

THE WORK AND THE REWARD OF ELDERS.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED JUNE 28th, 1814,

AT THE

ORDINATION OF THE REV. J. M'FARLAND,

OF

CHILLICOTHE, OHIO.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED THE

CHARGES TO THE MINISTER & PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. R. H. BISHOP.

CHILLICOTHE:

Printed at the Office of the Supporter,
BY NASHEE & DENNY.

1814.



BRETHREN,

UNDER the authority of Him who has all power in heaven and in earth, a few of us are met here this day, to commit to one of our fellow-men and fellow-sinners, the office of the holy ministry. The great apostle of the Gentiles considered it his most distinguished honour, "that he was counted faithful, and put into the ministry."* Hence he commands his son Timothy, and through him commands every one of his successors, "to commit the things which he had received to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also."† Hence also, the order of our church requires, that on occasions such as this, a discourse, on the nature and importance of the ministry, be delivered. Let the apostle Peter preach to us on the occasion.

"The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but of a ready mind; neither as being Lord's over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock, and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1. Pet. v. 1. 4.

*1 Tim. i. 12. 17.

†2. Tim. ii. 1. 2.

An elder is literally one advanced in years ; but in the passage before us, as well as in a variety of other passages, it expresses *authority* not *age*. In the first ages of the world, the patriarchal government was nearly universal ; the father or the eldest son, being the head of the family or clan.—Old men, or at least men, who were noted for their experience and prudence, were also in these ages, almost the only persons who were invested with authority, in cases of difficulty and danger. Hence the term elder came to be a general name for one invested with authority, in the same way that father and mother in the fifth commandment came to express superiors of every kind.

In the new Testament two orders of elders are pretty distinctly marked. In authority these elders are equal—the only difference is, that those of one kind *teach* as well as *rule*, while those of the other only *rule*. Hence in the council of Jerusalem, the apostles & elders are marked as distinct ; while there is no intimation given, that in point of authority, any one member of that council was superior to any of the rest. Hence also, in the epistle to Tim. we have these words : “ Let the elders who rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word & doctrine.” Two orders of elders being thus known in the primitive church, to these, and all their successors in office, the apostle Peter addresses himself in the passage before us.

It is quite natural and reasonable for us to be anxious to know something of the character and situation of the person who is to address us on any occasion. The very same matter has quite a different influence, when it falls from the mouth of one man under particular circumstances, from what it has, when it falls from the mouth of another man, or even the same man, under different circumstances. To meet then, this great and leading fact in the constitution of human nature, the apostle introduces his address with a statement of some of the circumstances under which he wrote. He exhorts that we attend to him, from the consideration that he himself is an elder—that he is a witness of the sufferings of Christ—and is also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed.

He himself is also an Elder—a co-presbyter. He is an elder in every sense of the term. He is advanced in years—he was invested with the authority of an elder, by the head of the church himself, at the commencement of the christian dispensation. He has had an extensive experience of the sorrows and comforts of the office—he is still engaged in the great and good work, and has, consequently, a fellow feeling for all his brethren in office, whether they now actually exist, or are to take their place, and act their part after the lapse of many generations.

He also is, or *was a witness of the sufferings of Christ*. The church was purchased with the blood of God; and of the inconceivable sufferings which attended the shedding of this blood, the apostle Peter was a confidential witness. He heard with his ears, the son of God, saying: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” He saw with his eyes the son of God, “sore amazed,” and “in an agony, and his sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” He heard him while in this agony praying, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”* At such expence was that flock purchased; of which Peter, and his fellow elders had, or still have the honour of taking care.

He is also, *a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed*. His master though once in a suffering state, is now exalted—though he was once crucified yet he is now alive and lives for evermore. He entered into this state of glory as a public character—as the head of an innumerable company. He took possession of all this glory, in the name of all whom he represented. His life and glory, are thus their life and glory, and perfect security that their spiritual life shall be continued; and the full effulgence of heavenly glory, be in due time bestowed. “In my Father’s house,” said he, “are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will

*Mat. xvii, 36. 46. &c.

come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.' Musing on these and other declarations of him, who is faithful and true, the elder Peter had frequently been transported into the very mansions of glory. He had already actually received a large portion of this glory by the Holy Ghost dwelling in his heart, and filling him frequently with a joy and peace, which were inconceivable and full of glory, often reducing him with his brother Paul, to an uncertainty, whether he was in the body or out of the body.

Such, brethren, are the circumstances, by which the apostle would arrest our attention to the exhortation he is about to give. They are truly no trivial circumstances. That elder must be careless indeed—he must be altogether unworthy of the name, who is not attentive to an exhortation from the lips of this man. Let us then hear the exhortation. It is in these words, "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

The name by which the private members of the church are denominated, first demands our attention; they are the *flock of God*: and they are *God's heritage*.

The saint's are *God's flock*—the innocence and gentleness of their disposition—their extensive, general and universal usefulness; and their living together in society, are hereby pointed out.

The gentle and inoffensive nature of the sheep, and the cleanliness of its food are well known. All saints in like-manner, are of peaceable dispositions. To be hateful and hating one another—to indulge a peevish, quarreling temper to any great extent, is not the spot of God's children. In the moment of regeneration, they are made partakers of that "wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."* As their nature is, so is their nourishment. They live not upon falsehood and error, but upon the pure

milk of the word. They have laid aside to a considerable degree, malice and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies and evil speaking, and as new born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby.*

No animal is so extensively useful as the sheep. Its annual fleece cloaths our backs—its milk and flesh strengthen our heart.—Just so, the saints are the only people who are of universal use. Take the influence of genuine piety out of the world, and human society would not be much different from the society of infernal spirits. Facts without number, and many of them within the reach of every person of observation, might be easily enumerated to confirm and illustrate this.

The sheep is a social, not a solitary animal; and it manifests a strong disposition to associate only with those of its own kind. All saints in like manner have a common spirit, which influences them to cultivate an acquaintance, close and intimate, with all other saints. Next to having communion with his God, every saint will cherish “the communion of saints.” No company will be daily and always agreeable to him, but the company of those, “who fear God.” See Mat. iii. 16. 17. Rom. i. 9. 12. Col. i. 4. 12. and ii. 1. 5. Philomen, verse 5, 6, 7.

Next, the saints are *God's heritage*. The earth and all that it contains, is the Lord's; but he claims the saints, the living members of his church, as his heritage—his lot—his peculiar property—his special treasure.—They were from eternity the objects of his special love. He passed by sinning angels, the higher order of created intelligences and fixed his love on lost men. In the same sovereign good pleasure, he passed by multitudes of men and fixed upon others. Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight. See Rom. viii. 29. 30. Eph. i. 3. 6.

They were redeemed at an immense price—nothing less than the blood of the Son of God. “We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish

*I. Pet. ii. 1. 2. see also Mat. v. 7. 8. 9

and without spot." For this heritage, God spared not his son, and that his only son.

There is a special care exercised over the saints. Jehovah keeps them, as he keeps the apple of his eye.—He pities them as a father pitieth his children. His angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation. Heb. I. 14.—See also Is. xxvii. 2. 3.

The saints are connected with God the Father and God the Son in a special manner. They are one with the Son as he is one with the Father. For thus the chief Shepherd says, "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, &c. John xvii. 20. 23.

Let us next attend to the relation, in which these elders stand to this flock and this heritage. It is an amiable flock—it is a valuable heritage. It is in fact the only thing on earth, which the God of heaven claims as his exclusive property. It must be a great honour to be any way connected with it. An object so dear to God, ought to be dear to us. These elders are the pastors of this flock, and the guardians of this heritage—they are to *feed the flock*—they have the *oversight* of the heritage. The duty enjoined supposes,

1. An extensive and experimental acquaintance with the doctrines of revelation. These doctrines are the food, and the office of the teaching elder particularly, is to deal out this food, according to the various wants and capacities of the flock. "The priests lips should keep knowledge and the people should ask the law at his mouth." But how can a man keep that which he hath never got; and with what satisfaction can the people ask the law from the mouth of a man as ignorant as themselves?

While all the flock agree in the general character of sinners or saints, their capacities & frames or states, are infinitely various; yet for every one of their various conditions, there are a portion of holy writ particularly suited. And a

great & leading art of feeding, is to deal out this food so as to suit these varieties. There are various grades of ignorant persons who are to be instructed—there are various grades of hardened sinners who are to be alarmed—there are distressed souls of every kind who are to be comforted; there are hypocrites of every description who are to be detected; there are backsliders who are to be reclaimed; there are multitudes of those who are weak in the faith, who are to be cherished; and there are the heady and high minded, generally in considerable numbers, and of every description who are to be convinced.

The elder who is to feed a flock of such diversities, must be well acquainted with all the provision which the head of the church has provided for such cases. His acquaintance must also be of the experimental kind, before his ministrations can be of general use. He must himself know the terror of the Lord before he can be very influential in warning others to flee from the wrath which is to come. He must have *felt* and must continue to *feel* something of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the workings of corruption, else he never will succeed in exposing to the heart and conscience of others, their hidden springs of wickedness. He must know from experience something of the sweetness and suitableness of pardon and peace, and sanctification and other blessings of Christ's purchase, before he can speak so as to be understood by distressed souls.

2d. It is the office of the shepherd, not only to lead the flock to suitable pasture; but also to keep them from straying, and to defend them from the midnight thief, or open robber, and beast of prey. Elders of both kinds are in like manner, set for the defence of the gospel. God has given to his church at large, but particularly to her officers, all the doctrines of revelation as a sacred deposit. These they are to preserve in their purity and fulness. He has given to them in charge all his ordinances; those they also are to preserve in their purity and fulness. He has given to the elders in charge, all his people, or flock, and for *every one* of these they are accountable.

The means, which the head of the church hath appointed for preserving and defending these important deposits, may perhaps all be classed under three.

1. A luminous exhibition of gospel truths. God's own word is the great instrument by which all that belongs to his flock and heritage is to be preserved and defended. This is the sword of the spirit. Hence elders both teaching and *ruling*, must be men mighty in the scriptures. Their understanding must be well informed in the scripture proof of every article in their creed. They must be able on all occasions, to give to both friends & foes a reason of their faith; the divine authority under which they speak, or act. It is thus only, that they can have any claims to being, 'the light of the world,'—'the city set upon an hill,'—the man in whose quiver are the arrows of the Almighty.

2. A conduct in all things becoming the gospel of Christ, is equally necessary. Men have in all ages and in all states of society, put more confidence in their eyes, than in their ears; and while human nature is human nature, this will be the case. We will be respected by our enemies, and confided in by our friends, in exact proportion as we are living epistles of Jesus Christ seen, and read of all men. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him? You profess to be leading others in the way of holiness, and yet you, yourself are, in many things visibly the servant of sin. You are extremely zealous that you and others should observe this ordinance, or this particular commandment, and yet you and your friends live in the open and avowed neglect of another ordinance, or another commandment, which rests upon the same divine authority. Ah Brethren! It is not thus you are to recommend God's flock, or God's heritage to those who are without. It is not thus you are to expect God's blessing even upon his own truth and his own ordinances. You are holding the truth in unrighteousness, and even God's cause will not prosper in *your hands*.

3. The shepherd who takes proper care of the flock committed to him, will keep the wolf and other beasts of

an hostile nature from having access to them ; he will also separate even the diseased and infectious sheep from the sound and healthy. In like manner, God's flock and heritage will never be preserved safe where there is not the impartial and conscientious exercise of discipline. This flock of God, is a select and orderly association ; and elders of both kinds are to rule and govern this association.

The scriptures in this case, as well as in all others, furnish us only with some great and leading general principles, by which our conduct is to be regulated.

The openly profane of every description are to be excluded from all the privileges of God's people. See 1. Cor. v. 1.—to the end.

It is also to be observed, that as we have no way of ascertaining men's connexion with the head of the church, but by the external conduct ; a church member, though he be united to the head, while he acts as the profane generally act, is to be classed with the openly profane, and dealt with accordingly. An impartial and speedy exercise of discipline, in cases of this kind, is the appointed mean of heaven for bringing such a brother, if he be really united to the Saviour, to evangelical repentance.—See 2. Cor. ii. 1.—11. and vii. 8—12. and xii. 20.—21. The obstinate maintainers of damnable heresies, are also to be excluded. See 2. John 6—11.

In exercising church discipline, we are however carefully to remember, that it is not every person, nor every principle, nor every action with which we, or some of our fellow-elders may be *displeased*, that is a proper object of discipline. Nor is the same kind of discipline to be applied indiscriminately to every object of discipline. God's will here, as well as in every other thing is to be our rule. And we are only officers, not sovereign lords. Much of the art of ruling and defending the flock, consists in knowing what proper objects of discipline, & what particular discipline is to be applied. A little common sense under the direction of piety, will be of more service here than volumes of speculative rules. In our zeal to keep the church pure, we may drive away many of God's sheep ; & drive away also, from God's

ordinances many sinners, who speaking after the rules of *probability*, might have been subdued to the obedience of faith.

3. The shepherd has to attend to his flock every day, and in all seasons, and frequently during the night as well as in the broad day.—Frequently also in the storms of winter, as well as the sunshine of summer. The work of the eldership, in like manner requires *continual unceasing care*. It is not to be attended to either by the preaching or the lay-elder only as a by job, it is to be their *business*. It is not to be attended to only when it may suit supposed convenience, or when it is agreeable but, is to be attended to at all times, and under all circumstances. It is a general law of nature, that no business will prosper, unless those who have the care of it attend to it constantly. We see this exemplified in the merchant, in the physician, in the lawyer, and in fact in all the department of lifes. Examine them all, near at hand or far remote, and you will find that all other circumstances being equal, their prosperity is in exact proportion to the time and care which the elders devote to their work. Not a day passes in which God's heritage does not require the attention and the labour of the overseers in some form or other. Scarcely an hour is known, in which some one of the flock has not some peculiar demand: and in exact proportion as this labour is bestowed, and these demands attended to, you will have a flourishing or a decaying congregation.

Such continued and undivided attention on the part of the elders, whether preaching or lay, is indeed scarcely known in these days: and the want of it is marked on the general character of our churches. But from the beginning, in the prosperous days of the church it was otherwise.

4. Thus much for the duty of the elders of the church, as brought before us in the passage under consideration. It only remains that we attend to the *motives* by which they are to be influenced in discharging this duty.

These are to take the *oversight* not by *constraint* but *willingly*—not for *filthy lucre*, but of a *ready mind*. They

are to exercise their authority not *as lords* over God's heritage but as *ensamples* to the flock.

One general observation will apply to the whole of these requisitions, viz. unless our heart is right with God all our external performances will be unacceptable—one great and important duty of an elder then is, *to watch over his own heart*. Are our hidden springs of action at all times, or generally such as God's law requires?

Elders are to take the oversight not by *constraint* but *willingly*. There is perhaps here an allusion to the excessive backwardness to undertake the office of pastor or elder, for which almost all, who were elected to that office in the first ages of the church were distinguished. Men in these days did not offer themselves as candidates for authority in the church; nor did they directly, or indirectly, then employ their friends to secure the voice of the people in their behalf. The current of fashion then ran in an opposite direction. Something like violence had to be used before those who were elected would consent to be invested with the office. Modesty and diffidence are good and necessary qualifications in any man, and as necessary in rulers, or rulers elect as any where; but they may be cherished to a sinful excess—or they may be pretended where the ruling principle is pride. If the head of the church has bestowed upon you my friend any talent tho' it should be only *one*; and if he in his providence call you to exercise it you are to offer it cheerfully. To need to be pressed and entreated, after the voice of the church has been fairly expressed, savours more of the low cunning of the men of this world, than of the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Not by *constraint*, but *willingly* says also, that in all our services which we may be called to perform to God's flock, every thing like *grudging* must be guarded against. If we are faithful we will find ourselves frequently called to make what the men of the world call sacrifices. We must, in many cases, sacrifice our personal and family ease: we must, on many occasions, lay temper and dispositions under considerable restraint: we are to lay our account to meet with mortifications, and insults in a thousand forms.

Our Lord himself was despised and rejected of these very men, whom he came to save. Our characters and even our lives may be demanded—all these are to be yielded, not by constraint but willingly, not merely because we cannot help ourselves, but cheerfully, without a grudge. It is God's flock—God's heritage—nay, God himself who requires these.

Again.—We are to take this oversight not for *filthy lucre*, but of a ready mind. This clause can never mean, as it has sometimes been explained, that church officers are to give the whole or the most of their services *gratis*. This would be to contradict a vast number of other passages of scripture, as well as the plain dictates of common sense. Nay the very fact, that the apostle warned the elders of his day to beware of being influenced by motives of filthy lucre, is pretty strong proof that the officers of the church in that day had a decent and honorable, and something like a liberal support from the church. There was danger, it seems, of men accepting the office of the eldership, not merely that they might eat a piece of bread, but even that they might amass what is called a fortune.

The meaning of the injunction, then, is, that the elders, both preaching and lay, in entering upon their office, and in continuing in it, are to beware of a worldly and avaricious disposition. They are, no doubt, like other workmen to eat their daily bread; but are never to eat as gluttons do, merely for the pleasure of eating, but in order that their bodies may be strengthened for the work of the day. They are no doubt to accept money or any other thing which may be a reasonable compensation for their services; but the amassing of money or any kind of property is never to be their object. Much less are they to use the influence, which they may possess as elders; or the knowledge which they may acquire of the actual state of things, in discharging the duties of their office, as means of accomplishing extensive commercial speculations. See 2 Tim. ii. 4. Their desires, in one word, are to be bounded generally with "give us day by day our daily bread." To be able to live without money, and without debt ought to be about the extent of their speculations.

Neither as being lord's over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. Elders are invested with considerable authority, concerning the eldership, the head of the church saith; "verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my father, who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them*" Yet extensive and commanding as this authority is, it is not sovereign and independent, but delegated and subordinate. The elders are not lords of the manor, they have God's heritage only in trust as servants. It is his property which they are to manage. They themselves are also his property; and they are only to execute; never to legislate.

We are not to be *lords* but *ensamples*, or *patterns* to the flock. We are never to imagine that we as officers are free from any obligations which are binding on the flock. We are authorised to command and encourage men to believe on the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls, but we are never to imagine that we, by virtue of our office, are so holy, or so dignified as not to need to be saved in the same way. While we command the flock in the name of the Lord Jesus, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—to have no unnecessary intercourse with ungodly men—to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and in general to abound in good works, we are to be ensamples—we are to go before them—we are to excel them if possible in all this holiness.

In fine, we are not to be *Lord*. With all our authority and dignity we are to remember, that we are accountable to our common Lord and master. At the end of our service we are to stand at our Lord's bar, on a level with the meanest of the flock. See Mat. xxiv. 45—51. with a view of this last event the apostle closes his address.

And when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

In the estimation of the world the eldership is neither a

* Mat. xviii. 18—20.

very honorable, nor profitable employment. Nothing however can be farther from the truth. Independently of all the heavenly comfort included in the promise, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," bestowed here, there is also for every humble and faithful and conscientious elder a *crown* in reserve. It is a crown which is only degraded when it is compared with the far famed crowns of laurel given in the Olympic games—or with the civic, or even imperial crowns, which were once at the disposal of those who styled themselves, "the Lords of the world." All these crowns have faded. The glory which was supposed to be connected with them has long ago passed away—has in many instances been converted into infamy. But the crown, which awaits every faithful elder is a crown of glory—of solid distinguishing glory. It is a crown also whose glory shall never fade. It shall shine brighter and brighter as eternity shall unfold the unseen, the immensely valuable inheritance, which all the redeemed, all the sheep over which the elders have watched, shall call their own.

How honorable and profitable is it to be any way connected with the church of the living God. How infinitely honorable and profitable it is to be written among the living members of the church! Well might the Psalmist say, "I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Every saint is a part of God's heritage—is really dearer to God than all the universe besides. Every elder is the heir of a crown, and a crown not at the mercy of caprice or accident, or even the most formidable combination of alliances which can be conceived. "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song saying thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign upon the earth."*

* Rev. v. 8--10.

CHARGE TO THE MINISTER.



My Brother.—YOU stand this day a public witness, that God is the hearer of prayer. You have this day received an answer to many of your own prayers, and to many prayers offered up in your behalf, by father and mother and other friends. The whole church of the living God has also received another answer to a prayer which has been incessantly offered up ever since the head said, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest."

This day forms an important era in the history of your life. Many years ago you, in the sincerity of your heart devoted yourself to the work of the holy ministry should God in holy and wise Providence, give you a regular call. From that day to this it is presumed you have experienced largely of the Divine care and goodness in a thousand nameless forms; and now that God to whom you had devoted yourself has given you the desire of your heart. You are this day openly and solemnly set apart to the great work of the gospel ministry.

It becomes you to set apart some time to review this important, though private, and in many cases, secret period of your life. In reviewing it mark, if possible, the most distinguished instances of the divine care towards you. You will thus be enabled to raise a new song of praise to Him, whose you are and whom you are resolved to serve. You will from these circumstances also draw encouragement to trust in the same divine care and goodness in all time coming. All these instances of divine care and good-

ness, many and great as they may be, are I hope only the *earnests* of what God will still do for you and by you.

It is necessary you should always be impressed with a deep sense of "the great importance of the ministerial office." It is the highest and most important office on earth. You are the organ through which the Majesty of the skies speaks to men. The best and eternal interests of many of your fellow men are involved in the manner in which you execute this office. See Ezek. xxxiii. 1—9. Luke x. 1—16, and 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

The particular duties of the ministerial office need not now be enumerated. Let me only suggest, that it is of vast importance they should always be viewed by you as a *pleasure*, not as a *task* or burden. Our *heart* must be in our work or it will never be either acceptable to God or agreeable and easy to ourselves. It is left as the saying of a worthy man now with God—"that after 40 years preaching of Christ, had he another life to pass in this world, he would rather beg his bread all the six days of the week, that he might have an opportunity on the Sabbath of proclaiming salvation to his fellow men, than without such an opportunity live in ease and affluence with the great ones of the earth.

Remember that you are devoted *wholly* to the work of the ministry. It is a great work which will require all your time and all your talents. And when the general state of things in this part of the world is taken into consideration, it is no common instance of the divine favor, which presents to you the prospects of having your whole time and talents and pursuits devoted to the study of divine things and the care of souls. Beware then of being even in thought guilty of *sacrilege*. The obligations under which you have come this day are not fulfilled when you shall have preached so many sermons or Sabbaths, or shall have so many times examined or visited the people committed to your charge. All your thoughts and all your pursuits, by night and by day, at home and abroad, in company and in solitude, are so far as circumstances will allow, to be made subservient to your work. See 1 Tim. iv. 11—16. 2 Tim. ii. 1—3 and iv. 1—5.

The work to which you are devoted is arduous and the times are peculiarly trying. But be not discouraged—you serve a good master—you are engaged in the very best of causes—the only cause on earth, in fact, which shall never perish. The world, in the course of eighteen hundred years, has witnessed many astonishing revolutions. Systems and empires established, and systems and empires overturned. It shall still witness revolutions great and alarming. But the empire founded by the instrumentality of the fishermen of Gallilee—the system of the cross have weathered all storms, and shall continue to raise their triumphant heads amidst the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds. The stone which was cut out of the mountains without hands, shall become a great mountain, and shall fill the whole earth.

I am by no means qualified to enter into every detail of the difficulties which are peculiar to the work of the ministry—nor, perhaps, is it necessary. Our Lord and master has given us a great general principle, which solves them all. While he commands you and me, and all who are invested with the ministerial office to preach the gospel to every creature, he says also—“Lo I am with you always to the end of the world.” *I am with you*, therefore, fear not; whatever is necessary to enlighten the understanding or elevate and sanctify the heart, shall not be withheld.

Only one word more. Should the head of the church, in any case make you successful, beware of sacrificing to your own net, and to your own drag—beware of ascribing your success to your diligence, or piety, or talents. Give to God all the glory. Paul may plant, Appollos may water, it is God only who can give the increase. Should you on the other hand be tried, as no doubt you will be, with the want of success, be not discouraged. The seed may be long under the clod, and yet an abundant harvest be the result. The most eminent of God’s servants have had but little evidence of success while they laboured below—the best of us cannot, in our present imperfect state bear much prosperity—God may make you extensively useful, and yet you, yourself, know little of it till you arrive in glory. Let us stand in our place—let us sow beside all

waters—let us endeavor to minister in the strength of the Lord our God, and when the chief shepherd shall appear then we also shall receive our crowns of glory which shall never fade away.

CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

You have again, brethren, received the wish of your heart—another of your fellow men has been solemnly set apart, by the authority of the head of the church to break to you, and to your children, the bread of life.

It becomes you to be very thankful—to be thankful not only for what has been done; but also for what under the blessing of heaven you may expect. To see your teacher is no small privilege; to unite with him, and with each other every Sabbath day, in the various acts of social worship is a privilege which distinguishes you from almost all the worshipping assemblies in this part of the world. While God in his providence is giving you the means of grace in such abundance, we have some evidence that there are many among you, and your seed, who are the objects of his special love. It is something like God saying to his servant, “speak for I have much people in this city.”

Beware of expecting too much of him who is this day set over you in the Lord. We have every reason indeed to expect that God has eminently qualified him for the work of the ministry. But still he is only a man of like passions with yourselves—you are not to expect to find in him absolute perfection, or infinite knowledge; nor are you to expect that he is to be altogether free from the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature. Much less are you to expect that he is always to please you, or please every one who may be connected with you *in all things*. In the most endearing of all relations, that of husband and wife, there are a number of things almost daily occurring, which, were they

not controlled by the great principle of mutual love, would make the connexion in almost every family, very uncomfortable, very unprofitable, and of very short continuance. Just so in the connection between a Pastor and his people. A diversity of opinion, a diversity of conduct, a diversity of humour, are in many cases to be calculated upon; and if regard to the authority of God, warmed by the heavenly principle of brotherly love, is not a commanding principle, the connection must soon cease.

In attending to his ministrations endeavor to forget the *man* and attend only to the *minister*. We hope it shall be his endeavor to preach *Christ* to you, not *himself*; to seek the honor of his master, not his own honor. Now depend upon it, you will soon find him both an empty and a broken cistern if you consider him only as John M ——— He is God's minister to you.—He is God's ordinance for your salvation and edification. He is only a vessel in which the heavenly treasures is put for your use; you are indeed, to esteem him highly, for his work's sake, and we hope you will have much reason to esteem him highly as an agreeable and useful man; but esteem of this kind is to be kept in a subordinate place. When you attend upon either his public, or private ministrations you are to attend, and hear what God the Lord will speak; you are to consider yourselves as receiving God's message from his mouth; hence when any individual finds himself reprov'd, he will be thankful, and take it as from God—and if he finds himself edified & comforted, he will be disposed to give to God, not to man, the praise & glory.

Be punctual and conscientious in attending upon his ministry. He has solemnly devoted his whole time and talents to your service. He is to preach the word to you, both publicly, and from house to house—he is to be instant in season, and out of season—but remember, he can never be under obligations of this kind and you free. If he is under obligations to preach publicly and from house to house, every one of you is bound to attend when he preaches from the pulpit, or waits upon you and your families at your own houses. It is not a matter of indifference with him, whether he attends to these things or not.—

His life and your life depends in a great measure on his faithfully and punctually performing these and similar service.—How can it ever be a matter of indifference with you, when you, or when any part of your families neglect to attend upon any of these ordinances. When, with a very little care you might have attended; you are as much guilty of *perjury*, as he would have been had he not made the appointment, or having made it, without any good reason neglected to fulfil it.

Lay your account to meet with difficulties and sometimes great difficulties in your connection with him, and in your connection with one another. It is the will of God, that all his people be, while they are in this world, tried with almost every kind of difficulty in every relation in which they stand. We are to glorify God in our present state by the exercise of confidence in his promise when appearances contradict the promise; and by fortitude and patience and resignation. In common life it is nothing but a cowards trick to leave our families, or this or the other connections, merely because we meet with a considerable number of difficulties. In religious life it is not only cowardly but highly criminal—to desert God's cause—to renounce our connection with his church, or any part of his church, merely because we meet with a number of things we don't like, or are under the necessity of bearing with a number of things which we cannot remedy. We manifest our love to our families by continuing with them and endeavoring to make them as comfortable as we can, even when their conduct and dispositions are in many cases extremely disagreeable; and when our love to our God is of the right kind, or right degree, we will cling with equal perseverance to that part of his church, with which, in holy providence, we and our families are connected.

Remember that where much is given much will be required. We repeat, it is no ordinary blessing which is this day secured to you. It is our lot to live in an evil generation. It is the age of desolations and the church of the living God has not escaped in the general wreck.—God in holy providence is destroying other congregations

while he is building yours up—much is therefore expected of you—nay, *much fruit* is only a reasonable demand.—Read with attention Mat. xi. 20—24.

Pray much for yourselves, and your minister—a praying people make a preaching minister; the difficulties which attend the faithful execution of the ministerial office are many and great—all the brethren here at this time being young in years, are also, of course, young in experience—every one of us, however, knows this much, that the difficulties which are visible, which are generally known, are not the greatest. The greatest difficulties are those which from their nature, can be known only to the individual and the searcher of hearts. In such cases relief and assistance can only be derived from the head of the church by the special influences of his holy spirit. Private christians, consequently by regularly and fervently praying for those who are set over them, in the Lord, must contribute much to their comfort, and much to the success of their ministry. Read with attention, not only now but frequently while you live. Luke xi. 1—13, I Thess. v. 12—23, and Hebrews xiii. 7—21.