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SERMON III.

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THE UNION OF TRUTH AND LOVE IN THE MINISTRY.

2 COR. 6:4—6,7. *But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,....by love unfeigned, by the word of truth.*

THE slow progress of truth, and the limited extent of the Redeemer's kingdom amongst men, is afflictive to those who consider the importance of this truth, and the blessings of this kingdom. Why is this the case? It is now about eighteen hundred years since the risen Saviour gave the command and the commission to the Apostles, and through them to their successors in office, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" From that day to the present, there has been, and there still is, an order of men, by profession and solemn vows to God, devoted to the exclusive purpose of spreading the gospel through the world. And yet, at this day, not more than *two eighths* of the whole human family are nominally Christian. The nature of the case does not admit of perfect accuracy in the calculation; but it is supposed to be near the truth, that six hundred millions of our race are, at this day, without the gospel. Of those who are nominally Christian, probably not more than *one in ten* is truly pious, and living under the influence of the gospel. The question returns, with heart-thrilling interest, why is this the case? Why are these hundreds of millions without the gospel? Why are these hundreds of thousands, in lands called Christian, without the spirit of vital piety? What have the ministers of Christ been doing for the last seventeen centuries? To them especially, the gospel has been committed in trust; on them has been devolved the high and fearful responsibility of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom: have they been faithful to this trust? have

they labored and suffered, as they ought to have done, in the cause of their Master? If they have, why is the world in this state? Had the apostles lived and labored till this day, would the same state of things have existed? Would Paul, himself alone, have done no more, in seventeen centuries, than has been done?

Some years before the close of the first century, the faith of the Romans was spoken of *throughout the whole world*. The gospel was known in all the world, as it was to the Colossians, and was bringing forth fruit, as it was with them. Even then, the gospel was *preached to every creature which is under heaven*. Admit that the whole world means no more than the Roman empire; yet that empire included nearly, if not all, the nations at that time known to the Romans and the Jews. Admit, also, that only a part of these nations had received the gospel; still we see the great and rapid progress which truth had made within the first half century. True, the apostles had the power of working miracles; yet those miracles were only intended to confirm the truth, and gain it admission to the conscience; but they compelled no man to believe. Men were *born again* then, as they are now, by the Spirit and word of God. This truth has been the same in all subsequent ages, that it was then; its influence and its effects on the mind have also been the same. The gospel which they preached was the very same, in all its details, which their successors in office have been permitted and required to preach. The faithful record of these miracles has, in all ages, accompanied the gospel as evidence of its truth. Nor has the opposition to the gospel been greater at any time, than it was in their day. The same Spirit who *gave the increase* to their labors, is promised to the earnest prayer of all who ask for his aid. We ask again, therefore, had the apostles been permitted to labor for seventeen centuries, would there have been 600,000,000 of the human family, or even a single nation on earth, ignorant of the gospel? Would Paul, dressed in the splendors of royal magnificence, have rolled over the pavement in his coach; would he have enjoyed the elegancies of the wealthy and populous city, when he knew that there was a nation on earth, however remote, who were without the gospel? No! he would have encountered the perils of the deep, and of the wilderness; though bonds and afflictions had awaited him in every place, yet none of these things would have moved him from his purpose. If pious friends had entreated him, with tears, to spare his life, he would not have been persuaded. *What mean ye, would have been his reply, to weep and break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.* He would have stood before kings and made them tremble; before the most learned philosophers and preached Christ crucified. He would have called from their retirement a Titus, a Timothy; would have infused his own spirit into hundreds of others and sent them into the field as his co-workers. Organizing a church, and ordaining elders in one city, he would have hastened to another, and another;

until every city, and town, and village, and neighborhood on earth had been visited and blessed with the gospel.

But it has not pleased the Head of the church to spare this devoted man. Why then, has not the same progress of truth resulted from the labor of others, his successors in office? They have had the same gospel to preach, the promise of the same Spirit to aid them, which he had. The very same motives to labor and to suffer in the cause of Christ, and which *stirred his spirit within him*, have been constantly presented to their mind. And yet, why is it that there are 600,000,000 of our race without the gospel? and why have so many millions, in Christian lands, under the ministry of the gospel, died without hope?

But let us not attempt to excuse ourselves by finding fault with others. Have the ministers of modern times, and of the present day, been as faithful as they ought to have been? And more especially, have the ministers of the gospel now addressed, labored and suffered as much in the cause of Christ, as they might have done? If Paul had occupied the same field in which we have been placed, and for the same time, would not that field have exhibited fruits of more ardent zeal, of more entire devotedness, of more judicious labor, than it now does? Are we not constrained to say, from the honest, though painful conviction of our heart, it would! Why, beloved brethren, is this the case? Make, if you please, all proper allowance for his superior talents; yet why has not our ministry been more successful? But one of two answers can be given;—either we must resolve it into the sovereignty of God; or we must charge it to our own unskillfulness and negligence. Can we feel satisfied in ascribing it to the sovereignty of God? We would cherish the deepest conviction of the truth, that, whoever may plant or water, *it is God who giveth the increase*; and that whatever good we may have been instrumental in doing, the glory is due to God alone, and not to us. And had we depended more entirely on divine assistance, and prayed more earnestly for it, our ministry would have been more successful. Still we cannot think that this is the answer we should give to the question. A moment's reflection will convince us, that we did not derive our motives from this sovereignty; we did not labor because we knew certainly that God would give the increase; nor did we labor with less diligence, because we knew that he would not give it. As other reasons, therefore, than those derived from this sovereignty, influenced our conduct, so other reasons ought to be assigned for the result of that conduct. It is certain that we shall not be judged, at the last day, by the sovereignty, but by the law, or the word of God. We ought, then, to judge ourselves now by the same rule, by which we shall finally be tried. The designs of God, which are unknown to us, are for the regulation of his own conduct, not of ours. Let it be remembered also, that it is to the *planting* and *watering* of his ministers that

God giveth the increase. Unless, therefore, we have been faithful, we had no reason to expect this increase. This answer, then, ought not to satisfy our conscience, because it is not the right one. There is no escaping the conclusion, therefore, that this want of success is chargeable to ourselves: we have not studied, and prayed, and preached, and labored as we ought to have done. The review of our past ministry, presenting so many deficiencies for which we can find no excuse, may be very painful; but on this very account, like the bitterness of some valuable medicine, it may be highly useful. It will lead us to inquire into the reasons of these deficiencies, of this want of success; and by what means our ministry can be rendered more useful in future.

In pursuing this inquiry we may, with great advantage, refer to the example and the writings of Paul. What was it that rendered his ministry, through the blessing of God, so eminently successful? It was the union of TRUTH and LOVE: truth was the weapon, and love was the power by which it was wielded. This weapon, thus wielded, was *mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*. This is the information given us in the passage from which the text is taken. *In all things*, in all the trials through which the Providence of God, and the duties of our office may lead us,—*approving ourselves as the ministers of God,—by love unfeigned, by the word of truth*. His mind was filled with truth, his heart with love. The importance of truth and love to the success of gospel ministry, through the blessing of the Spirit, will be the subject of a few remarks.

I. Without attempting the discussion of truth in the abstract, it is sufficient for our purpose to state, that THE WORD OF GOD, contained in the Old and New Testaments, is that system of truth, which it is indispensable for the Christian minister distinctly to understand, carefully to treasure up in his mind, and faithfully to preach. *The word of Christ should dwell in him; should have its home in his understanding and his heart; should be his constant companion, his most intimate friend; not in detached parts, or in scanty portions, but richly, in all its extent, in all its harmony, and in all its details; richly, in all wisdom; that he may bring forth out of his treasure things new and old; that he may have something ready and appropriate for all characters, occasions, and purposes.* That he may be qualified thus rightly to divide the word of truth, will require much prayerful reading, study, and meditation. If he declines this application of mind, he can never be an able minister of the New Testament, neither of the *letter*, nor of the *spirit*.

The importance of this truth, in a preacher of the gospel, is very obvious. Paul approved, or, as some render the word, established himself by the word of truth. We suppose this means in the sight both of God and man. That he valued the approbation

of God above all things, is evident from his life and his writings. One of his directions to Timothy is this: *study to shew thyself approved unto God*. Nothing but truth, he well knew, could secure this approbation; for he is *a God of truth*. But he also means that he approved himself to men. The same truth which receives the approbation of God, is the only means the faithful preacher will ever employ to gain the approbation of men. Thus he writes in another part of this epistle,—*But we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God*. He would employ no secret efforts, which could not bear the light; would not profess one thing, and really intend another; would not preach the gospel with the view of accomplishing some unholy and selfish purpose! But his determination was, to manifest the truth, plainly and fully; with this to rise or to fall; to receive no approbation of men, with the sacrifice of truth. If he commended himself to the conscience of men, it should be in the sight of God, his omniscient Judge.

From this and other passages, we infer, that there is a powerful tendency in truth, when plainly and faithfully stated, to reach and control the conscience of men; and to extort from them, secretly at least, their approbation. Wicked men, who will not obey the gospel, who are determined to live in sin, bear witness to this fact. Such men *hate the light*: but why hate it, unless they know, from experience, that, if admitted, it will rouse and disturb their conscience, and destroy their pleasure in sin? Such men *will not come to the light*, but shun it as they do an enemy: but why shun it, unless experience has taught them how painful are its just and solemn reproofs? These men also *resist the truth*, as they do a thief about to break into their house to rob them of their goods: but why this resistance, unless they believe that, if admitted, it will rob them of their peace, and *torment them before the time*? If the word of God is so far *corrupted* as to become *another gospel*, if error is so blended with truth as to give another aspect to the system, they neither hate, nor shun, nor resist the preaching of this system. These opinions, though called the gospel, are found to be harmless, giving no disturbance to the conscience, allowing them to cherish, at the same time, the love of sin, and the hope of final escape.

This testimony is given by men who have lived an abandoned and wicked life, and have at length been brought to believe and obey the gospel. In the honest sincerity of their hearts, they have told us that all their utmost efforts were not sufficient to prevent the truth from entering and disturbing their consciences; that they have often acted the most hypocritical part, assuming the appearance of gaiety and mirth, while painful remorse was corroding their peace within. Col. Gardner is a striking, and well known instance of this very thing. From his testimony, and

that of many others, there is reason to believe, that there are as real hypocrites among professed infidels and wicked men, as there are among professed Christians.

The same tendency of truth is taught in the Letter to Titus, where Paul directs him to employ *sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.* We suppose that Titus was neither required nor expected to accomplish, or even to attempt what was impossible. If it was possible then, so it is now, to preach the truth in such a manner that it cannot be condemned; that the hearers, though of the contrary part, can find no evil thing to say of it. We suppose Paul speaks of the tendency of truth, and of its general, though not universal, effect; for we find that the Jews, at Antioch, *spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming*, yet this loud and fierce opposition is proof that they felt and dreaded the power of truth; for men do not thus oppose what they believe to be harmless. If there be exceptions, they rather confirm than destroy the general rule. If the truth is fully, and plainly, and affectionately preached, accompanied with suitable illustrations and proofs, it will be exceedingly difficult to condemn it.

Again; the importance of truth appears from this; that it is employed, by the divine Spirit in changing and purifying the heart of man. That church to which we belong, teaches her children to believe that, "the Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially, the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." This is sound philosophy, because it is sound scriptural theology. It ascribes the great work in the heart of man, from the first quickening touch, to the most sublime triumphs of faith and hope, to the Holy Spirit, as the agent, and to the word of truth as the instrument. The sinner is begotten, made to feel his guilt and danger, by *the word of truth*; he is *born again by the word of God*; he is *sanctified through the truth*. It is by the *holy scriptures* that the *man of God is made wise unto salvation*, is thoroughly furnished *unto all good works*. All the motives which regulate his life, are derived from the word. Every genuine impression, every spiritual affection, every purpose of his heart, is the effect of truth on the mind.

That the truth may produce its complete effect, it should be preached in such a manner as will be most happily calculated to gain it admittance. For this reason, order and connection are very important. Even truth may be delivered in a manner so confused and promiscuous, as to render its reception less easy, and far less useful, if received. If the ideas belonging to two subjects, say, the wisdom of God, and the duty of prayer, were given alternately, one belonging to the first, and then one belonging to the second subject, though each might contain the

truth, yet this truth could not be so useful, as if each train of ideas was given separately, and in connection with its own subject. The preacher who would employ the truth with the happiest effect, must be careful to deliver it in such an order and connection, as that one thought may prepare the way for the next, and impart to it additional power on the mind. If his own conceptions are clear and connected, his honest efforts to convey similar views to others will scarcely fail; but if his own ideas are confused and obscure, he is but poorly qualified for the duties of his office. The trumpet may be loud, but if it *give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?*

Truth may be obscured, of course its reception and its usefulness in some degree prevented, by the style in which it is delivered. The language is sometimes too colloquial, approaching to vulgarity; the illustrations and figures are too low to suit the dignity of truth. There are some who seem to think that ordination to the ministry, is a license to violate the plainest rules of grammar, the principles of good taste, perhaps to torture the delicacy of their hearers with impunity. Is it too much to expect of those whose profession is *speaking*, that they should use a correct and reputable style, especially when they speak in the name of God? No coarseness or incorrectness of language, it is true, can divest the truth of its intrinsic importance and dignity, in the estimation of those who are acquainted with it; but it is the object of the preacher to introduce it to those who are unacquainted with it. To these, the truth will, in some degree, be identified with the dress in which it is presented. If you clothe a man of the most grave and dignified character in the garments of a clown or a harlequin, and introduce him to strangers, their impression of his character will not accord with his real merit, but will be modified by the dress in which he is introduced. Those friends who are intimately acquainted with him, will esteem and love him not the less on this account; and they will be sure to feel a mixture of grief and displeasure at the burlesque you have put on their friend. The real beauty and excellency of truth cannot be changed by the uncouth dress in which it is sometimes presented; its friends who know its value, will love and embrace it, though thus shamefully caricatured. But its reception and its influence with those who are ignorant, and who really need instruction, will, in some degree, be prevented by the repulsive dress in which they form their acquaintance with it. *We speak as unto wise men; judge ye what we say.*

Others fall into the opposite extreme, by attempting to recommend themselves by what they consider exhibitions of learning. Sometimes these attempts consist in the frequent use of long and learned terms, the intervening spaces containing words which are mere expletives, sometimes expressing sense, and sometimes not. This is concealing the gospel under the cloke of their own vanity. However such may be pleased with themselves, the

pious and well informed, can feel nothing but grief and disappointment, when compelled to hear such empty, and often disgusting rant, under the name of preaching Christ and him crucified. It is wonderful how minds impressed, and subdued, and humbled with the gospel, can trifle in this manner; trifle, too, in the presence of God, and with the salvation of immortal souls. There are others, whose preaching is good sense and evangelical sentiments; but there is such a profusion of shining ornaments as to suggest, in the mind of the hearers, the idea of art employed for the sake of these ornaments. The gospel, indeed, is preached; but the hearers will find it difficult to banish the thought, that it is partly, if not chiefly, for the sake of an opportunity of presenting these elegancies of style; that the gospel is used merely as the canvass on which these splendid figures are to be drawn and exhibited. These embellishments are so numerous as to give character to the sermon; and it is called beautiful, elegant, and by some even eloquent. Multitudes, who reject the gospel, will be highly pleased with these decorations; this pleasure may be mistaken for religious feeling, and thus contribute to their self-delusion and their final perdition. If the truly humble and pious will draw aside this drapery, will remove this painting, they may find the gospel which will cheer the heart. If this drapery has to be drawn aside, then, is it not a hinderance to the gospel? to say the least, is it not useless?

We can think of nothing better for those ministers of the cross who may be inclined to pursue this manner, than for them to sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his words. He too was a preacher of the gospel, and as such has left an example worthy of the closest imitation. He knew perfectly the mind of man, and in what dress to present the truth, so as to render it most efficient. His style is simple and perspicuous, and yet dignified; full, and yet not redundant; brief and comprehensive, and yet not obscure. He employs a variety of figures; but they are like so many suns, shedding light on the truth which he taught. Not a word, not a phrase, not a trope is used merely for the sake of ornament. Every sentence is well adapted to answer the purpose of the speaker; and for this reason he is truly eloquent. In proof of this, the tears of the humble penitent, the bitter opposition of his enemies, may be adduced.

The truth may be obscured by the method of reasoning sometimes employed. The reasoning is perfectly correct, and the conclusion irresistible; but on account of its length it is too abstruse, and requires too much mental effort, to be easily comprehended. It, therefore, fails to enlighten the mind, or approve itself to the conscience. Preaching, indeed, requires reasoning, close and powerful reasoning; but such only should be employed as will render the truth more intelligible, of course, more forcible than it would otherwise be. Let it be powerful as the light-

ning's stroke, but clear as the sunbeam. Such was the reasoning employed by our Saviour;—short, clear, and conclusive.

II. But the spirit with which the truth is delivered is of essential importance to give it its full effect on the conscience; and this is the spirit of love; of *love unfeigned*. No style, no manner will commend the truth or the preacher to every man's conscience, without love; sincere, ardent, constraining love; love which manifests itself by its own appropriate effects; love to God, to the Saviour, and to men. Nothing can supply the place of this holy ardor of soul. The style may be elegant, the manner may be graceful, genius and learning may exhaust their stores; but without love, all will be cold and lifeless; without it, there can be no genuine pulpit eloquence. Nothing else will bear the Christian minister through *honor and dishonor*, through *evil report and good report*, through all the nameless toils and anxieties and sacrifices of his office.

The voice of inspiration has clearly decided, that if we love God, it will lead us to obey his will. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. If a man love me, he will keep my sayings. This is the love of God that we keep his commandments.* We have decided, beloved brethren in the ministry, after much inquiry, much deliberation and prayer, that it was the will of God concerning us, that we should preach the gospel. This decision has been affirmed by those who were in the ministry before us, by the laying on of their hands. This is true of all whom the Head of the church has called to the sacred office.

We see, then, that this love will give a direction, different from that of other Christians, to the inquiries and labors of a minister. Both have to *work out their own salvation*; but in addition to this, the minister is bound, by preaching the gospel and administering its ordinances, to use his utmost efforts to secure the salvation of others. This is the will of God: which is peculiar to him, which love unfeigned will lead him to obey. Hence, his first inquiry will be that of Paul;—*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* What must I do, and what must I suffer to promote the salvation of perishing sinners? Love unfeigned will lead him to pursue this inquiry till he is fully satisfied; for it is not a blind instinct that urges him on to a course of action for which he can assign no reason; it is the holy fervor of an intelligent mind, under the influence of motives, acting with design, having a specific object to accomplish. It is not enough that he be actively employed; he must be satisfied that his efforts will meet the approbation of God; of course, that they are according to his will. With this view he will turn his attention to all those sources from whence information can be obtained. With deep interest he will consider the example of Christ, who *taught as never man taught*. How did he comfort and cheer the humble, the weeping penitent; how did he direct the anxious inquirer, instruct the ignorant, and

give warning and reproof to the hardened and impenitent; how did he invite to the fountain of mercy; how did he pass sentence on those who proved incorrigible? How did he feel and how did he act when the air was rent with hosannas to the son of David; and how, when the same air resounded with the cry of crucify him? To every Christian the information derived from this source will be highly useful; to the minister of the gospel it will be of more value than half the wealth of the globe. It flows directly from the fountain of truth, from the *Head of the church*, from the *Apostle and high priest of our profession*. For the same purpose he will turn to the example of Paul, of whose ministry more is given than of any of the other apostles. If the perfect purity and wisdom of the Saviour should be supposed to place his example above the attainment of men, here is the example of one *subject to like passions with himself*, who has, by nature, the same wicked and deceitful heart, depending on the same mercy, influenced by the same motives, invested with the same office, accountable to the same Judge with himself. Two lessons, particularly useful, may be learned from this example; first, the use that ought to be made of learning and talents, both of which Paul possessed in no common degree. He could have used the words which *man's wisdom teacheth*; have discussed the philosophical speculations of that age; have employed the eloquence then so much admired; and thus have gained the unhallowed applause of men. But he determined to know nothing, and to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. It might be foolishness to the Greek; but on this course he staked his reputation as a man of learning and talents. The only use, then, which he made of his acquirements and abilities was, to explain the gospel and render it intelligible to the weakest capacity; to bring the truth to bear fully and powerfully on the conscience and the life. Such is the use which all, who are willing to learn from this example, will make of their learning and their talents. The second lesson is; a wise and careful adaptation of the truth to the character and condition of men. He reasoned with the Jews out of the scriptures, which they professed to believe; and with the Pharisees and Sadducees, according to the peculiar opinions of these two sects, into which the Jews were divided. When he addresses the great mass of the gentiles, who were devoted to the senseless rites of idolatry, he labors to convince them that the objects of their worship were *dumb idols*, without wisdom or power to help them; that they were the *workmanship of men's hands*, of course, *no gods*. When he meets the philosophers in Mars-hill, his address is different from both the former instances: he reasons with them from the altars at which they performed their devotion, and from their own poets. In this sense *he became all things to all men, that he might, by all means, save some*. He knew that the truth would not be received unless it was understood; and that it would most proba-

ly be understood, if derived from principles acknowledged by those to whom it was presented.

The minister of the gospel, at this day, who would *make full proof of his ministry*, must imitate this example; he must try *all means* in his power. There is the same necessity now, as in the days of the Apostle, for rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving each his portion. It will not excuse him to say, that he will preach the truth, regardless of the prejudices, the errors and the ignorance of men. His object is to save them from this state of mind by the most judicious exhibitions of truth which he can employ. He is to deal with men as he finds them, not as they ought to be. Besides, it is not the sacrifice of truth, but the skilful adaptation of it to the minds of men, as they are, that is required. Paul, though made all things to all men, yet did not sacrifice a particle of truth; he was *under the law to Christ*. Whether he preached to the Jew or the Greek, his object and his *prayer to God* was always the same, that *they might be saved*. That preacher of the gospel, therefore, who desires to be useful, will be amply rewarded for the most persevering attention he can pay to this instructive example.

We most earnestly insist, that supreme and ardent love to God and the Saviour will lead the zealous herald of the cross to pursue this course. His first desire will be, to please God. He will be deeply convinced that without the divine blessing, his ministry will not be useful; and that this blessing need not be expected, unless his labors are according to the will of God. He can learn his will, only from the precepts and examples, contained in the holy scriptures, relating to the ministry. He will, therefore, *search the scriptures*; for *love rejoiceth in the truth*. If there is one manner of delivering the truth, better calculated than another, to render it successful, he will endeavor to make that his own. He will not be as *one who beateth the air*; his efforts will be directed to a specific object. He will endeavor to render his short and uncertain ministry as useful as possible.

This unfeigned love to God will coexist with sincere love to all men, and, of course will lead the faithful minister to desire and labor to promote their salvation. It will exert a most happy influence on his own mind, sustaining him under those trials and preserving him from the danger of those temptations, which are peculiar to his office. He may be tempted to spare the rich and those who are esteemed great in this world, supposing their influence and their approbation too valuable to be lost; and may fear that this would be the result of faithful and honest reproof. But if he loves their souls, this love will not permit him to *consult with flesh and blood*; it will overcome his timidity and give him boldness in the discharge of his duty. His fidelity may commend itself to their conscience, though it wounds their pride. If by this fidelity he should incur their displeasure, he will secure the approbation of God, and of his own conscience. He may be tempted

to neglect the poor. But if he loves their souls, this love will draw him to their humble abode not less frequently nor less cheerfully, than to the more wealthy. He will enjoy it as a privilege to instruct them, to guide and cheer them on their way to heaven. Though poor in this world, they may be *rich in faith, and be heirs of the kingdom*. By faith, he can see them, on the morning of the resurrection, clothed in their white robes, acknowledged as friends by the Judge, and entering into the joy of their Lord. He will not then be ashamed to be their companion; nor regret to have aided them in preparing for this elevation and glory.

Every one who labors faithfully in the ministry will meet with much to try his patience. Some whom it is his desire and his duty to instruct, will be found *dull of hearing*; some are stupidly ignorant and insensible; some warped with prejudice; some are carried away with error; some are daringly wicked. Having honestly endeavored, again and again, to convey truth to the mind without success, he may become impatient, and be tempted to relinquish the task of instruction as entirely hopeless. But if he loves them *with a pure heart fervently*, this love will suppress this feeling of impatience. To give them up as hopeless, is to give them up to perdition. His love and compassion for their souls will not permit him to do this. *Love beareth all things*, for it is *not easily provoked*. His compassion is excited by a deep conviction of their great and imminent danger. Those things which try his patience, are proof to him that this danger is increasing every day. He will, therefore, persevere in his efforts. If one attempt fails, with greater earnestness, with deeper compassion, and, if possible, with greater wisdom, he will make another. Hope of success will animate these renewed efforts; for *love hopeth all things*. He will not give up as hopeless those whom God is preserving in his providence, with whom he is waiting *with much long-suffering and patience*. His provocations are nothing compared with those continually offered to God, who yet gives them time for repentance.

Even in the pulpit, a variety of events may try the spirit of the preacher. Some wantonly and shamelessly intrude themselves after the worship has commenced, and disturb the devotion of the whole assembly. Some, by their idle and indecent gazing, tell him plainly that not a word is understood or regarded. Some give decent attention from year to year, but remain unmoved as the rock. Some turn their pews into couches, and doze when they ought to pray. To resist these trials is not so easy as some, who are unacquainted with them, may suppose. He is but an *earthen vessel*, to whom the gospel is committed in trust. Some degree of impatience and irritation may be excited; and if the occasion, in his opinion, justifies reproof, this may be given with an asperity of temper and of language which cannot be concealed. This exhibition of unholy displeasure will operate differently on different classes of hearers. By some it will be turned into reproach; by others, into an excuse for their neglect; while the pious

will view it with the mingled emotions of compassion and sorrow;—compassion for the man who gives this public display of his own weakness;—sorrow, that the cause of Christ should be thus wounded *in the house of his friends*; wounded, too, by the man whose duty it is to give lessons of meekness, gentleness, and forbearance. *The heart*, by nature, is *deceitful above all things*. A degree of pride, that strong and prominent feature of the *old man*, may exist in his heart, so latent, and so disguised, that he is unwilling to acknowledge, even secretly to himself, that he is under its influence; and yet such may be the fact. He may think his labors too important to be lost, his preaching too good, too well calculated to be useful, to be thus neglected. He may feel a degree of resentment,—holy resentment, he will call it, or a laudable zeal for the cause of Christ; and yet there may be such a spicing of harshness, such a want of tenderness in his language and his manner, as clearly to indicate that all this warmth of feeling has an unholy origin. He may sincerely desire to see them under the pains of conviction, the sorrows of repentance, not only as connected with their own salvation, but also as a gratification to his wounded feelings, as an atonement for the neglect with which they have so long treated his ministry. If he permits such feelings to exist, he cannot easily conceal them. He may declare that his warmth is the warmth of love to their souls; but the impression of his hearers will be produced, not by his declarations, but by these symptoms of unhallowed excitement. Those who most need instruction, are often the most ready to notice the least improper feeling or language in him who would instruct them. For such improprieties in themselves, they can find abundant excuses, while they can find none for him who would teach them the fear of God. Truth thus presented, will not be received; of course, his usefulness must be limited.

The threatenings of God are sometimes repeated with a sternness of manner which by no means accords with the subject. No part of a minister's duty requires more tenderness, or is more powerfully calculated to excite the deepest compassion, than that of passing sentence of death,—of eternal death, on his hearers; and yet this is sometimes done with a vehemence which accords much better with the feeling of anger and revenge, than of love and compassion. Few judges, in the civil court, can pass sentence of death on their fellow men, without some degree of tender emotion. This vehemence in a preacher of the gospel will not, by the hearers, be mistaken for zeal, an essential part of which is love; but will be referred to such motives as they cannot approve; their hearts will, therefore, be closed instead of opened to the reception of truth.

Love, fervent, unfeigned love to the souls of men, is the only safety from the tendency of these trials. This, however, will effectually secure the heart in which it exists from all these forbidden emotions. This we are taught in the positive words of

inspiration. *Love beareth all things*; that is, all provocations to any kind of unholy feeling. It requires no effort, and is no proof of love, for the mind to remain unmoved, when there is nothing to excite evil passions; but when provocations are presented, then it is that love exerts its heavenly and controlling influence, preserving the mind composed and free from all criminal excitement. *Love is not easily provoked*; or, as Macknight renders it, "love is not exasperated;" not in any degree, or by any provocations. It is much easier to prevent the very first risings of evil passion, than to suppress it, after it has risen. This is the manner, and this the time, when love exerts its control: before the motive, derived from the provocation, has affected the mind in the least degree, love presents much more powerful motives in favor of meekness and forbearance. Love preoccupies the thoughts, leading them off from the cause of irritation, and thus secures the dominion of the heart. Nor will it produce these happy effects for a month or a year only; for *love suffereth long*. The objects on which it is placed, and the causes by which it is excited are the same at all times. If it preserves the minister of Jesus in safety through the trials of one day, one month, one year, it will through the next; for it is not weakened, but rather strengthened, by these trials. But this is not all; *love is kind, and seeketh not her own interest only*. Towards those for whose salvation he labors, it is active benevolence, it is real kindness and compassion. He is willing to do any thing and to suffer any thing to promote their spiritual interest. They may remain insensible under his ministry, may speak evil of him, may become his enemies; but he will not be overcome by these provocations, but will labor to overcome their evil dispositions and their wicked hearts by greater kindness.

But love unfeigned will commend him as a preacher of the word for another reason: it will purify the heart from moral defilement. The love of God and the love of sin, cannot reign in the heart at the same time. It is in this way that faith purifies the heart and regulates the life. *Faith worketh*, that is, produces its effects, *by love*; by exciting this affection, the love of sin, and indeed all sinful passions, are weakened, cast out from the throne of the heart, and finally destroyed. *The love of God thus shed abroad in his heart*, every sermon he preaches, every visit he makes, every word he speaks, every action of his life, will be seen to flow from kindness. He will enjoin on them no duties in the discharge of which he does not live, warn them against no sin which he does not avoid, prohibit them from no pleasures from which he does not himself abstain. He will *show himself a pattern of good works; an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*. *Giving no offence in any thing*, even his enemies will have no evil thing to say of him. If, however, he should not escape the reproach of ungodly men, he will cast over their sins the mantle of love, and the less he is loved, the more abundantly he will love them.

With well-doing he will put to silence the *ignorance of foolish men.*

Now, *the word of God*, in itself, is *quick and powerful*. This is testified by those who hate and resist it; by the painful convictions of the awakened; and by the piety of those who receive it. No man rejects a doctrine which he believes and acknowledges to be true; for this would involve an absurdity with which he does not wish to be chargeable. The truth, indeed, is often rejected; not, however, as truth, but as error. The tendency of love, of meekness, of humility, of kindness, is to conciliate, to attract, to assimilate. Even the bitterest enemy, who can be brought to feel and acknowledge that he has received an act of kindness, will find, through the influence of this kindness, the hatred and malice of his heart yielding and softening, and feelings of approbation and friendship rising in their place. Kindness, indeed, is often resented, but, to justify this resentment, the action or the treatment is ascribed to other motives than those of kindness. When, therefore, the word of truth, which possesses an intrinsic energy to enlighten the mind and control the conscience, is plainly preached, in all its bearings, connection, and harmony, by one whose life is pure, with the earnest and affectionate spirit of love; it will be exceedingly difficult to reject the truth when thus presented; to divest the truth of its own appropriate character, and ascribe to it the properties of error; to call that malevolence, which is genuine kindness.

REMARKS.

1. The fact that wicked men, who are determined to live in sin, do hate, and shun, and resist the truth, offers an important lesson to the Christian minister; one which he should not fail to improve. It teaches him that though these men may follow their sinful passions, yet truth exerts an important influence on their conscience; an influence which it requires their utmost art to conceal, and which, like the hand-writing on the wall, often causes them to tremble in the midst of their loudest mirth, and their licentious revellings. Let him wield this weapon faithfully, and it will commend itself, and him who preaches it, to the conscience. These men dread the voice of conscience, when roused by the light, as they do the grasp of death or the voice of God. He may receive their bitter reviling; yet even this will prove that conscience is on the side of truth, and gives a reluctant testimony in its favor.

2. From this view of the subject, the Christian teacher may clearly perceive, that if he would be a co-worker with God, in the salvation of sinners, he must *preach the word*, adapted by suitable illustrations, as far as possible, to their capacities. He must prove it to be the word of God, and press it upon their conscience with an earnestness that will take no denial. If he would

banish that ignorance which darkens the minds of multitudes, it can be done by the light of truth alone. If he would eradicate those errors and delusions, which lead so many thousands to ruin, truth alone can accomplish the object. If he would save his hearers from the degrading influence of superstition, from the fitful and feverish starts of wild fanaticism, truth is the best, the most effectual remedy for these evils. If he would build up the people of God in their most holy faith, excite in them a spirit of active benevolence, he must shed the light of truth into their hearts.

3. With what prayerful diligence should the minister of Jesus cultivate the spirit of love! This cannot be called up by a simple act of volition. To excite this devout affection, he must think, with intense application, of the goodness of God in sending his own Son, to be the propitiation for sin; of the condescension and kindness of Christ in dying for sinners; of the souls of men, exposed to perdition, and yet invited to become heirs of glory. Without the constraining influence of love, his work will be but an irksome task, performed with reluctance, and only from a regard to his own character, and to escape the reproach of his own conscience. He is the beating heart in the church. He should circulate around him the pure doctrines of the cross, qualified with the healthful spirit of love. This spirit, through the blessing of God, will be diffused among his beloved people; the cause of Christ will flourish under his ministry; his duty will be his privilege; his work, the pleasure of his life.

4. The hearers of the gospel have a deep interest in this subject. For your sake the office of the ministry was instituted; for your sake he who fills it, devotes himself to the duties and trials peculiar to this office. You will be the joy or the grief of his soul. If you are the zealous and active disciples of Christ, you will be his glory and his joy; but if you remain impenitent, you burden his soul with sorrow. Could you follow him, at the close of public service, to his closet, and witness the anguish of his heart, and hear his desponding complaints to God, you must feel compassion for him. By obeying the gospel, you will change this anguish into joy, these complaints into grateful praises. If you persevere in rejecting the Saviour, you bring upon yourselves *swift destruction*; your repentance will not only rejoice the heart of your pastor, but will give joy in heaven, and will secure your own eternal salvation.