

A

S E R M O N,

Calvary

DELIVERED BY

EZRA STILES ELY,

ON THE

First Sabbath

AFTER HIS

ORDINATION.

“ Then said I, Ah, LORD GOD ! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.”

“ But the LORD said unto me ; Say not I am a child : for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.”



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1806.

 *AFTER repeated solicitations, the AUTHOR of this DISCOURSE, delivered on the 5th of October A. D. 1806, to the second society in Colchester, is induced to publish it, hoping it may be useful to the people, whom he is bound to serve in the LORD.*

SERMON, &c.

I. CORINTHIANS II. 2.

“ For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

HAVING, my dear hearers, a few days since, received the spiritual guardianship of this church and congregation, it may reasonably be expected, that I should make you acquainted, with some of the motives, which have induced me to engage in the work of the gospel ministry ; and with some of my emotions, on receiving you, as my peculiar charge. To speak of ourselves, in public, is unpleasant ; but upon many occasions, proper and necessary. The apostles and many pious ministers of Jesus, have done it ; and may God grant his servant, who is “ less than the least of all saints,” grace, to do it with becoming humility ; at the same time, with confidence in his SAVIOUR.

FROM early childhood, to the present moment, it has been my fixed resolution, providence permitting, to be a minister of the everlasting gospel. No other profession have I desired ; no other do I now desire ; for a faithful servant of the meek and afflicted Jesus of Nazareth, is, in my opinion, more highly honoured, than the greatest monarch on earth. He is honoured of God. Much greater is the pleasure of being an instrument in conquering an impenitent soul, than in subduing

all the kingdoms of the world. The man, who, by the energy of the Holy Spirit, turns a sinner from the path of destruction, into the way, which leadeth unto everlasting life, shall cover a multitude of sins : but Alexander, having subdued what was then supposed THE WORLD, sat down and wept, because there was no other world, in which he might display his military prowess. My desire of entering on the work of the ministry, increased with my years, and my principal studies have been directed to this main object.

In the fulness of God's time, it is my humble hope, that I was in a sense prepared, by the washing of regeneration, which opened my blind eyes, conquered the obduracy of my heart, and gave new motives, views, affections and moral habits to the soul. From childhood I have feared, that I should never be qualified, for this most solemn employment. Truly it requires the affectionate disposition, the mildness of John ; the energy of Paul, the eloquence of Apollos. Jesus alone, is the perfect preacher of righteousness : but it is the Lord's pleasure, that the unsearchable riches of Christ's gospel, should be committed to " earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Should all the angels of heaven, descend to proclaim the will of Jehovah, to mankind, they could not, of themselves, regenerate a soul ; but the Holy Spirit may use, the smallest insect, as an instrument of the conviction and conversion of multitudes. Hope then, O my soul, in the mighty God ! Since the vows of God have been upon me, be assured, my anxiety has not diminished ; but as my day may demand, so may my strength be increased.

Almost fourteen years of my life, were irrecoverably gone, before I publicly professed the religion of my God and Saviour : eighteen had dawned upon my existence, when I was called, providentially, to commence the preaching of the gospel : and now only twenty have elapsed, when I have received of my fathers in the ministry, the consecrating prayer, the charge of a church of Jesus, and the right hand, expressing the fellowship of those, who profess themselves disciples of the Son of God. Too many years cannot be devoted to the best of services, and should I be called away in youth or old age, my petition is, that I may be found engaged in my Father's business. Thrice happy shall I esteem myself, may I be ac-

counted of my Judge, a faithful ambassador, of the **PRINCE OF PEACE.**

The unity and attachment, which my hearers have discovered have accelerated the time of my settlement ; and did I not imagine that I had followed the directions of the divine hand, I should accuse myself of precipitance.

Such have been my motives and reflections, and when I received ordination to the pastoral care of this flock, “ I determined not to know,” (or not to *make known* as it is in the original, according to the Hebraism, here used,) “ any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Let us, **FIRST**, consider, what is implied in making known a crucified Saviour : and **SECONDLY**, what things are necessary, to enable a gospel minister to accomplish the object of such a determination.

The messenger of **GOD**, who would make known nothing among his people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, must devote himself to the study of the **GOSPEL**, and preach it faithfully ; administer all the ordinances of Christ, and imitate, so far as he is able, the perfect example of his Divine Teacher.

He should devote himself to the study of the gospel, because meditation is essential to the preparation of such discourses, as will be likely to instruct and edify his hearers. The apostles were immediately inspired, and therefore, were commanded to take no thought, what they should speak, that the revelation might evidently appear, to be, entirely, of Jehovah : but all who attempt, now, to preach, without attentive study of the gospel, must be either weak or wicked ; for we are instructed, to “ search the scriptures,” that we may discover the connection between the different parts, comprehend the original meaning of the writer, explain difficult and apparently contradictory passages, and be enabled to comfort the Christian, alarm the impenitent, and close the mouths of infidels. Those who have an imperfect knowledge of them, and read them negligently, often abuse them, by ignorant and unholy explanations. Paul exhorts Timothy, to study, to show himself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth : that he meditate upon these things, and give himself, wholly, to them. It is not in human nature to be attentive, when there is nothing new, either in

matter or manner ; and therefore, the PERFECT INSTRUCTOR used an almost infinite variety of method, in the exemplification of truth. His favourite mode of instruction, was that of a parable, because it aroused the attention, of persons, blind to the superlative excellence of his doctrines. “ Therefore speak I unto them in parables : because they seeing, see not ; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand :” but to his disciples, whose hearts were prepared, by love, it was given to know “ the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”

Such as preach without study, commonly dwell upon a few commonplace topics ; and often, while they are discoursing about death, while they are leading the funeral procession to the gloomy mansions, their audience slumber. While speaking upon that infinitely important subject, the eternal damnation of the ungodly, their manner is so unfeeling and monotonous, and so many are their tautologies, that the impenitent among the aged enjoy their repose ; and the youth either smile at one another or the preacher, when he should by the terrors of the Lord persuade them to reflect, and make them tremble before HIM, whose vengeance is a consuming fire.

O my God, pardon such an one, as by his dullness in preaching, induces his hearers to think, that neither he nor the God that sent him, is in earnest : and enable thy young servant, so to speak, as one, who hopes for salvation through a bleeding Saviour !

All possible means of gaining the attention of thoughtless souls should be studied, and no lawful, practicable method left untried. Without profound meditation the whole gospel cannot be preached ; for although the essentials are few, plain and easily understood, yet there are important truths, which require thorough investigation : there are doctrines of God, which St. Peter informs us, the “ *unlearned* and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” If such danger arise from being unlearned, how should the teacher of a Christian church, study to know, whatever may be connected with the sublime science of theology ? The original languages are peculiarly important, for few of my hearers need information, that the scriptures were neither composed, nor translated by inspired Englishmen. Our present English Bibles, are generally allowed to be more correct, than

any other translation, but have not yet attained to the accuracy of the *pure word of God*. Sound students in biblical criticism, have made many important observations, which elucidate obscure texts of the sacred volume. Whatever tends to explain circumstances, alluded to, in the word of Jehovah, must be important ; and therefore, a teacher of righteousness should be well acquainted with ancient and modern church history.

Christ's servant, who would make known nothing among his hearers, save Jesus Christ, crucified ; must preach, faithfully, the doctrines of the scriptures, which are all connected with the death and sufferings of the Saviour. That he may be enabled to do this, the spirit which was in his Master, must abide in his heart. Jesus was fervent in preaching. The flame of love within his breast, gave light and warmth, to every ray of truth, which proceeded from the effulgence of the *GODHEAD*. Shall his messengers then, with philosophical coldness and critical insipidity, repeat a few rife maxims, which a Platonist might teach, or a few passages from the volume of inspiration, with as much insensibility as if they were extracted from a heathen writer, and call his polished composition, the preaching of an innocent, condemned, insulted, benevolent, murdered Redeemer ? Let no man preach either Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or, what is more frequently the case, *himself* ; but the Son of God, whose authority is supreme ; whose doctrines, pure and perfect ; whose life presents a spotless example, of heaven-born morality.

Some discourses are extant where the name of a Saviour is scarcely introduced : and were it not for the passages of scripture prefixed, few would think them designed for gospel sermons.

Brethren, let God's preacher in the soul have audience, and although the wicked heart be burthened with the sight, yet you will not dare to utter the wish, that the crucified Jesus may be hidden : and should any minister neglect to present him, you would complain with Mary : " they have taken away the Lord—and we know not where they have laid him."

If we treat of sin, we should not lead others to esteem it, a thing trifling in its nature, an harmless imprudence, a venial error, an imperfection necessarily incident to humanity and therefore almost excusable ; but that abominable disobedience, which

Jehovah abhors, which exposes us to irremediable destruction, and made necessary the incarnation of THE MOST HIGH AND HOLY GOD. If we speak of any particular transgression, it should be represented as nothing less, than what nailed Jesus to the cross ; or of unbelief in general, as nothing less odious in the sight of the Father, or less painful to the Son, than the spear which pierced his side. When we would enforce the duties of temperance, meekness, humility, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, forbearance, firmness, sincerity, candour, kindness and beneficence, we should present the example of the man Christ Jesus ; who was in all respects, tempted like his brethren, but continued holy, harmless, undefiled, and in all his thoughts, words and actions, separate from sinners. No human character should be exhibited, for imitation, any farther, than that character is a correct pattern, of the great original of perfection. When we preach upon the subject of gratitude, all our enjoyments should be represented to come, from the Father of mercies, through Jesus the MEDIATOR, the channel of all our blessings ; even all the joys of heaven, which the righteous are permitted to expect, are communicated by the SON OF GOD. Redemption, the remission of sins, sanctification, justification, adoption, temporal and eternal life, are through Christ, who is made of GOD unto us, “ wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; that whoever glorieth, may glory in the LORD.” When we preach, in an evangelical manner, any doctrine relating to Christ, we preach him : and when we show, that every thing we are, and hope to be, is through the sufferings of Christ, and the satisfaction made to divine justice, we preach Christ, crucified. This is foolishness to many, and to the Jews a stumbling block, a rock of offence ; but may we for ever triumph in the strength of Jesus, over all spiritual foes ; and if, at any time, we are cast down, let us sink upon the cross of Christ ; for if that fail of supporting us, we have nothing but darkness and eternal despair. As a person exposed to a watery death, embraces what appears most likely to save him, so let our souls lay hold on the hope set before them, trusting in God that they shall be secure, when the billows of affliction dash around them ; yea, perfectly happy, in the wreck of worlds.

All the ordinances of the gospel, must be administered by one, who would fulfil the holy resolution expressed in the text. "Into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," all are to be baptized, who profess to believe, with all the heart, that Jesus is the Christ. The children also, of all visible believers, are to receive the "*seal of the righteousness of the faith,*" which their parents have, because Jesus consecrated such infants, by the imposition of hands, and commanded to baptize all nations, saying, "*the promise is unto you, and to your children.*" In the administration of the Lord's supper, most solemnly is represented Christ Jesus, crucified. By the kind providence of our heavenly Parent, the unworthy servant of Christ and this church, is called, this day, for the first time, to present the symbols of a Saviour's broken body, and blood poured out, on Calvary, for the remission of sins. When we reach forth the hand to obtain the bread, may the arm of faith be stretched out, to receive from the Author and Finisher of our faith, the gift of eternal life: when we eat that bread, which, in a sense, becomes one with us, and affords us nutriment, may we become one with Christ, and obtain help from him, who is mighty to save: when we take the wine, may we reflect, that we deserve to drink the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and at the same time, may we be *cheered* by the love of a Redeemer: when we sing an hymn, may we rejoice in spirit, knowing that there is joy in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth; knowing assuredly, that we shall rejoice for ever, if the finger of Jehovah, with the blood of atonement, have recorded our names in the book of the Lamb.

If it be the duty of a gospel minister, to administer these ordinances, to all the proper subjects; all Christians are under indispensable obligations to present themselves for the reception of them: and may God grant, that our number be greatly enlarged, by such as humbly trust in the mercy of the Lord, and resolve, by divine assistance, to perform their whole duty—by such as shall be saved. It becomes my duty, henceforth, to exhort all my hearers, who are capable of understanding the nature of the ordinance, to profess the religion of Jesus, and celebrate his death, resurrection, ascension and future judgment. At the same time, solemnly *I entreat*—no, *Jehovah* commands

persons not to come to the communion table, from unholy motives. Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory of God.—Every man should obey, with a good and honest heart, the injunction of a dying Saviour. To all his disciples, he has said, “take, eat :” “drink ye all of it :” “this do in remembrance of me :” and one, who feels content, while he neglects to obey, may be assured, that the love of Christ is not in him. No command in the moral law is plainer, or of higher obligation. But some *fear* to obey ! Rather let them fear to pour contempt upon the holy Jesus, by despising his institutions ; “*for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” “But may we not be children of God, born of the Spirit, and still absent ourselves from the Lord’s supper ?” No man *ought to flatter himself*, that he is a Christian, who *habitually* disobeys any plain, positive command of God. And which of the following precepts is the plainest ?

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“This do, in remembrance of me.”

If any are willing, and sincerely desire to honour the cause of Christ, but are prevented, the guilt falls upon those, who obstruct them in approaching the holy communion of our common Lord and Saviour. Dare we, my brethen, refuse any person, who professes to believe, *with all his heart*, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, unless Christ has warranted us to conclude, from his conversation and conduct, that his declarations of attachment, are hollow-hearted ? Far better is it, to admit ten unsanctified persons, thus professing, whose lives do not bring disgrace upon the church, than to reject one sincere, humble follower of the LAMB. To judge hearts, is the prerogative of an OMNISCIENT GOD : and if any imagine themselves Christians, because they have made a profession it is either their own, or their pastor’s fault. Church-membership, has no inherent tendency to spiritual slumber or delusion.

One actuated by the sentiment contained in the text, must carefully imitate Christ, in all those perfections, which he possessed, as a sinless man. In his omniscience, and other attributes, connected, necessarily, with the mighty God that tabernacled in the humanity of Jesus, created persons cannot re-

semble him. But by a Christian moral character, a minister of the Son of God, may preach, most effectually, the crucified Redeemer.

He must be indefatigable in his exertions, to promote the best interests of mankind ; patient under trials ; persevering in his undertakings ; firm in his purpose ; gentle in his manner ; meek, in the instruction of opposers ; a zealous asserter of the truth ; holy in disposition ; undefiled in his life ; given to hospitality ; wise as a serpent ; harmless as a dove : in short—Christ has left us *an example, that we should follow his steps.*

Who is sufficient for these things ! How shall a youth proclaim the whole counsel of God ; and in his life, be a constant witness of the truth as it is in Jesus ? Many doctrines must be delivered, hard to be admitted by the hearts of the unsanctified ; who are ever ready to say : “ prophecy good, we pray thee, concerning us.” How shall I declare what God hath not spoken ? Verily, there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. All the impenitent are in an evil case. “ The way of transgressors is hard.” Brethren, pray for me, that I may reprove, rebuke, exhort and teach with long-suffering patience : that I may so conduct, as to secure the approbation of my own conscience, and the salvation of all committed to my charge.

And now, in the words of the faithful prophet Micaiah, I do solemnly swear, “ as the Lord liveth, what my God saith unto me, that will I speak.” So help me, O God, to perform, as I have promised.

Let us, **SECONDLY**, consider what things are necessary, to enable a minister of the gospel, to fulfil his determination of knowing nothing among his people, save Christ Jesus, and him crucified. You are sensible, that a person cannot bring out of his treasure things *new*, as well as old, without meditation : and that he cannot give himself *wholly*, to these things, unless he be disentangled, in a great measure, from the concerns of the world.

His affections should be weaned from all undue attachment, to sublunary things ; but comfortably to supply his rational wants, it is his duty to seek, in that method, which shall least divert his attention, from ministerial duties. You will not forget, that a minister is a man, and may be cold, weary, hungry,

infirm, in want of clothing, and diseased. Indeed, you have not forgotten, that he, who soweth unto you spiritual things, will need to reap some of your carnal things ; and I take this opportunity, of rendering you thanks, for that provision, which at present, I esteem liberal, and hope to find sufficient for my maintenance. Should it prove inadequate, your liberality will dictate what is expedient, or the good providence of God will otherwise provide. My prayer is neither for poverty, nor riches. “ Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar ? *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.*” If persons hearing these passages, and knowing that Almighty God deemed it equitable to appropriate, *by law*, the tenth part of every man’s gain, for the support of the Jewish priests, can conscientiously say it is an unholy thing to support the preachers of the gospel, in a similar manner ; it is my desire, that they enjoy the privileges, of Christian institutions, and be free from contributing their proportion, to the maintenance of the labourer, whom the Lord has declared worthy of his hire. “ Mine answer,” saith the apostle, “ to those that do examine me, is this. Have we not power to eat and to drink ? Have we not power to lead about a sister, (who is) a wife, as well as other apostles ?” “ Who goeth a warfare, at any time, at his own charges ? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof ? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not the milk thereof ? Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also ? For it is written in the law of Moses ; ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox, that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen ?’ How much more, will he give precepts, for the support of his servants ! Paul here asserts the right, of all, who make the gospel their study, and preaching their business, to demand a competent support for themselves, and for their families, if they choose to marry : but there are cases, when it is prudent not to assert this right ; when it is duty, even to be hungry, cold, destitute of comfortable apparel, and houseless, for the cause of Christ. Were a people unable, and as much afflicted as the early Christians, by the grace of God, I would work for daily bread, and preach, esteeming it a favour, that God had

so much honoured me, under the greatest trials, as to entrust me with the care of souls, and the everlasting gospel. Under some circumstances, we are to depart, shaking off the dust of our feet, as a testimony of their ingratitude.

This society has reason to bless God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, for the ample provision, made by one,* long since departed to the eternal world, for the permanent maintenance of a school, and the institutions of Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God, that his partner,† who assisted in the benevolent design, still continues with us, a living example of faith and good works. When she is gone to the general assembly of the church of the first born, whose names are enrolled in heaven, may generation after generation arise, enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and call her blessed.

AGAIN. It is important, that a minister of Jesus should have the prayers and kind attentions of his people, that he may be encouraged and strengthened in the determination, of making known nothing among them, save Christ Jesus, and him crucified. To stand alone is difficult, but sometimes necessary. Christians should edify one another in love ; and particularly should a minister, who is subject to like temptations, with other men, be assisted, counselled, encouraged and exhorted to persevere in the performance of those arduous duties which devolve upon him. Paul says, " I myself am a man : " what need then have uninspired, weaker servants, of the friendly aid, forbearance, forgiveness, tenderness and kind wishes of their hearers ? May God grant, brethren, that we be mutually instrumental, in warming each other's hearts.

FINALLY : Whoever would study, preach and live Christ, must be himself engaged in the sacred cause ; his heart must be warmed, with the blood of sprinkling, or he will be a negligent student, a cold, unanimating preacher, and an almost lifeless Christian. An apparently insincere, languid, unfeeling preacher of a Saviour, warm with love for his enemies and dying to

* Mr. David Day, died, Sept. 15. A. D. 1775, in the 66th year of his age, and left the income of a large landed interest, for the support of a grammar school, and the gospel ministry.

† Mrs. Day, now, the widow Elliot, was born, April 8th, A. D. 1717, is still living, and able to attend public worship.

redeem them, is a sight—O how painful to an engaged Christian ! How cruel a persecutor is that man of the bleeding Jesus !

“ I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,
 “ Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
 “ Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
 “ That he is honest in the sacred cause !”
 “ Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
 “ Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own—
 “ Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
 “ His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
 “ I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;
 “ In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,
 “ And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste
 “ And natural in gesture ; much impress’d
 “ Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
 “ And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
 “ May feel it too ; affectionate in look,
 “ And tender in address, as well becomes
 “ A messenger of grace to guilty men.”
 “ Are all such teachers ?—would to heaven all were”!

Such the CHRISTIAN POET has represented the venerable Whitfield.

“ He lov’d the world that hated him : the tear
 “ That dropp’d upon his Bible was sincere :
 “ Assail’d by scandal and the tongue of strife,
 “ His only answer was, a blameless life ;
 “ And he that forg’d, and he that drew the dart,
 “ Had each a brother’s int’rest in his heart !
 “ Paul’s love of Christ, and steadiness unbrib’d,
 “ Were copied close in him, and well transcrib’d.
 “ He followed Paul—his zeal a kindred flame,
 “ His apostolic charity the same.
 “ Like him, cross’d cheerfully tempestuous seas,
 “ Forsaking country, kindred, friends and ease ;
 “ Like him he labour’d, and, like him, content
 “ To bear it, suffer’d shame where’er he went.”

Let us all remember, my friends, that the gospel is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, to all who hear it. It will either save our souls, or aggravate our misery.

Take heed then, how ye hear ; and may God forbid, that any one in the day of judgment, arise, and call me accursed, charging me with being an unfaithful servant of Christ. If after the labour of a life, any one is hopefully converted unto God, through my instrumentality, it will soften the bed of death, and may Jehovah receive all the praise, in everlasting anthems.

O my once crucified SAVIOUR ! grant me assistance, and in imitation of thy example, I would breathe this life away, in preaching the gospel, might my ascending spirit waft an individual, to thy free, pardoning love, in glory. Amen.

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NOTE.

West-Chester was incorporated, as a society, in the town of Colchester, A. D. 1729.

In 1729 was ordained, Judah Lewis, who died in the 10th year of his ministry, and 36th of his age.

In 1740 was ordained, Thomas Skinner, who died in the 23d year of his ministry, and 54th of his age.

In 1764 was ordained, Robert Robbins, who died in the ^{39th}~~42d~~ year of his ministry, and 63d of his age.

In 1806 was ordained, Ezra Stiles Ely.