

THE CHARACTER OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF THE  
GOSPEL DELINEATED—

IN A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED JANUARY 16, 1805,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

*THE REV. JOAB BRACE,*

TO THE

WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

OVER THE

*CHURCH AND CONGREGATION*

IN

NEWINGTON,

A PARISH IN WETHERSFIELD.

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HARTFORD,

PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN.

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1807.

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## A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

### COLOSSIANS I. 7.

▲ FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST.—The whole verse is,  
*As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant,  
who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.*

ALL candid and reflecting people will admit, that to know what ought to be the character of a minister of the gospel, and what principles should animate his conduct, is of great moment. When a church and congregation are called, in Providence, to make choice of ONE, for themselves, if they know what character he ought to sustain, and what principles should govern him, they will be enabled to make a wise choice. They will also esteem him for his office sake; and if so happy as to enjoy the privilege of a regular Christian ministry, will be led to improve it aright. A Christian people, if well acquainted with what ought to be the character of Christ's ministers, will, it is presumed, ardently supplicate him, as the Lord of the harvest, to send forth faithful labourers into his harvest.

Epaphras was a faithful minister of Christ; and, on this account, dear to the apostle Paul, as a fellow servant. *As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you a FAITHFUL minister of Christ.* The connection of the words is this. Paul and Timothy present tender salutations to the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse. The spirit of Christianity leads all its ministers and professors, to

feel an affectionate friendship and benevolent regard for all the people of God, and to embrace all fit occasions to testify their sincere affection. Paul, in this Letter to the Colossians, which was written from Rome, begins with expressing his pious and ardent wishes for their spiritual good—*Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.— Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints ; for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*

*As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.*

The single point, which will be attempted in the subsequent discourse, will be to delineate the character of a faithful minister of Christ.

It is hoped that all candid and judicious hearers will allow, that what will now be advanced, respecting the character of a faithful gospel minister, must necessarily constitute such a character ; and the pertinency of the subject to the very solemn and affecting occasion, upon which we are now assembled before God, all will readily perceive.

And, the *faithfulness* of a minister of Christ, necessarily implies real piety of heart. He cannot be a faithful minister unless a really good man. By a really good man is intended a regenerated man. Religion in the heart, will alone render him faithful. It will make him conscientious in the discharge of his sacred trust. It alone will furnish him with knowledge and ability for his work. It will, more than all things else, contribute to render him happy and cheerful, impartial and sincere, ready and willing to do his duty. A gracious and sovereign God, may employ what instruments he pleases, in carrying on his designs of mercy among the children of men.

But can success in the evangelical ministry be reasonably expected, when the dispenser of the sacred mysteries, has no experimental knowledge of the truth—or is in a natural and unrenewed state? Would a rational man wish to employ one to guide and conduct him, in a path, beset with difficulties and dangers, with which he was wholly unacquainted? Were I about to undertake a voyage to a distant country, where my all was to be hazarded—and the course of the voyage lay through a rough and dangerous ocean, I should chuse to embark with one who practically knew the mariner's art, as well as had studied its theory. Real religion, in the heart, or a regenerated heart is the most essentially necessary qualification for a gospel minister; so essentially necessary, that, without it, all the human learning in the world, cannot qualify a man to act in that character. The most brilliant talents and exalted science, united to the most melodious voice and desirable powers of elocution, cannot qualify a man to be a gospel minister, if love to God—if faith in Christ—if repentance for sin—if love to the souls of men—if a renewed and sanctified heart be wanting. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ*, says the apostle Paul, *let him be anathema, maran-atha*. To pretend to preach a gospel, which we do not love and believe—to preach a Redeemer whom we have never owned or received—and to recommend and press upon the consciences of others, a religion, whose doctrines we do not relish, and whose duties it gives us pain to practise, in the view of common sense is certainly very absurd. No unholy man should minister in holy things. Those, who cultivate the heritage of the Lord, should love that heritage, and prefer Christ and his gospel to all things else. It is the idea of all our ministers and churches, that none may attempt to preach the gospel, without having a prevailing hope, that they have personally been the subjects of a work of grace on the heart. And happy is it that this is the case. The first enquiry then, when a church and people wish to obtain a licentiate to

settle over them in the work of the Christian ministry, ought to be, is he, in the judgment of charity, a really pious man, or does he profess to have experienced a renovation of soul, and give credible evidence of the same?—*So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.—He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.—He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Grace in the heart is, however, though the main, not the only qualification of a faithful minister of Christ. There must be likewise a competent degree of human literature. An ignorant man is incapable of teaching the Christian religion. A man must be learned, as well as pious. Unlearned and unstable men never were called of God to enter on the arduous business of teaching Christ's spiritual religion. Such come not at the call of a divine Redeemer, but thrust themselves, through spiritual pride and self-conceit, or a wicked ambition, into the work. It is awful presumption, in an unlearned man, to attempt to officiate as a minister of the gospel. In order to be qualified to officiate, in this holy and difficult work, there must be good natural powers and capacities of mind, a good utterance, and good acquaintance with the circle of the sciences. How can a man be able to teach, without extensive knowledge? There must then be human literature, as well as divine teachings. This is essential at all times, but peculiarly desirable in the present day, and in our own country. Most interesting is it, indeed, in all ages of the church, and in all countries, to the Christian religion, that its ministers be not only found in

the faith, but also learned ;—well read in ecclesiastical history and deeply studied in theology ; well versed in the languages in which the scriptures were originally written, and in the sciences generally taught in our universities ; much conversant, likewise, with the great writers on the various systems of doctrine known in the churches : and permit me to add, not strangers to the artful objections and sophistical reasonings of infidel authors, who have signalized themselves by their violent attacks on christianity. A pious, orthodox, and learned ministry, is the greatest blessing to the church and to a nation. Such alone will be faithful. Such will be eminently useful, and we may hope will, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, be made successful. In no age since the apostolic, and in no Christian country was there ever such a number of good and faithful ministers of Christ needed, as in our own country. IN OUR CHURCHES, and those connected with us, the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, more than ONE THOUSAND are wanted, to supply the vacancies in them and the new settlements. The call upon all missionary societies, from east to west, from north to south, is for a regular ministry. The cry is, “ give us ministers—give us ministers to break the bread of life unto us, and to teach us the knowledge of the Lord, the way of truth.” Our prayer, at the throne of grace, should be, that the Lord of the harvest would raise up and send forth faithful and able laborers into his harvest. Better, however, is it to have a few pious, orthodox, learned ministers, than to attempt to answer the EXTRAORDINARY CALL, in our new settlements, by bringing forward illiterate and unskilful workmen. The demand cannot be *immediately* supplied, without bringing forward such. SUCH, however pious, cannot officiate to advantage, in the holy ministry. The credit, and indeed, degree of religion, depend, more than is commonly conceived, on the character, respectability and literature of its authorized teachers. Ministers are clothed with the holy office, by the hands of the presbytery, or BY THE PASTORS OF THE CHURCHES, and must be

faithful. *Faithfulness*, in general, is being true to our trust, our engagements and promises ; and, in a gospel minister, sincerely, conscientiously and diligently attending to all his works, however painful or laborious,—is being true to the trust reposed in him. He must be faithful to his divine Lord and Master, who puts him into the office, and is head over all things to the church—faithful to God, to whom he is to render an account of his stewardship—faithful to his own soul, to the souls committed to his pastoral watch, and to all to whom he may, in the course of Providence, be called to preach the gospel of the Son of God.

In order to set before you, in the most instructive manner, the character of a *faithful minister of Christ*, one of the most amiable and respectable of characters—I shall go into some detail—

1. And, *faithfulness*, in a minister of Christ, we may observe, will lead him, to make the SAVIOUR the principal subject of all his preaching. And to make him the principal subject of his preaching, is to exhibit to the people, in due order, all the doctrines, which he taught, the duties of religion, which he enjoined, the virtues of morality, which he requires, and the ordinances, which he appointed. There are many temptations to withhold important, and necessary doctrines, lest we displease some of our hearers, or lose our character for scholarship, and elegance of taste, with the fashionable world. More are, no doubt, guilty of keeping back truth, than inculcating error ; of omitting duty, than committing crimes ; of not building the house, than wilfully pulling it down.

The system of religious truths is of wide extent. It includes all we are to believe. Man's original state of innocence and perfect holiness ; for God made man upright ;—holy in his image, and happy in his favor. His present fallen, depraved state ; by one man sin entered into the world ; human nature is now wholly corrupted : There is none good, no not one : All have gone astray from God : The carnal mind is enmity against God : by nature man

is altogether destitute of any holy principle : The divine purpose of mercy :—the steps taken, from age to age, to manifest it :—the person, divinity, undertaking, and sufferings of the Saviour :—all his laws as a teacher ; his atonement as a priest ; his dominion as a king :—the agency and influence of his spirit :—and of an all-surrounding Providence, are important parts of the revealed will of God. A faithful minister, will devote his health and time to study ; and will endeavor to make his people acquainted with the whole scheme of gospel truths ; laying the foundation as the Apostles laid it ; and building upon it, as they built. Some of the doctrines are more important and necessary than others. But none are unnecessary. A faithful minister will neither omit, nor misplace any. For all are precious—all are useful. None, therefore, are to be omitted, lest they should be made, through the corruption and prejudices of hearers, hurtful. It has been urged that some doctrines revealed by God, are unsafe to be preached, lest they should be abused. The sovereignty of God ; his eternal purpose ; and the freeness of his grace, are often passed by under this unjustifiable pretence. Every truth is capable of being abused by perverse and corrupt minds. And, perhaps, all have been, in some instances, abused. All the doctrines of Christ, are to be preached *openly*—to be preached *fully*—to be guarded against abuse, and sinners are to be told, if they wrest the good word of God, they do it to their own destruction. Whatever truths, a gracious and benevolent God is pleased to reveal ;—are best to be revealed—are necessary and useful. Infinite wisdom does, on the whole, what is best. Had man a becoming sense of this, there would not then be so many attempts, in one age and part of the christian church and another, to explain away or conceal what is most obviously contained in the sacred volume, such as the endlessness of future misery—the divinity of our Lord—the mystery of re-

derivation—the freeness of grace—the benign operations of the Holy Ghost on the heart—and fulness of the atonement. But we should join with the Apostle, in saying, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.* A faithful minister of the gospel will declare ALL THE COUNSEL of God. *I have not shunned, says our Apostle, to declare all the counsel of God. I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you from house to house.*

2. A faithful Minister will do his utmost, by assiduous application to study, reading, meditation, and prayer, not only to preach ALL Christ's doctrines, but to give to EACH its proper place. Some of the doctrines of the gospel must be considered, as the great and leading, all-important and foundation principles. Others are less necessary, and may be viewed as only circumstantial. If we carefully search the inspired volume, we shall find certain points of doctrine always exhibited, and seem to run through the scheme of revealed religion, and distinguish it from all fabulous theology. Such as the entirely lost state of man by nature—the absolute necessity of salvation by Christ—his sufferings in the sinner's room—free forgiveness through his atoning blood—a trinity of persons in the divine Unity—the new birth—the grace of the divine spirit to enlighten, convince, sanctify and comfort his people—justification by faith—the purity of the divine law—the exceeding evil of sin—holiness of life, and exclusion of the finally impenitent from the regions of blessedness. These doctrines are of such unspeakable moment, that they ought to be clearly explained, affectionately urged, and frequently repeated. They are the doctrines of primitive christianity: they are the doctrines of the REFORMATION: they make the substance of all protestant confessions of faith, of all the creeds in the church from the days of the Apostles. They are the glory of our church in this

land : they have, by the blessing of God, been eminently the means of revivals of religion in the christian world : they have, also, been sealed by the blood of thousands of suffering Martyrs. Faithfulness, in a gospel minister, will lead him to lay aside contentions and disputes about abstruse and metaphysical points, in the investigation of which too much profound erudition and zeal have already been expended ; and plainly, powerfully, and constantly hold up these grand and essential truths of God, giving to each its proper place, and just proportion. Then happy, thrice happy, would be the effect ; religion would revive, errors and infidelity be suppressed, our churches filled, our congregations thronged, and the tone of public morals raised.

3. *Faithfulness* in a minister of Christ, will uniformly dispose him to keep our divine Saviour in the eye of his hearers, in all his preaching. As a Redeemer is the all and in all of his religion, so he is to be constantly recommended by faithful ministers to their people, in his DIVINITY—in his mediatorial offices, characters and work—as prophet, priest, and king in his church, whose kingdom is not of this world, and whose design, in coming into this lost and ruined world, was to redeem and save it.—A gospel minister's great work is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. As his is the only name given among men under heaven, whereby any can be saved ; as he is the way, the truth, and the life ; as no man can come to the father but by him ; as he is the only foundation laid in Zion ; as there is salvation in no other ; as all the help and hope of perishing sinners are in him, so he is to be continually kept in the view of the hearer. No art or science can be taught to good advantage, but by explaining it, step by step, and observing a proper order and method. In the system of christianity, every truth holds its proper place, and loses in its force, by a removal from its station. We are to give every doctrine, duty, virtue, and ordinance its proper place. To arrange all

these, in their proper order, is what ought to be attempted. Man's wholly lost and ruined condition by nature must first be established, or we shall see no beauty in redemption, or need of it. If not guilty, why should repentance and remission of sins be preached in the name of Christ? If not altogether polluted, why need to be renewed? If not wretched, why talk of salvation? The whole need not a physician. In short, a Redeemer, in his divinity, offices, atonement, mediation, merits, intercession, and example, is the sum of the gospel. Not only faith and repentance, and all evangelical graces, views, exercises, and practices, but all duties and moral virtues are to be urged from Christ and him crucified. Out of him, no duty or virtue, no moral conduct can be accepted of a holy and sin-hating God. The hearer is never to be left in suspense, whether Christ and his atonement and all-perfect righteousness be the grand foundation of the sinner's justification and acceptance to eternal life.

4. *Faithfulness* in a gospel minister consists in giving to all a portion in due season. All need their portion of meat. The care and faithfulness, as well as wisdom of the steward appear to great advantage in dealing out to all, a portion in DUE SEASON. Both duties and doctrines derive a beauty and lustre from being seasonably placed before mankind. Instructions from the sacred desk should be always well-timed. And faithfulness in a minister of Christ will dispose him to endeavor to have all his instructions seasonable. A reproof may be worse than lost, when unseasonable. All the circumstances of a people are to be well weighed. Many a sermon, otherwise excellent, has lost half of its worth, because ill-timed. Subjects, and the method of treating them ought to be chosen with prudence and discretion. In order to give seasonable instructions, counsels, warnings, and reproofs, a minister must be well acquainted with the general state of religion, in the age in which he lives, and with the tone of the public morals, and with his

own congregation in particular. He must know their wants ; what sins prevail among them ; what duties are going into disrepute ; what doctrines are disrel-ished ; and what vices and errors are becoming fashionable. He cannot adapt his discourses to the cases and condition of his people, unless he understand them. Hence the necessity of a faithful pastor's knowing the state of his flock ; which are sickly and disordered ; which healthy and vigorous ; which unruly and turbulent. The physician for the body would be accounted ridiculous, who should undertake to apply means, before he had informed himself of the state of his patient. We are to consider what the state of religion is among our people, if we would be faithful ministers, or best promote the kingdom of Christ, and render our instructions seasonable. We are not to flatter any in an evil way, or to give them false hopes, or rivet their prejudices. If any doctrinal errors be getting in among our people, we are *early* to meet and oppose them. If any open sins be prevailing, we are to reprove, with all boldness. If any one class of duties be disesteemed, we are to recommend and urge it. In short, we are to watch for souls, as those that must give an account, at the final judgment. We are to stand as watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, to give warning of every rising danger, and approaching enemy ; to look all around us ; and to take heed both to ourselves and doctrines so as to save our own souls, and the souls of them that hear us ; to reclaim the erroneous ; to silence gainsayers ; to confirm the doubtful ; to console the mourning ; to admonish the careless ; to alarm the thoughtless ; to instruct the ignorant ; and to improve all divine providences, among a people for their spiritual good.

IN THE SECOND PLACE, *faithfulness* in gospel ministers respects the *manner* as well as *subject-matter* of their preaching.

1. And they will preach the gospel with great plainness, clearness, and simplicity. As their object

is not self credit, worldly influence, riches, popular applause, and self aggrandisement, so they will study to treat all religious and moral subjects, in a plain perspicuous, and definite manner. They will honestly endeavor to let their sentiments be known. They will speak so *plainly* and *definitely* as that the hearer may not be able to misapprehend or misunderstand them. They never will conceal their meaning, or the truth by any ambiguity of language, equivocation, mental reserve, or by the studied arts of a false eloquence, or splendor, pomp, and ornaments of diction. They will speak so clearly and plainly on every doctrine, duty, christian grace, holy exercise, and moral virtue as to be easily understood. In illustrating gospel-truths, they will aim at something infinitely more important than beauty, elegance and correctness of style, viz. to reach the heart—to convince the judgment—to move, affect, and enlighten the hearer. A faithful minister will always exhibit his ideas so as to be easily understood ; he will preach so as that the hearer may know what he believes—what principles he holds—or how he understands the doctrines of Christ. If we would be understood—if we would convince—if we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God—if we would be instrumental of building up the cause of Christ, the best and most glorious of all causes, plain and definite language must be employed. If a minister preach, on the great doctrines of the gospel, for years together, so that a diligent and intelligent, or even common hearer, cannot understand what his sentiments are, and certainly know them, he is totally inexcusable—he cannot be faithful—he must be an abomination in the sight of God. What plainness of speech did the Apostle Paul use ! *And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of spirit and power.*

2. *Faithfulness* in a minister of Christ, will influence him to be *bold* and *firm* in declaring the counsel of God to his people. He should preach all the truths of the gospel, boldly and honestly, without respect of persons, whether popular or unpopular. There are few temptations more dangerous to a minister than the fear of man. It often influences him, though he may know it not, to conceal doctrines, which may disgust or offend his hearers. Such is the malignant enmity of the wicked against the good, and bitterness of prejudice, that he may suffer injury from them in his name, substance, and person. They may destroy his reputation, peace, and influence, by open calumnies and lies, or vile insinuations, and secret whispers of deadly malice. Against this danger our Saviour has warned his disciples, in the following passage. *And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear ; fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell : yea, I say unto you fear him.* It is remarkable that in the prayer, recorded in scripture, as offered up by the apostles, for divine assistance in their sacred office, as well as those in which they ask the prayers and intercessions of their fellow christians, this circumstance is almost never forgotten. Firmness and resolution were what they felt that they continually needed. *And now Lord behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all BOLDNESS they may speak thy word.*—Again, *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth BOLDLY to make known the mystery of the gospel.* To please God and not man, is the object of a faithful minister. He will, therefore, boldly plead the cause of truth and righteousness, in an evil day, and among evil men, without regarding the persons of any, high or low, rich or poor. He must be resolved and determined to know nothing, among his people, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Consulting what is truth and duty in his holy ministry, he must with fortitude invincible,

and firmness unshaken, preach the pure doctrines of the gospel. He must not be moved by what may render him acceptable to the gay and fashionable world. Prudence, however, is to be always mingled with firmness. Harshness and severity of manner are to be avoided. While firm and bold in delivering the truths of the pure gospel, a minister ought to be cautious not to give unnecessary offence, or to disgust. He ought to be candid, mild, and wise. Truths should be expressed with safety and dignity. All rashness, precipitancy, uncandor and bitterness, are to be avoided. If ministers of the gospel would best fulfil the ends of their office, they must be attentive to all existing circumstances. They must do all, that the highest prudence, wisdom and discretion can do, to promote the gospel-kingdom of peace and benevolence among mankind. They should never needlessly excite prejudices against the truth, or provoke the malice of enemies. They are to be harmless and wise, meek and gentle, easy of access.

3. *Faithfulness* will lead a minister to be *grave* and *fervent* in his addresses from the sacred desk. He ought to be warm and zealous in his Master's cause. For it is a cause of the greatest magnitude and importance. A deep sense of God and divine things, will influence him, with all zeal and solemnity, to urge the truth home upon the conscience. He will feel for dying man, all the ardor of pious zeal; accordingly, he will press him now to awake out of sleep—to arise, and attend in earnest to his salvation, by all that is dear and sacred, by all that is awful and affecting. He will be, above all, desirous that his hearers should secure the eternal salvation of the precious and immortal soul. To accomplish this, no zeal and fervor, if tempered with prudence and sound discretion, can be too great.—What gravity and solemnity appear in all the writings of the apostles! How pure in their intentions! how honest and faithful, as well as solemn and grave! *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness,*

*nor bandling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

It is only subjoined,

4. *Faithfulness* in a minister, will fill him with *tenderness and affection*, while dispensing to his people the glorious gospel of the blessed God. He will be kind and condescending. His compassion for lost, perishing sinners will be peculiarly excited. To save them from the fatal effects of sin—from the penalty of a broken law—from the wrath of God, and from the pains of hell forever, he will be ready to lay out all his time and talents, to undergo hardships, and if called in Providence, even persecution. He will persuade men to hear the calls of grace, and to repair to a merciful God and the peace-speaking blood of a crucified Jesus, with all tenderness and affection. He will warn, reprove, instruct, counsel, invite, and beseech them now to hear and live—to turn from all their errors and evil ways to God and holiness, and be happy here, happy in death, and happy to all eternity. How tender and affectionate were the apostles, after the example of their Lord, in fulfilling the ministry which they had received of him! Their great work was to preach Christ crucified. *For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.* Again, *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.—For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. And straightway he preached Jesus in their synagogues. Neither is there salvation in any other. Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.* A faithful minister of

the gospel will follow the example of the apostles, in preaching Christ to his people, and also will imitate their tenderness and affection in doing it.—*Brethren*, says the apostle Paul, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

The holy sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, are to be dispensed to meet subjects, and strictness of discipline maintained by a faithful minister. And he will consider his hearers, as composed of two very different and opposite classes, those of good and bad men ; and remember that, in each class, there is indeed a great diversity of characters, to which he is to adapt his instructions—reproving, exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine : sometimes, like another Boenerges, thundering to his hearers, and shaking them with the terrors of Sinai ; at others, proving, like the more amiable Barnabas, a son of consolation, and soothing them with all the melody of Zion. He will study, like that wise and faithful steward of whom his Lord speaks, to give every man his portion of meat in due season.

In the pulpit, his deportment should be such as becomes the sacred place. His attitude should be graceful. His countenance composed and animated. His voice should be modulated agreeably to the truths delivered. His action should be sparing, but significant. Being full of his subject, he should speak as a dying man to dying men.

“ That style which best suits the pulpit, were I to venture,” says an ingenious writer on the eloquence of the pulpit, “ at a general definition of it, should be simple, yet great ; adorned, yet chaste ; animated and strong, at the same time easy and somewhat diffuse ; and in fine, numerous and flowing, without running into the poetic, or swelling into the bombast.

It is to be remembered, however, that one's manner is to be varied according to the subject treated or the aim proposed. Sometimes, for instance, one must use the plain familiar style ; sometimes the figured and pathetic ; and at others rise into the solemn and majestic : now spread out his discourse to explain or amplify a point, then contract it, to give it greater weight and force. It should, likewise, be raised or lowered, to the pitch or key which is suited most to the greatest part of the audience."

Preaching the peculiar doctrines of grace, as they are called, is the most effectual way to prevent errors and divisions among Christians ; is, on the whole, most popular ; and hath in every age been the means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation : and in the same proportion as this hath been neglected, the power of godliness hath declined and languished, till a cold formality hath at length given way to the open profession of infidelity itself. Much depends on the right method of preaching the gospel. If a preacher keep out of sight Christ and him crucified, and the discriminating and peculiar glories and doctrines of the gospel, and dwell chiefly on moral subjects, errors will take place, sectaries arise, vital piety decay, and infidelity be openly professed. On preaching the PECULIAR DOCTRINES of grace, a judicious and esteemed writer has the following observation.

" That where a great and universal neglect of preaching Christ hath prevailed in a Christian nation, it hath given a fatal occasion to the growth of infidelity and deism : for when people have heard the sermons of their ministers for many years together, and find little of Christ in them, they have taken it in their heads that men may be very good, and go safe to heaven, without Christianity ; and, therefore, though they dwell in a land where the gospel is professed, they imagine there is no need they should be Christians."—To which I may add, that every revi-

val of religion has been introduced and carried on, through the blessing of God, by preaching the peculiar doctrines of grace. These, and these alone, have been, and ever will be, the wisdom and power of God unto salvation.

I have attempted to delineate the *character* of a *faithful minister of Christ*. And, shall close the discourse by a short address to the candidate for ordination, and to the people to be committed to his pastoral care.

And, first, to the candidate for ordination to the evangelical ministry. By prayer and laying on the hands of the presbytery are you to be set apart to the holy ministry. The power of ordination is vested in the pastors of the churches, by the express will of Christ and his inspired apostles. On this day's solemnity, you will adore the footsteps of that sovereign Providence, whose way is a great deep. It is early for you to be introduced into the arduous work of the gospel ministry. Your inexperience, however, will be relieved by the counsels of the aged servant of the Lord, with whom you are to be associated in the gospel of the grace of God. In respectful attention to him, under the burdens of age, in study, in prudence, in zeal, and in soundness of faith, be all which he could wish you to be. How affecting must it be to him to resign up, as it were, his people, to whom for such a length of years he has been a painful laborer in the gospel! to see you come, and take his place! affecting scene to him, and solemn to you.

Behold the people, whom you are to instruct, and to whom you are to break the bread of life. How solemn the thought of taking upon one the charge of souls! how anxious must this day be to you; a day big with your happiness or woe! Their felicity and your's, are now to be connected. The tear of laboring distress will flow. The deep sigh will heave. Unutterable solicitude must fill the mind. The man, who enters the work of the evangelical ministry, knows not what a weight he takes upon himself, till

taught by experience. Let your first care be to seek the spirit of vital religion for yourself. The faithful minister must be a good man, a regenerated man, a disciple of Christ indeed. Let all your abilities and acquirements be sacred to religion. Give yourself wholly to reading, meditation and prayer. Give yourself to a life of study. Shunning carefully, superstition, enthusiasm and bigotry, be candid and liberal. By a dignified course of conduct, by meekness and wisdom, prudence and firmness, honor religion. As the way to avoid insults and rudeness in the petulant, treat all men with propriety, and your own people with tenderness and affection. If difficulties arise, heal them with a lenient hand. More of a minister's happiness and usefulness depend on a meek, candid, forbearing temper, than can easily be conceived. Calling no man master, think for yourself, but never once imagine, that true independence of sentiment consists in differing from others, or in a contempt of their opinions. A great mind will be slow in dissenting from the common faith, and tremble to deviate from it; and the common faith is known by the creeds of the church, in different ages and countries. Honestly, plainly and fervently preach the glorious gospel of the Son of God, its peculiar doctrines. Bend all the powers of your soul to advance the interests of vital godliness. Endeavour always to feel your subject, and accountableness to an omniscient God. Be what you preach. Live a life of near communion with God, and of prayerfulness. A holy life recommends religion, by a kind of silent eloquence, more emphatic and prevailing than any words.

I would next address myself, in a few words, to the church and congregation that usually convene here to worship God. You have heard the character of a faithful minister of Christ. Happy, happy indeed is that people, who have such an one over them in the Lord! And you see what sort of preaching you are to value. Behold the man who is now to be set apart to the labours of the gospel among you. We

trust he will make a FAITHFUL MINISTER—will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and be evangelical in his general strain.

Brethren and friends in the Lord, we congratulate you, on this day's solemnity. You have long—more than half a century, sat under the preaching of your worthy pastor—we trust a faithful minister of Christ. By reason of age, he is unable any longer to perform the duties of so arduous a work. He has generously relinquished his pecuniary demands upon you, that you might be able to support another minister. His heart's desire and prayer for you, have been that you might unite in calling one to take the pastoral care of you, while he lived. With flowing tears and a feeling heart, he now witnesses the joyful sight. Remember how this worthy faithful minister of Christ has warned—rebuked—exhorted—prayed with, and taught you, according to the form of sound words delivered by the Apostles. Forget him not. Let him have a place, in your prayers, in your hearts, and in your kindness, the residue of his days.\*

In regard to him, who is now to be consecrated to the holy ministry, be willing to have him preach the great doctrines of grace, all the doctrines of Christ, and to build morality upon a gospel basis. Be candid and unprejudiced, attentive and affectionate.—Let sweet benevolence reign among you. Let kind offices and a generous heart soften the lot of your minister. It is in your power to make him either a happy, or wretched man. Encourage him by friend-



\* The Church and Congregation of Newington, the second Society in Wethersfield, have enjoyed the labors of three ministers of the gospel.—The Church was gathered October 3, 1722—October 17, 1722, the Rev. *Elisha Williams* was ordained to the pastoral care of the Church and people—April 1736 he was removed to the rectorship of Yale College.—December 23, 1726, Rev. *Simon Backus* was ordained : in 1745, he died in the Garrison as chaplain, Cape Breton.—November 11, 1747, the Rev. *Joshua Belden* was ordained. And—January 16, 1805, the Rev. *Joab Bruce*, was ordained colleague Pastor with him.

ship—and above all, by a constant, diligent, and serious attendance on his ministry. Be always found in your place, on each revolving sabbath, as well as he in his place. Reverence all religious and moral institutions. Admire the excellence—study the doctrines—observe the ordinances—practise the duties—and exemplify the virtues of religion.—All the means of grace are designed to bring you to holiness and happiness—to faith—repentance, and eternal life.—We wish you a blessing out of the house of the Lord.—Finally brethren, farewell. Be of one mind, and live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Let all the numerous concourse of people now convened, learn the importance of the means of grace, and ministrations of the gospel. Make such an improvement of them, where you enjoy them, as that they may render you happy. Seek the divine blessing to accompany them, and to render them effectual to your salvation. Reverence your Creator—love your Saviour—study your Bibles—hear the voice of conscience. Attend supremely to the things of eternity; then, when your probationary term shall be closed, you will ascend to the world of glory.—And now to the King, immortal, eternal, and invisible be rendered through Jesus Christ, all honor, glory, and praise from all on earth, and all in heaven.