and raiment, and that often none of the best. They are excluded from acquiring separate property. They have no means of making provision for their wives and children, as they ought to have, and would have, if circumstances permitted, and yet we often hear the infidel slander, of missionary operations being a "MONEY-MAKING CONCERN."

With regard to the great majority of ministers in our own country, especially in the west and south, their condition is such as has been described. And because there are generous spirits willing to make these sacrifices, and with apostolic heroism, willing to endure privation, and toil, and reproach, and death itself, in the service of their Master, let not these facts, so honorable to the ministerial character, be alleged by professing christians, as an apology for their negligence, avarice, and injustice, in withholding from their ministers that remuneration which is their right, and which God expressly commands.

"Let us not (says Dr. Mason) hear of self-denial, spiritual-mindedness, and a heroic indifference to worldly things, as characteristic of the true minister of Christ. Self-denial does not mean *starving*. The spirituality of the father will not stop the cravings of his children when they cry for food; nor is there any heroism in preferring tatters and a hovel, to decent clothing and lodging, when they may be had. It is very convenient, no doubt, for men who are adding house to house, field to field, thousand to thousand, to harangue in a religious style, on the necessity of a minister imitating his Master, "who had not where to lay his head;" when the practical inference from all this is in favor of their own pockets. They are wonderfully concerned for spirituality and self-denial to be practised by their minister, but as to their *own* share of these virtues, as to their parting with a pittance of *their* pelf to render him comfortable—why—that is another affair. It is one of the most wicked forms of hypocrisy, to plead for the cultivation of a minister's spiritual-mindedness, by way of an apology for cheating him out of his bread. The sin of the neglect complained of is not equally gross in all. In some it proceeds from thoughtlessness; in others from an incapacity to make a right estimate; but in most, it is the fruit of downright covetousness. There has been, on this subject, an absurd *squeamishness* in those whom the Lord has authorized to "live by the gospel." It is time for them to claim their due in a modest but manly tone, and throw the responsibility of expelling an *enlightened* ministry from the church, upon those who are able but not willing to support it honorably. We say an *enlightened* ministry. For we have no conception that niggardly provision will soon strip her of every thing in the shape of a minister. You cannot place the pecuniary recompense so low as that it shall not be an object for somebody. Fix your salaries at fifty dollars a year, and you shall not want candidates. But then they are fifty-dollar men. And it may be, little as congregations give, they give to the uttermost farthing "for value received." The mischief is, that the rule of abridgement becomes general, and the "workman who needeth not to be ashamed" must share the fate of him who is no workman at all."<sup>\*</sup>

The solemn truth is, the churches of almost every denomination need to be aroused on this subject. Let professing christians shudder at the thought of uniting with infidels in their impious clamors against the authority of God. See Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11—14; 1 Tim. 5:18.

\*Christian Magazine, Vol. 3, p. 365.