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1877
The wisdom of winning Souls.

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SERMON,

DELIVERED

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. JOHN WALKER,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CHURCH IN GREENFIELD,

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BY WILLIAM MORRISON, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN LONDONDERRY.

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SERMON.

PROVERBS XI. 30.

He that winneth souls is wise.

VARIOUS are the duties and moral obligations incumbent on us as members of society. A due regard to them discovers wisdom, and the neglect of them weakness and folly. The observance of them is inseparably connected with our real honor and safety. According to their nature and effects on society, a proportioned degree of wisdom is necessary for a faithful and proper discharge of them. Are we parents, we need wisdom and skill to manage with propriety the affairs of our families, and to bring up our children either for honor or comfort to themselves, or usefulness to others. Are we farmers, we need wisdom to know the times and the seasons when, and the manner how, to cultivate our fields in order to have any rational prospect of a joyful harvest. Whether we are merchants in the store, or mechanics in the workshop ; whether advocates at the bar, or physicians in the hospital ; whether judges on the bench, or statesmen at the forum ; generals in the field, or counsellors in the cabinet ; we all need wisdom proportioned to the dignity of the station we occupy, and the difficulties we have to encounter in acting well our part for our own, and the public good. If, in those professions which relate chiefly to the concerns of the body, we need wisdom, what additional force and solemnity has the truth of the maxim in our text. *He that winneth souls is wise.*

It must appear obvious, that these words are peculiarly applicable to the character and work of a gospel minister. The maxim must appear correct in reasoning

either from effect to cause, or from cause to effect. Those pious labors which are regulated by the word of God, and which are blest with success in winning souls, display wisdom. He, who engages in the profession of winning souls, needs the wisdom of Heaven to direct his steps. He acts in a public capacity. He is examined by the scrutinizing eye of an independent public. He has many powerful prejudices to encounter. Every person, whether good or bad, high or low, wise or foolish, assumes, without hesitation, the right of judging and passing sentence on the private character and public labors of a gospel minister ; and to him with peculiar propriety the old proverb is applicable, " that as dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth an unpleasant savor, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." And above all, as he must render an account of his labors for the souls of those committed to his care at the awful tribunal whence lies no appeal, he needs wisdom.

The word wisdom is used variously ; sometimes it was used among the Grecians to comprehend the knowledge of nature, or of causes and effects in general ; and is expressive of the science of philosophy both natural and moral. Thus the word philosophy is composed of two Greek words, *philia*, love, and *sophia*, wisdom, and accordingly, a philosopher signifies a lover of wisdom or knowledge. Sometimes it may signify penetration and talents, both natural and acquired, to render us capable of preserving, choosing and prudently and faithfully persevering in the use of the best means to obtain or accomplish the end proposed.

In the word of God, wisdom implies true religion ; and accordingly, the virtuous and pious are called wise, and the wicked foolish.

In an age of increasing learning like the present, it is not too much to say, that a good degree of knowledge both in a natural and moral point of view, in the history of the church and of the world, penetration of mind, prudence in deportment, a just sense of religion, and the fear of God, are necessary qualifications of a gospel minister who is wise to win souls. The end proposed to a gospel minister is to win, or as the learned Paul ob-

serves, to catch souls, to recover, or save souls from that approaching state of misery and destruction which threatens the unbelieving and impenitent. The wisdom he needs should be in proportion to the magnitude of the work, and in some measure paramount to the difficulties which oppose the attainment of so desirable an end.

To display the truth of the maxim in our text, we shall briefly consider,

First. The subject to be won.

Secondly. From what, and to what, it is to be won.

Thirdly. The obstacles which oppose the labors of those who are engaged to win souls, together with the awful consequences those must endure whose souls are not won by the offer of the gospel.

And *First.* The subject to be won is the soul ; not a mass or composition of material substances, such as flesh, blood and bones. It needs wisdom to discern the worth of the precious and immortal soul. Our Saviour displayed his knowledge of the value of the soul, when he said, *what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.* Many, alas ! discover great anxiety concerning their bodies, enquire what they shall eat and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed ; but with regard to their souls, act as if they were of little consequence. Such are inferior in wisdom to the heathen, who said, he chose to be distinguished, and to have his name transmitted to posterity by actions of the mind, rather than by bodily exercise ; because, said he, my body I have in common with the brutes, but the soul in common with the gods.

The soul possesses powers and faculties, in the proper exercise of which, it may love, fear, worship and enjoy communion with God. The soul possesses an understanding to search for truth, a will to choose good, a power to perceive moral excellence, that it may refuse evil, and affections to set on things above ; or as the Poet, Dr. YOUNG, has sublimely observed—

“ ’Tis wing’d by heaven
To fly at infinite and reach it there,
Where seraphs gather immortality,
On life’s fair tree fast by the throne of God—

When momentary ages are no more.”

The soul is endued with a reasoning faculty to lay down premises and draw conclusions ; to investigate the principles and open the paths of useful science to other generations. Such are the distinguishing faculties which display the worth of the soul, and evince the propriety of incessant exertions to save it. If any thing more be necessary to evince its worth, and the wisdom of saving it, should not the infinite price paid for its redemption, and the lamp of gospel ordinances which are established to cast light on the way in which it should be saved, have a powerful effect on our minds ? And this held up to view by God himself in the time of the patriarchs and prophets, in the days of the apostles and primitive churches, with the promise of his presence to the end of the world, together with the continuation of the gospel ministry, the prevalence and success of the plain, unadulterated doctrines of the cross, and the preservation of the church, though called to pass through scenes of persecution and seas of blood ? Should not these things evince to a careless world, that the soul is precious, and that he is wise who wins it ? Should not the immortality of its nature evince to us that it is wise to save it ? Tho' heaven and earth shall pass away ; the soul must exist forever, either in happiness or misery. Considering the eternal existence of the soul, what wisdom can be more important and interesting than that which is engaged for its salvation. Of so great worth is the soul, as a subject to be won or lost, ruined or saved, that the hosts both of heaven and hell are in a state of rivalry and great agitation concerning it. With regard to the soul, Christ and Belial are directly opposite in their employments. Satan contended for the body of Moses ; and we may with propriety suppose that his design was to ruin souls, which are infinitely more valuable than a lump of mouldering clay. It is in the powers and faculties of the soul, that man was created after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

We shall, *Secondly*, observe, that he who wins souls must be wise, when we consider from what and to what the soul is to be won.

The soul that is won is recovered from sin, the source of evil exercises, such as rebellion, ingratitude and insurrection against God—from the powerful propensity to moral evil—from the love of sin in heart and the practice of it in life—from the guilt, pollution and demerit of sin to all holy obedience and conformity of disposition to the moral image of God—to submit to all the dispensations of God's holy providence—to acknowledge the excellency of his government, and to rejoice in the moral beauty of all his administrations.

The soul, that is won from sin, is saved from infidelity and hatred against God and his law, to the exercise of faith and love, and all the habits and exercises which distinguish and ornament it with the salvation of God. The soul, that is won from sin, is recovered from the deformity of moral evil to the beauty of holiness, and appears fair as the moon, clear as the sun, beautiful as Tirzah and comely as Jerusalem. It is wise to win the soul, because in winning it from sin, it is exalted from the most awful state of darkness and ignorance to God's marvellous light and knowledge. Hence the soul is considered as blind and ignorant, until it is recovered from a state of sin, as knowing not God, and without God or any knowledge of Christ. This is evident from what Christ said to the woman of Samaria. "If thou knowest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The soul, that is won from sin, is saved from the worst of all beings, places and employments, to the greatest and best of all beings, places, enjoyments and exercises. It is won from the power of Satan to God—from the bondage and slavery of Satan to the glorious liberty of the sons of God—from living on the husks and vanities of time, to live by faith on the bread of life that came down from heaven, that giveth life to the world. ~~The soul~~, that is won, according to the meaning of the text, is won from sin, Satan, and the ensnaring temptations of an evil world—from the sting of death and the power of the grave, to a state of holiness and life—to an innumerable company of angels—to Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant—to the general assembly and church of

the first born, whose names are written in the book of life—to heaven itself, and to the right hand of God, in whose presenee is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. It is won, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. It is won to glory, and the eternal enjoyment of God himself. The eternity of God is the date of the soul's happiness that is won. The immutability of God is the cup of rest to the soul that is won. The immensity of Jehovah constitutes the bounds of the inheritance prepared for the soul that is won.

We are, *Thirdly*, to consider the obstacles which oppose the labors of those who are engaged to win souls, together with the awful consequences those must endure whose souls are not won by the offer of the gospel.

The souls which are saved are scarcely saved, nothing more than saved. With all the care, wisdom and exertions they can use, through the blessing and direction of God, they make their lean escape from ruin, as Lot did from Sodom. To enumerate all the sources whence opposition arises to the salvation of the soul, would fill volumes. Let a few be noticed, as sufficient to evince the necessity of wisdom in a gospel minister. Opposition arises from the pride, passions and humors of the human heart. Men must be taught humbling truths. They must be taught what they are by nature. The carnal mind is a proud, vain and self-conceited mind, and it requires wisdom to manage the doctrine of depravity with success. Men, in a state of nature, generally speaking, are prejudiced, and prepossessed against plain and humbling truths. They are opposed to the doctrine of the universal sovereignty and decrees of God. But this doctrine must be taught, because it is a true and bible doctrine. It belongs however to the deep things of God and requires penetration and prudence in expression, to inculcate it with success. On this subject, it is possible to speculate beyond profit to ourselves, or edification to others. The plain manner in which Christ taught divine truths, should be imitated. We are informed, that because the preacher was wise, he taught the people knowledge, and sought out acceptable words—words of truth. The words of the

wise are as goads and nails fastened. Through the blessing of God, they fasten conversion in the minds of those who are blest with the belief of divine truths. The words of the wise are as apples of gold set in pictures of silver, because fitly or wisely spoken.

The allurements of the world require wisdom in winning the soul from them. The wealth of the world has a dangerous influence, from which it is difficult to win the soul. It requires wisdom to win the soul from the deceitful and flattering honors of worldly preferment, to the honor which cometh from God. Many are in danger of being ruined and overwhelmed in the ruin of licentious gratifications and intemperance, and it requires wisdom to use the best means to save them from sinking in their folly to eternal destruction.

The sinful customs, fashions and vain amusements of the world oppose the salvation of the soul, and occasion a waste of time and abuse of talents. To these we may add the wiles of Satan, who, though his power is limited, yet exercises great cunning and unwearied diligence in going about, seeking whom he may devour. All his efforts are used and intended to destroy; and a minister needs wisdom to detect his wiles, that he may warn sinners to escape the dangers in which they are involved. Ministers need wisdom to win souls from erroneous and destructive sentiments concerning religion. The human race, with very few exceptions, profess to believe some religious sentiments, and to be governed by religious principles. It is necessary that they be exhorted to embrace the sentiments which are founded in the plain truths of the bible, lest they embrace those which may prove destructive to the peace of their souls. Through the influence of false sentiments, and the delusions of ignorance, thousands and millions are worshippers of idols. Some worship the sun, others the moon, some the stars, and some stocks and stones, the works of men's hands, &c. Under the influence of these idolatrous sentiments, in some of the dark corners of the world, the most horrid cruelty prevails. From the influence of false notions of religion sectarians swarm in our country, creeping into private houses, and leading astray silly and weak persons, to the destruction of all good order and regularity. Such is the

flame of their zeal, and the whirlwind of their enthusiastic delusions, that great wisdom is necessary in choosing the means and manner of restraining them. We are informed of the doctrines of devils, and told that Satan can appear as an angel of light. Accordingly, we are commanded to try the spirit, whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Under the influence of such prophets, if any man is too covetous to support the gospel in an orderly manner, he will unite with a class of people who pretend that religion needs no temporal support. Under the same influence, if a man becomes displeased with those sentiments which restrain vice and enjoin holiness, he will espouse those false sentiments which promise salvation in sin, and final safety, should he wallow in the mire of all fleshly propensities. Though it is as obvious as the sun at noon day, that such sentiments are erroneous and dangerous, yet it is not an easy matter to save souls from embracing them, or to persuade them who have, to forsake their evil ways.

When we consider the pride, passions and prejudices of the human heart, the alluring vanities of the world, the wiles of Satan, and the influence of false teachers, all co-operating in favor of the moral depravity of the heart, we may justly exclaim, under a conviction of our want of wisdom to win souls, "who is sufficient for these things?" and may, with propriety, acknowledge, that he who wins souls is wise. This appears more strikingly evident, when we consider the dreadful consequences those must forever endure who are lost.

When the soul is lost, the body is lost with it. The eye no longer beholds objects with grateful satisfaction, but with sensual and unholy desires. The ear is no longer open to useful instruction. When the soul is lost, all the bodily members go into captivity, as members of unrighteousness. When breath departs from the body, the soul that is lost is sown in corruption, but never to be raised to incorruption. If our souls are lost, our time and opportunities are lost, and shew that we have not so numbered our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. When we look back, our lives appear to be a wild waste of precious time and opportunities. Should he, whose soul is lost, live an hundred years under the most favor-

able opportunities and gospel privileges, he finally dies accursed. When the soul is lost, all the means and pains used to reclaim it are lost. The punishments God administers in adversity are lost, for they serve to harden. The blessings and privileges of prosperity are lost; because they elate the soul with pride. The common operations of the spirit are lost to the soul that is blind to approaching ruin; because they are used as occasions to encourage a vain and presumptuous hope. All the means used either by God or man to convert the soul are lost to the sinner who dies in a state of impenitence. They only serve to aggravate his future misery, and render his situation more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. All his talents, whether natural or acquired, are lost to him whose soul is lost. If the unhappy man has more penetration and learning than others, they are lost. He acts the part of the prodigal, and wastes them. The soul that is lost, has lost heaven and all the glories of an invisible world, that which is represented under every emblem of magnificence and delight, as a crown, a kingdom, &c.

To what are those lost whose souls are lost? They are lost to themselves. Their loss almost surpasses the power of the soul to endure. Hence Cain said, My punishment is greater than I can bear. The soliloquy of the soul that is lost may with propriety be like the following :—My innocence, my honor, my peace of mind, the favor of my Maker, the domestic, and, dearer still, the heavenly and sublime joys which sweeten and dignify existence, are forever lost. I have lost all that can sweeten the desire of existence. I have lost and destroyed myself.

Those, whose souls are lost, are in a certain sense lost to all others. They are lost to the declarative honor and glory of God who made them, to Christ who redeems, and to the Holy Spirit who sanctifies. They are lost to the general assembly and church of the first born, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and also to an innumerable company of angels; for they shall never join nor see them, to be with them in glory. Those, whose souls are lost, are also lost to all the exercises of the redeemed; their mouths shall never be opened to praise him, nor hearts open to enjoy communion with

God. They are debarred from his presence and the smiles of his countenance ; the just victims of his frowns and displeasure. Their loss, with respect to themselves, is universal. Every thing is lost to the soul that is finally condemned. As all things are secure in Christ to the soul that is won, so all things are lost to the soul that is ruined ; things present and to come ; things temporal as well as spiritual, are lost. Death is not gain, but loss ; resurrection is not gain, but loss ; judgment is not gain, but loss ; and immortality is the everlasting curse of the soul that is lost.

This is an unparalleled loss. No loss can equal it, whether by sea or land ; by fire, famine, pestilence or sword. The loss of health, strength, food and raiment is great ; but this can be endured. The loss of crowns and kingdoms has been borne with magnanimity ; but the loss of the soul, who can bear ?

The loss of the soul is an irreparable and irrecoverable loss. A man may lose his health for a time, and afterwards recover it. He may lose his estate, and by care and future industry recover it. He may lose his reputation, and afterwards, by a uniform course of good behaviour, in a good measure recover the favor and good opinion of the virtuous and benevolent : But when the soul is lost, alas ! it can never be regained ; it is gone beyond hope of recovery ; condemned without reprieve, and destroyed without remedy.

The loss of the soul is an everlasting loss. We must, if we would be wise to win souls, disturb the dangerous slumbers of those who are eminent in worldly wisdom, as well as alarm the fears of the foolish, who would sleep the sleep of death to their souls. If the heathen mariners called upon Jonah to awake and call upon his God, when the vessel was riding the storms and tempests of the ocean, with how much more propriety may we call on those who are sleeping and careless, while exposed to the flames of eternal fire.

We have considered the truth of the proposition in our text, that he who winneth souls is wise, and that a minister of the gospel needs great wisdom to win the souls of men from the allurements of sin and the snares of death.

If your patience is not already exhausted, you will please to attend to a few inferences which may be deduced from the subject ; to a short address to the candidate about to be set apart to the gospel ministry ; and to a few observations which may be offered to the church and congregation, and also to this respectable assembly.

If the definition of wisdom, as comprehending talents both natural and acquired, with prudence in deportment and real religion in heart, be true ; then, certainly, it nearly concerns presbyteries and associations to guard against admitting irreligious, weak or unlearned men into the ministry. A carnal or graceless minister is a deplorable judgment to the church of God, and cannot be supposed to realize the worth of souls, the evil nature of sin, or the happiness to which souls are to be won. Ministers of this description are a prey to the allurements of the world, the wiles of Satan, and the moral depravity of their own hearts. It is equally obvious, that a weak and unlearned minister is not wise to win souls. A minister is set for the defence of the gospel, and should be well instructed in all necessary wisdom and knowledge ; but if he is weak and ignorant, he is ill qualified to defend it. If Paul, with all his learning, natural talents and grace, exclaimed, " who is sufficient for these things ? " what shall we think of those who are so weak and unlearned as to be scarcely able to read a page of any author in their own mother tongue with propriety and understanding ? Is it too much to say, that such resemble the blind leading the blind, and that both fall into the ditch ? Is it not just to suspect such are spoken of as wresting the scriptures to their own destruction ; and as novices who are lifted up with pride to fall into the condemnation of the devil. Should it be said that God employed illiterate men in the days of the apostles to preach the gospel, and for the same reason they ought now to be admitted because God can do what he pleases by their instrumentality ; to this we reply, that it is not what he has power to do, but what he does do, that is to be the rule of our conduct in this case. Do we find that God at the present time qualifies men to work miracles as he did then ? When, therefore, these weak and unlearned brethren,

who affect to be preachers, shall give us such testimony of a call to preach as the apostles did, by raising the dead, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and speaking in different languages to a variety of people from different countries, we shall then be disposed to admit the truth of their call to preach the gospel. But while we see such ignorant and weak persons puffed up with pride and self-conceit, we cannot forbear warning people against them, and enjoining upon our people to beware of such, as not wise to win souls.

From the indispensable necessity of wisdom in this all-important employment, we infer the great propriety of ministers taking the holy scriptures as the rule of their wisdom, and whatever is there revealed, it is wise to bring forward to win souls, for all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. Wisdom will not direct us to shun the declaration of any part of the council of God. The doctrines of moral depravity, divine sovereignty and divine decrees or the eternal purposes of God, which he executes in the works of creation and providence, are to be inculcated. Wisdom also forbids any affectation of being wise above what is written. Our ideas with respect to the deep and mysterious parts of the christian religion should be clothed in scripture language, acknowledging that secret things belong unto God, but revealed things unto us and our children forever.

It is the soul which is to be won ; therefore it is wise to use the means of grace with a steady dependance on divine influence to render them effectual. The hearts and souls of all men are in the hand of God, and he can turn them whithersoever he pleases. Paul may plant, Apollos may water ; but God giveth the increase. We are to draw the bow, and leave the direction of the arrow to infinite wisdom.

My dear Son and Brother in the Gospel,

To you, the solemnities of this day must be peculiarly interesting. You are to be invested with an office which elevates you to an employment more exalted in its nature, and more important in its consequences than to have temporal dominion over millions of nations. You

are this day to be elevated to an office, in the faithful discharge of which, the declarative honor and glory of God, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in this place, and the salvation of the souls of your hearers, are deeply involved. You are to be invested with an office which, in the sequel, will subject you to the highest degree of responsibility at the tribunal of God. You will be accountable for the souls of your hearers. The enquiry will appear highly consistent, whether you shall have faithfully, wisely and prayerfully sought their salvation, by being instant in season and out of season ; or whether you shall have sported with their eternal ruin by your neglect. Should any be lost through your neglect and folly, the united exertions of all created intelligence cannot save you from ruin with them. For thus saith the unerring word of the final Judge of ministers and people : " Their blood will I require at the watchman's hand." But, my dear Sir, from a well formed acquaintance with you, I hope better things of you. I hope and think I have reason to conclude you have a share of the grace of God and of the wisdom necessary to win souls. Though I thus speak of things which accompaſy salvation to your people, you are not to sit down as if already perfect ; but study to advance in divine wisdom, and in all useful knowledge and understanding, reading much, and praying more for that wisdom that is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Finally, my Son and Brother, with respect to your honor and usefulness I cannot be indifferent, for while you were with me I was one of the happiest of teachers. Go, under a deep impression of the importance of your office, into the best employment that ever challenged the attention of men or angels ; and persevere, constantly relying on the presence of your Divine Master. If you are faithful in discharging the great and important duties which claim your undivided attention, you will have a name among them who are wise to win souls, and a place among those constellations of glory who have been instrumental in turning many to righteousness, and will shine as stars forever and ever.

Dear Brethren of this Church and Congregation,

Permit me to say that the dismissal of your late worthy Pastor touched our minds with concern for your spiritual welfare. We frequently find christian churches and societies, by vicissitudes and changes of this nature, broken into parties and scattered upon the mountains of prejudices and errors, a prey to wolves in sheep's clothing. By the good hand of God and of Christ the chief shepherd, you have been saved from this destruction. The solemnities of this day do you honor in the sight of christian churches and christian ministers. They are the joyful effects of your united and immediate exertions, and we would trust of your secret prayers for the re-establishment of the ordinances of the gospel of Christ. Your eyes behold the man of your choice given you as your minister. We congratulate you, my brethren in the Lord. Encourage the heart of your elected pastor; strengthen his hands in the work of the ministry. Pray to God for the success and usefulness of your minister. A praying people make a preaching pastor. Attend to the solemnities of public instruction. And while we hope your pastor will study to be wise to win souls in things spiritual, we repose confidence in you, that you will despise the meanness and folly of neglecting him in things temporal. Receive him in love; and long may he live, a wise and successful minister among you. For many years may you and your offspring reap advantage from the solemn work of this day; and when you and your minister shall dissolve connexion on earth, may all meet in the house not made with hands, where the pains of separation never shall be known.

Fellow-Citizens of this respectable Assembly,

Under impressions of gratitude for your patient and decorous attention, you will pardon my freedom in asking the continuance of the same favor for a few words more.

We are here assembled from various places, blessed be God, not to pay a blind and fatal adoration to ponderous idols in sacrificing our bodies for the imaginary good of our souls—not to throw our children into the fire to appease a cruel fictitious deity—not to see our

fair sex stretched on the funeral pile with the loathsome breathless bodies of their deceased husbands, as is frequently the case in public assemblies in pagan nations. We are met in a land of gospel light. We are met to attend an institution of that God who is possessed of all possible perfections, and fills heaven and earth with his presence. We have met to worship that glorious Being who sent his Son into the world to seek and save, and not to destroy sinners. We are convened together on a joyful occasion, not to rejoice with gamblers and bacchanalians at the table of intemperance—not to unite in the clamorous folly of those who assemble on the plains of horse-racing. We are convened, blessed be God, not as actors or spectators of plays in theatres, sporting themselves with representations of thunder and lightning, fire and brimstone, the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell. But we are convened in the house of God to praise his name, to bow before him in the beauty of holiness, and to worship him in spirit and in truth.

As it is likely we have never been all together before, so it is probable, and more than probable, that we never shall all meet again, until we shall be summoned, with unnumbered millions, by the sound of the last trumpet, to the tribunal of God; when all who are in their graves shall come forth, they who have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. For this day's solemn transaction we are accountable. With what renewed and increasing impressions of the worth of our souls, should we retire from this house! With what renewed conviction of the reality of true religion, or our interest in Christ as the one thing needful! Without it, we never can be at rest. Without it, our souls must be driven away in their wickedness to the abodes of eternal misery and death. Without it, we shall never glorify God on earth, nor finally join the general assembly and church of the First Born, who surround the throne of God and of the Lamb, engaged in ascriptions of praise forever and ever. AMEN.

THE CHARGE.

BY REED PAIGE, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN HANCOCK.

OF all the offices into which any of mankind enter in this world, that of the gospel ministry is the most sacred, and followed with the most weighty and solemn consequences. This office was appointed with special reference to the great work of man's redemption, and that the only way of salvation for guilty man might be proclaimed through this wicked and perishing world.

If those who are in this office shall be faithful, they will be promotive of the declarative glory of God on earth, they will secure their own eternal felicity, and they may be the happy instruments of the salvation of many souls who are ready to perish. But if they shall be unfaithful, they will dishonor God, they will load their own souls with accumulated guilt, and they may draw multitudes after them down into the awful regions of eternal damnation. The consequences of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in ministers of the gospel attach not to themselves only ; but they reach, they will have influence and a durable effect upon all their hearers. "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch."

It is, therefore, matter of no surprise that Christ did, by his conduct while on earth, and by the example of his holy apostles, give direction that those who become ministers in his kingdom, be seriously exhorted and solemnly charged, that they "take heed to the ministry which they have received in the Lord, that they fulfil it." Wherefore,

Reverend and dear sir, as you have now, by solemn prayer with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, been ordained the Pastor of this Church and Minister of this People, so we, your elder brethren in this holy office, do now in the presence and hearing of this great assembly, and, what is infinitely more solemn, we do now, "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who

shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom," exhort and charge you to be a faithful minister in the kingdom of the Son of God.

And as one great and essential part of the gospel ministry consists in preaching; so we charge you to preach, not the commandments of men, not the cold and lifeless morality of heathen philosophers, but the weighty and animated truths of God's word—"the unsearchable riches of Christ." Hear the words of God on this subject, which deeply concern you and all of us in the gospel ministry. "Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word. He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Paul could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And while we are told that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God," we are also told, that "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law."

Let, therefore, neither the frowns nor the flatteries of men, neither their friendship nor their enmity, nor any worldly consideration, deter you from preaching the whole of that system of divine truth which the scriptures reveal. For the truths of the scriptures are the words of eternal life, and the great means which a merciful God uses to save men from sin and from ruin. Be careful, therefore, to study the scriptures, and to attend to all those things which shall help you to understand the holy oracles. Therefore, give thyself to reading, meditation and prayer. Read the great volume of creation and providence, look into the pages of eternity as revealed in the scriptures, and meditate deeply on the immense truths they bring to view, that, with a heart full of weighty matter, you may, from sabbath to sabbath, enter within these sacred walls, having the everlasting gospel to preach to your hearers.

You are not only to preach to your hearers, but you are to pray with and for them. In this earthly temple, you are to be their mouth to God, as well as to speak the words of God to them. Let their interest, therefore, especially their spiritual and eternal interest, lie with such

impressive weight on your mind, that you may remember them in all your petitions at the throne of grace, and that you may in truth adopt the words of an holy apostle : " God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."

Furthermore, you are to be a watchman on this part of the wall of God's Jerusalem ; and you are to watch for souls as one who must give account of himself to God. Know, therefore, the state of your flock ; and always be ready to speak a word in season to every man. Warn the wicked, alarm the secure, detect the hypocrite, direct the inquiring sinner to the Redeemer, comfort the mourning soul, and animate the saint, by opening to his view the great and precious promises of God.

Preside in the church with moderation and wisdom, and feed it with the sincere milk of the word of God. Have respect not only to Christ's sheep, but also to his lambs. Administer the ordinances of Christ's house to properly qualified subjects, and labor to have a holy discipline maintained in the church, of which you are now the pastor.

Keep thyself pure from the blood of all men. Let no man despise thy youth ; but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

The things which thou hast this day received, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Never countenance the introduction of men into this sacred office who are of immoral lives, nor ignorant men, nor men who teach doctrines subversive of the gospel.

In all things study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Labor to maintain the credit of the ministry, and magnify your office.

If your intention is to be faithful, you may expect to meet with trials and difficulties, not only with those which are common to other men, but with those which are peculiar to the gospel ministry. Every faithful minister has experienced opposition from this wicked

world. But let none of these things move you, neither count your life dear unto yourself. To endure trials patiently, to be faithful in your holy office, and to be successful in your ministry, rely upon the grace and strength of Him who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

And now, dear brother and fellow laborer in the Lord, we commend you to the almighty protection of that compassionate Saviour, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. "Be thou faithful unto death," and "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The Right Hand of Fellowship.

BY REV. JOHN M. WHITON,

OF ANTRIM.

THE work of a gospel minister is the most important that can employ the powers of a created mind. It presents many dangers to be encountered, many difficulties to be overcome. On the skill and fidelity, with which it is performed, eternal consequences depend. How much, then, do ministers need the prayers, the counsels and the aid of each other. When we further consider, that they are all engaged in the service of the same master, in the promulgation of the same gospel, and in the advancement of the same great cause, how desirable does it appear, that they should be knit together by the ties of love.

Mutual love, then, being the duty of the ministers of Christ, it is proper there should be some appropriate rite, expressive thereof, to be observed at their induction into the sacred office. Such a rite God has appointed. When James, Cephas and John, who were pillars in the church, perceived the grace given to Paul and Barnabas, they gave them the Right Hand of Fellowship. No doubt they did this by divine direction. Their act was designed by the Holy Ghost to stand as a precedent, to be followed, on similar occasions, by their successors in the ministry. Accordingly this rite has been observed in the Church from that period to the present day.

In observance of this divine institution, and by appointment of this Reverend Ecclesiastical Council, I do, my dear Sir, in their name, give you this *Right Hand*. By this pledge, we assure you of our affection. By this, we acknowledge your regular induction into the ministerial office, and your investiture with the same ministerial powers, as are possessed by ourselves. We now bid you welcome into this part of the vineyard of our Lord, and promise you, while in the faithful dis-

charge of your official duties, the aid of our friendship and our prayers ; expecting a return of the like friendship and assistance from you.

Strange will be your lot, should you not meet with a share of difficulty and trial. Even the Son of God was not exempted from these ; and 'tis enough, that the servants of Christ be as their Master. But let none of these things move you. Be faithful unto death. And when, my Brother, you take a final earthly review of the labors of your ministry, may you be enabled to adopt the triumphant exclamation—"I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

We rejoice with you, Brethren of this Church and Society, in the pleasing prospects now opening before you. We congratulate you on the uncommon unanimity which has marked your efforts to obtain the re-establishment of stated gospel administrations among you. Your eyes again behold your teacher. Long may you rejoice in his light. That you may profit by his labors, be diligent in attending upon his ministry, and forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. You will esteem him highly in love, for his work's sake. Amid the frequent trials and the arduous labors of his office, you will do all in your power to strengthen his hands and encourage his heart. You will not forget him in your prayers. And when you and your pastor appear together at the bar of Christ, may you there have a comfortable, happy meeting. May you, and each individual of this assembly, hear the approving voice of the Supreme Judge, and be admitted to dwell in his kingdom and presence. AMEN.

