

THE  
EXHORTATION,

AT

MR. SAMUEL CLARK'S ORDINATION, AT ST. ALBANS.

(SOMEWHAT ENLARGED.)

THAT which yet remains, before we part, is to address an exhortation, give me leave to call it a charge in Christ's name, to you, my dear brother, who have now dedicated yourself, and have been very solemnly dedicated, to the service of Christ in the work of the ministry; which I trust has left such a truly indelible character and impression upon you, that you will remember this day by a good token as long as you live; as the day in which your heart was more than ever fixed for God, as the Master you love, and resolve by his grace to live and die with; and your ear bored to his door-post, to serve him forever; never to go out free from his service, but to go on more and more free in it.

Think you hear Christ saying to you, as he did to his disciples, when he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again: *Know ye not what I have done to you?*<sup>a</sup> I say, what Christ has done to you, for it is he who puts you into the ministry,<sup>b</sup> not we. Do you know, do you consider, what an honour he has put upon your head, what a trust he has lodged in your hand, and what a bond he has laid upon your soul? And will you not next consider, what he expects and requires from you, in consideration of this which he has done to you?

I hope you have such a sense of the excellency of the work to which Christ has called you, and its direct tendency to advance the honour of your Creator and Redeemer, and the true welfare of your fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians, that if we should now say to you, as Elijah said to Elisha, when he had cast his mantle over him, *Go, return, for*

*what have I done to thee?*<sup>c</sup> you would reply as Ruth to Naomi, *Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn from following after thee;*<sup>d</sup> for from the plough, to which I have this day laid my hand, I trust I shall never so much as look back.<sup>e</sup> *The Lord keep it always in the imagination of the thought of your heart, and establish your way before him!*<sup>f</sup> You have, as Jephthah, opened your mouth unto the Lord; and you cannot go back.<sup>g</sup> Go forward then, in God's name; go on and prosper, and the Lord be with you.

You have this day received a commission from the Lord Jesus, according to the true intent, and full extent, of the institution of the gospel ministry, to be an officer in his army, to train up his soldiers to, and lead them on, in all the services of the Christian warfare; to be an officer in his kingdom, to see that his laws be observed, his ordinances kept, and the peace and order of his kingdom preserved, for the honour of the prince, and the protection and welfare of all his loving subjects.

The apostles, prophets, and evangelists, were extraordinary ambassadors, employed to set the treaty on foot between God and fallen man: to them first was committed the *ministry of reconciliation.*<sup>h</sup> Pastors and teachers are, as residents or consuls, to carry on the treaty of peace, and to maintain all the branches of that commerce and communication between heaven and earth, which is founded upon it; their business is to negotiate affairs between Christ and his church; they are *taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God;*<sup>i</sup> as the priests under the law were; that Christ may have the rents, honours, and services, which he

<sup>a</sup> John xiii. 12.    <sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. i. 12    <sup>c</sup> Kings xix. 20.  
<sup>d</sup> Ruth i. 17.    <sup>e</sup> Luke ix. 62.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Chron. xxi. 11.    <sup>g</sup> Judg. xi. 33.  
<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.    <sup>i</sup> Heb. v. 1.

was to receive from his church, and the church may have the favours and benefits which it is to receive from Christ.

Now, as the officers in a kingdom or corporation are commonly sworn to execute the office they are put into according to law; so you are this day sworn, as it were, to do the work of a gospel minister, according to Christ's institution.

It is therefore requisite that you rightly understand what the business of your office is, and what is the work that you are called to; that you may both prepare and apply yourself accordingly. I doubt not but you know it, and have considered it, yet I hope you will now give me leave to put you in mind of it, and myself too. This charge is given you, *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust*; <sup>k</sup> it is a great trust that is committed to you, and which you must shortly give an account of, and therefore it concerns you to be *faithful, by mercy obtained from the Lord*. You have accepted the trust, acquaint yourself with it, and be faithful to it, that you may in the great day give a good account of it.

I. There is a *trust committed to you, in common with all Christians*, and that is, your own precious soul. This charge therefore we are to give you, in the first place, which St. Paul gives to Timothy, *Take heed to thyself, that thou mayst save thyself*; <sup>l</sup> and to the elders of Ephesus, *Take heed therefore to yourselves*.<sup>m</sup> Those are very unfit to take care of other people's souls who are careless of their own; and to guide others in the way to heaven, who appear not at all solicitous to find the way thither themselves, or seem as if they had found some other way than that of strict and serious godliness, which the Scripture directs all to, and to which they direct others to; who, in another sense, must join with the spouse in her confession, *They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept*.<sup>n</sup>

Look well to the state of your own soul, and the terms on which it stands with God, and there make sure work about your calling and election; make it more and more sure to yourself, more and more evident, that you may be able to speak by experience, and then you will speak best, of regeneration, and the new birth; of union with Christ, and of reconciliation to God, and communion with God through him; may be able to say in some measure, with the apostle, *That which I have seen and heard, looked upon, tasted, and handled of the word of life, that declare I unto you, that you may have fellowship with us*.<sup>o</sup>

Look well to the frame of your own spirit; that you not only approve yourself a Christian indeed, but that you always maintain a Christian temper, and evidence it. You have made it appear to us at this

time, that your judgment is rightly informed concerning the things of God; now, make it appear that there is a divine *heat* accompanying the divine *light*; for wherever the Sun of righteousness arises upon any soul, he brings both along with him; and our Lord Jesus, in those two remarkable operations of his upon the minds of his disciples, after his resurrection, his opening their understandings to understand the Scriptures, and his making their hearts to burn within them,<sup>p</sup> gave a specimen of what he would do for and in all his faithful ministers.

As we should labour to understand that ourselves which we would lead others into the understanding of, so we should ourselves be affected with that wherewith we desire to affect others; for the expressions of seriousness and earnestness are but affection, further than as they flow from true affection. Let what we say come *from* the heart, and then it will be likely to reach *to* the heart. But whatever influence it has upon others, let us take care that it have a good influence upon ourselves, that we be leavened by it, and delivered into the mould of it; that one poor soul, at least, may be the better for every sermon we preach, that is *our own*.

I have often, with a great deal of pleasure, thought it a mighty advantage, which we who are ministers have above others for the keeping up of our acquaintance with heaven, and the carrying on of the interests of the spiritual and divine life in the soul, that the business of our profession is such as obliges us to be much in converse with the Scriptures, and the things of God, to *meditate on those things*, and *give ourselves wholly to them*.<sup>q</sup> And besides our stated devotions, in secret and in our families, which we have more time for than those have whose business lies in the world, we have occasion to be frequent in prayer with the sick, and the afflicted, and the families of our friends; and in good discourse with them: which if it be, as it ought to be, a *pleasure* to us, and we be in it as in our element, it will be something more, it will be a *profit* to us; and unless we be very much wanting to ourselves, will contribute abundantly to the prosperity of our own souls.

Yet this is not all: look well to the tenor of your conversation, that it be even and regular, and such as becomes your character; that by its evangelical tendency you may be preaching daily to those with whom you converse. It is not enough that it be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, but your light must shine in every thing that is virtuous and praise-worthy. It is not enough for us who are ministers to say, none have learned *any ill* by us; but what *good* have they learned? It is part of the charge to Timothy, *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*.<sup>r</sup> It is not enough that we do not pull down

<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20.  
<sup>m</sup> Acts xx. 28.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.  
<sup>n</sup> Cant i. 6.

<sup>o</sup> 1 John i. 1, 3.  
<sup>q</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 15.

<sup>p</sup> Luke xxiv. 45, 32.  
<sup>r</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.

with one hand what we build up with the other; but we must build up with *both* hands, both with our doctrine and with our example; then, and then only, are we burning and shining lights. The account we have of our Master is, Of what he began both to *do* and to *teach*;<sup>a</sup> which is an intimation to us, that our teaching and doing should be of a piece.

II. There is a *trust* committed to you as a minister, which you must be true to. Every servant in the house has his work assigned him; but the steward is not only employed but intrusted; there is more referred to his prudence and care than to the other servants: now the ministers of Christ are stewards of the mysteries of God,<sup>b</sup> and it is required in stewards that they be faithful; they are *rulers in the household*, under the Master, to give them their portion of meat in due season;<sup>c</sup> and in order to the due discharge of their trust, have need to be wise as well as faithful. Now when a steward enters into his office, it is usual to give him a particular account of the things put into his hand, and the trusts committed to him; the keys of such and such a storehouse are lodged with him, and he is to be accountable for what is in it, and what is given out of it. Perhaps Christ alluded to this, when he gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven,<sup>d</sup>—and, in him, to all faithful ministers who are intrusted to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that kingdom, according to the direction of their Lord, and for his honour.

When the Levites had *their hands filled*—as the Hebrew phrase is, for consecration—that is, had the charge of the sanctuary committed to them, and the parts and utensils of the tabernacles put under their custody, each of the three families had their part committed to them, and knew what they were to take care of, and account for: the Kohathites had the charge of the ark, the table, the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary; the Gershonites of the tent, the curtains, and hangings, &c. the Merarites of the boards, bars, pillars, &c.<sup>e</sup> Thus care was taken, that each should know his charge; and it is said, that *the instruments of the charge of their burthen were reckoned to them by name*;<sup>f</sup> that they might be engaged to the utmost circumspection in the discharge of their trust.

Give me leave, brother, in like manner to be particular in giving you an account of the holy things put into your hands, that good thing which is committed to you; to keep, not by any skill or strength of your own, but by the *Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us*;<sup>g</sup> and I hope you will not think we take too much upon us, if we charge you, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession, that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable,

until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:<sup>h</sup> and in the discharge of this stewardship, remember that our Master expects we should approve ourselves both faithful and wise servants, as those who, through grace, have both skill and will for our work.

1. You must, faithfully and wisely, explain and apply the oracles of God. You have declared, that you receive the Holy Scriptures as of divine authority, and the standing rule of your faith and practice, and as such we commit them to you, to be your treasury and touch-stone, the fountain whence you must derive your knowledge, and the foundation on which you must build your faith; for by them is the *man of God perfect*, accomplished as a man of God, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.<sup>i</sup>

The book of the law was committed to the custody of the priests;<sup>j</sup> and it is a very proper and significant usage in some churches, to put the Bible into the hand of ministers when they ordain them. That is one of the great things we commit to you. Keep the Bible as a sacred deposit of inestimable value, which being a light shining in a dark place, it is not strange if the powers of darkness level all their force against it, to corrupt it, to slacken the obligation, or lessen the reputation of it, to take it away from us, or, which would come all to one, to take us off from it to follow some false light. It is therefore given in charge to all Christians, but to ministers in an *especial* manner, To hold fast that form of sound words which we have in the Scriptures, in faith and love, and to hold to it. Let us be true to this trust, as faithful keepers both of the words and things contained in the Scriptures; as the Masorites, among the Jews, were of the letter of the Old Testament, who could tell how often each letter of the alphabet was to be found in their Hebrew Bible; and let us not come under the black character of those, who in the primitive church were called *traditores*—traitors, or betrayers; because, to avoid suffering, they gave up their Bibles to their persecutors.

In all your preaching, keep close to the Scripture; and fetch both matter and words thence. To the law and to the testimony.<sup>k</sup> It is Scripture philosophy, and Scripture oratory, that ministers must be masters of, and serve Christ and his church with: if they speak not according to that rule, it is because there is not that light in them that should be. You have a gospel to preach, not a gospel to make; and then only are faithful to your commission, when you strictly pursue your instructions, and deliver all that, and that only, which you have received of the Lord, in its native purity and simplicity, as one who dares not add thereto, or diminish from it, nor make any alteration.

Study the true and genuine sense of Scripture.

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 1.    <sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.    <sup>c</sup> Luke xii. 42.  
<sup>d</sup> Matt. xvi. 19.    <sup>e</sup> Numb. iii. 25, 31, 36.    <sup>f</sup> Numb. iv. 32.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Tim. i. 24.    <sup>h</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14.    <sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 17.  
<sup>j</sup> Deut. xvii. 18.    <sup>k</sup> Isa. viii. 20.

by consulting the originals, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual; and rest not in Scripture words and phrases, without understanding the true import and intention of them, and doing what you can that those you speak to may rightly understand it too: for what will it avail us, *hæere in cortice—to worship in the outer court?* Paul, when he was a Pharisee, had his Bible at his fingers' ends, and yet owns he was *without the law*,<sup>d</sup> because he was a *stranger to the true intent and meaning* of it; and what does it profit then? Nay, if we do not take pains thoroughly and truly to understand the Scripture, we shall be in danger of handling it deceitfully, and wresting it to our own and others' destruction.<sup>e</sup> In plain texts, keep to the plain sense; in difficult ones, be modest and humble in your searches, and *keep to the proportion of faith*,<sup>f</sup> expounding them by those that are more plain.

Accustom yourself to a Scripture language; and labour to be ready, as well as mighty, in the Scriptures, that you may speak of divine things in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches;<sup>g</sup> for in those words they are brought with the most power, both to convince and to comfort. Do what you can, therefore, to make them familiar both to yourselves and to your hearers. Whence can we better fetch both strength and ornament to what we say, than from the Scripture?

In order to all this, I earnestly wish that the reading and expounding of the Scriptures were universally practised in all our congregations, as, blessed be God, it is in many. It has been, and would be, of great use to increase Scripture knowledge both in ministers and people; and some plain and obvious observations gathered out of a chapter in the exposition of it, might do as much to enlighten the mind, and direct the conscience, as a long studied train of arguments in a sermon. *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aqua—Water drank from the spring-head is sweet indeed.*

2. You must, faithfully and wisely, administer the ordinances of Christ, according as your opportunity is. Divine institutions are to be kept pure and entire, not kept *from* the church, but kept *for* it, and you are intrusted with the custody of them, and the dispensing of them, so as to serve the great ends for which they were appointed; both those which are common to all revealed religion, as the word, prayer, and the sabbath day, and those which are peculiar to the Christian economy, as baptism and the Lord's supper.

The preaching of the word is a divine institution, not only for the bringing in of those who are without the church, as if none needed to be preached to but heathens and Turks, but for the bringing up of those who are born within the church, as they come

up to years of understanding, and the building up of those who are grown to maturity, who, as long as they are on this side heaven, need the constant preaching of the word, for the increasing of their knowledge, the refreshing of their memories, the assisting of their meditations and devotions, and the directing of their affections and conversations; besides the necessity there is of it, for the conviction and conversion of sinners, even in Christian nations: *I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word, the pure word of God; be constant, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.*<sup>h</sup> Prepare for this part of your work; it is the wisdom of the preacher, still to teach the people knowledge; let him give good heed, and seek out, and set in order, many proverbs; let him study to find out acceptable, profitable words.<sup>i</sup> Manage it as an ordinance of Christ, instituted for the advancing of his honour and interest, and therefore preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus the Lord,<sup>k</sup> as one who has determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified,<sup>l</sup> and desires to acquaint others with him. "Preach Christ, brother," said an aged minister, to one who asked his advice; "whatever you do, preach Christ."

Prayer is another divine institution, and you are to give yourself to that, as well as to the ministry of the word;<sup>m</sup> and this part of your work is as necessary to be done, and to be done well, as that. You must be the people's mouth to God, to declare all their concerns to him, as well as God's mouth to them, to declare all his counsel to them. And for this also you must prepare, by meditation and secret prayer, and acquainting yourself more and more with the Scriptures and your own heart, and the several cases both of saints and sinners. Know and observe the great intentions of this ordinance, not to prescribe to the providence of God, but to plead and put in suit his promises, to give him the honour due to his name; and to fetch in that grace, strength, and comfort, which he has encouraged us to ask and hope for in the name of Christ: keep this in your view in every prayer.

The Lord's day is a divine institution; the religious observation of one day in seven to the honour of God, is as ancient as the world; the fixing of it to the first day of the week, in honour of Christ rising from the dead, is as ancient as the Christian church; and the thing itself is necessary to the keeping up of religion in the world; and, therefore, study to keep up the honour of the Christian sabbath, that you may keep up the power of it; call it a *delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable*, and teach others to call it so too.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vii. 9.<sup>e</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 16.<sup>f</sup> Rom. xii. 6.<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13.<sup>h</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.<sup>i</sup> Eccl. xii. 9, 10.<sup>j</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 5.<sup>l</sup> Acts vi. 4.

The two sacraments, of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, you are likewise intrusted with the administration of ; and must therefore study the nature of them, and furnish yourself well with that which is pertinent and proper to be said in the administration of them, both in the word, and prayer, by which they are sanctified ; and get your heart affected with the great things contained in those ordinances, that you may administer them not only so as to instruct, but so as to affect others also. And in your administrations have an eye to the institution ; that is your warrant on which you must depend for your authority, and, therefore, that must be your rule to which you must adhere for your direction. *See thou do all according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.*

3. You must faithfully and wisely maintain and defend the great truths of the gospel. From the beginning, the gospel was preached with much contention,<sup>1</sup> and our Lord Jesus himself endured the contradiction of sinners ; and the like must be still expected, till we come to that world where there is no pricking brier nor grieving thorn. The ministers of Christ are not only labourers in his vineyard, but advocates for him at the bar, to plead his cause ; soldiers for him in the field, to fight his battles ; and you must furnish yourself accordingly.

There are matters in variance among good Christians and good protestants, like those of old about meats and days, in which we must study mutual forbearance, humbly and honestly walking according to the light God has given us, and charitably believing that others do so too. But there is opposition given to the gospel we are the ministers of, by atheists and deists, Socinians and papists ; against whom we must contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ;<sup>2</sup> and to whom we must not give place by subjection, no not for an hour ; that the truth of the gospel may continue with us. In controversies of this nature, you must know how to handle your arms, and to stand to them, those weapons of our warfare, which, though not carnal, yet are mighty through God to the pulling down of Satan's strong holds ;<sup>3</sup> must be able to give a reason of the hope that is in you,<sup>4</sup> and to convince gainsayers in meekness, and yet with all faithfulness, instructing those who oppose themselves.<sup>5</sup>

*Ordinarily*, it may be best, in your preaching, to handle the truths of the gospel as if they were never controverted ; setting them before people in their true light and evidence, and rather obviating and anticipating objections than raising them ; but still you must be furnished with answers, whenever there is occasion for them, to those who contradict. Know what to say, and be ready to say it, to those who question the being of God, and the dominion of his providence ; who oppose the Scripture and divine

revelation, who set up any other light and power in competition with it ; to those who deny the Trinity, the Godhead of Christ and his satisfaction ; and to those who advance the pope's supremacy and infallibility, who worship images, and give that honour to creatures which is due to God and Christ only : here you must put on resolution and holy zeal, and set your face as a flint. And never betray these great truths of Christ by a cowardly silence ; but in things wherein the Lord your God is jealous, be you so too. Buy the truth, and sell it not. As you need not distrust your cause, so you need not distrust him whose cause it is ; his advocates shall never want instructions, but if you humbly and honestly depend upon his assistance, and aim at his glory, it shall be *given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

There are some controverted things, in which we must be careful not to run into extremes ; we must hold fast both the truth as it is in Jesus,<sup>6</sup> the truth which gives all the honour to Christ, and exalts free grace, and yet we must hold fast the truth which is after godliness,<sup>7</sup> the truth which strengthens our obligations to holiness in heart and life. The gospel does not make void the law, but perfects it. Duty must be done, and must be preached ; but still Christ must be *all in all*, both for strength and righteousness. What *seeming* differences there may be between one Scripture and another, your business must be to accommodate them, not to aggravate them, for we are sure there are no *real* differences ; and when we meet with difficulties that we cannot solve, let us abide by that which is plain and without controversy, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us.

4. You must, faithfully and wisely, preside in religious assemblies ; for as a minister, you are appointed to be one of the stewards of Christ's courts, and one of the masters of those assemblies.<sup>8</sup> The holy convocation is a divine appointment. Though every particular family and person, apart, might get the knowledge of God's will from his word, and praise him, and pray to him, yet he has ordained that Christians should associate at stated times for his worship, under the conduct of a gospel ministry : the Jews had their synagogues, which it was our Saviour's custom to attend in, with his neighbours, every sabbath day, to set us an example. Religious assemblies are appointed, for the glory of God and Christ, for the keeping up of the countenance of religion in the world, for the joint profession of our most holy faith and hope, and a joint concurrence in prayers and praises, and for the testifying and promoting of holy love, to be pledges of the communion of saints, and earnest of heaven.

God promises to Joshua, that if he will keep his

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 2.    <sup>2</sup> Jude 3.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 4.    <sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.    <sup>6</sup> Eph. iv. 21.    <sup>7</sup> Tit. i. 1.    <sup>8</sup> Eccl. xii. 11.

*charge*, he shall keep his *courts*:<sup>1</sup> these courts you are to keep, for *him*; in his name, and not your own; for his honour, and not for your own; and so as to answer the great designs of their institution. God's tabernacles are amiable, study to make them more and more so; his service reasonable, evidence that it is so. The assemblies of his people are both his praise and his pleasure; let us therefore preside in them, so that he may be both praised and pleased. When the sons of God come together, to present themselves before the Lord,<sup>2</sup> remember it is your business, as their mouth, to present them to him; both as learners at his feet, and supplicants at his footstool. And have this in your eye.

Let every thing in our religious assemblies be done decently, and in order, as becomes the solemnity of them; and nothing that is vain or light, that sullies the beauty of the service, interrupts the thread of it, or tends to distract and draw away the mind from it, be said, or done, or suffered in our assemblies; but let every part of the service be managed with that seriousness, and reverence, and due decorum, which becomes those that worship God in the Spirit, and know and consider who he is with whom we have to do, and what it is we have to do with him. So that if an unbeliever, or one prejudiced, should come in, he might see and say, that God is with us of a truth.<sup>3</sup> This charge therefore we commit to you, that you maintain the honour of religious assemblies; for that will redound much to the honour of Christ, who has promised to be there where two or three are gathered together in his name.

5. You must, faithfully and wisely, witness against sin, and carry on the holy war against it, for the suppressing of it, the breaking of its power, and the checking of its prevalency; for the Lord has sworn, that he will have war with that Amalek, that enemy to his church and people, that rebel against his crown and dignity, from generation to generation.<sup>4</sup> Every baptized Christian is an enlisted soldier, but every minister a commissioned officer, to fight under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil. Your business, therefore, is to strive against sin; to strive against it, in yourself, in others, in those especially who are under your charge.

Bear your testimony against all instances of vice and immorality, all appearances of sin, and approaches toward it. That which is confessedly evil, and a violation of the law of God, faithfully reprove, and warn against it; that those who have sinned may be brought to repentance, and others may hear and fear. Here you must be *zealously* affected, as the angel of the church of Ephesus, that could not bear them which were evil, and hated, though not the persons yet the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which Christ also

*hated*;<sup>5</sup> here the zeal of God's house should even eat us up, and make us so far to forget ourselves, as not to fear the face of man.<sup>6</sup>

The charge given to God's prophets, was to cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,<sup>7</sup> to show the house of Jacob their sins; and herein to cry aloud, and not to spare;<sup>8</sup> not spare those, not spare themselves. A minister is a reprover in the gate, a reprover by office, and, therefore, ought to speak as having authority, and to be bold for God; O that we were all more so! And had we but more boldness in the cause of Christ now, it would be a comfortable earnest to us of boldness in the day of Christ shortly. Some sinners must be rebuked sharply,<sup>9</sup> and saved with fear, plucking them out of the very fire.<sup>10</sup> And this consideration should awaken us to a holy zeal herein, that we have no other way of delivering our souls, but by warning the wicked man of his sin and danger. If we do not reprove our neighbour, we suffer sin upon him, and are in danger of bearing sin for him.<sup>11</sup>

In the difference that arose between Christ's disciples who followed him, and one who cast out devils in his name, but did not follow with them, Christ laid down this rule of CHARITY, *He that is not against me is with me*;<sup>12</sup> but in the controversy between Christ and Beelzebub, between holiness and wickedness, he laid down this rule of ZEAL, *He that is not with me is against me*.<sup>13</sup>

6. You must faithfully and wisely separate between the precious and the vile. It was required of the priests, that they should put a difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean,<sup>14</sup> and this was the condition of a prophet's acceptance with God, *If thou take out the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth*.<sup>15</sup> Not that we must pretend thoroughly to part between the tares and the wheat, the sheep and the goats, in this world; that will never be done, till the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory; yet Christ has lodged with his ministers a power, according to the word, to *bind* and *loose*.

In your preaching you must distinguish, as the gospel does, that you may speak terror and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong, and may neither strengthen the hands of the wicked; nor make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God would not have to be made sad.<sup>16</sup> The business of the steward, is to give to every one their portion of meat in due season; to every one that which is appointed for them, and is fit for them; and you must do so, by dividing the word of truth aright.<sup>17</sup> *Suum cuique—to every man his portion*: acquaint yourself with, and then accommodate yourself to, the state of the souls of those you preach to, that they may readily say, *This is for me, it suits my case*.

<sup>1</sup> Zech. iii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Job i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xvii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. ii. 2, 6.

<sup>6</sup> John ii. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xvi. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Isa. lviii. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Tit. i. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Jude 23.

<sup>11</sup> Lev. xix. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Mark ix. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. xii. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Lev. x. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. xv. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ezek. xiii. 22.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15.

In administering special ordinances, you must go by rule, and not lay them in common. Those who are ignorant or scandalous, and openly profane and vicious, ought not to be admitted to eat of the holy things now under the gospel, any more than they who were ceremonially unclean under the law. *Procul hinc, procul inde, profani*—*Far hence, far away, ye profane!* We cannot know men's hearts, but must be guided by a judgment of discretion, to do that which will be most for the honour of Christ and his institutions, and for the welfare of the souls of men.

7. You must faithfully and wisely comfort afflicted consciences. The great Shepherd gives the undershepherds a particular charge to strengthen those of the flock who are diseased, to heal that which is sick, to bind up that which is broken, and to bring again that which is driven away;<sup>m</sup> from him therefore take this part of your charge. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Zion.*<sup>n</sup> Among those who have spiritual senses exercised, there cannot but be some who are wounded in spirit; learn how to deal with such, how to pour oil into their wounds, and to bind them up. Those have indeed the tongue of the learned, who know how to speak a word in season to them who are weak.<sup>o</sup>

Learn how to deal tenderly with them, and with a spirit of meekness; putting your soul into their soul's stead; that you may heal their bruises, and yet not heal them slightly; may not add to their trouble, and yet may not show them the wrong way to peace. Their case is often difficult, and to be studied, but very pitiable, and not to be slighted.

Direct those who are of a sorrowful spirit, to fetch all their comfort from Jesus Christ, and to build their hope on him; show them the way to that city of refuge; and teach them not to look for that in themselves which is to be had in Christ only, that is, a perfect righteousness; not for that on earth which is to be had in heaven only, that is, a perfect holiness; not for that in the world, which is to be had in God only, that is, a perfect happiness.

If their souls refuse to be comforted, and they hearken not to you for anguish of spirit, yet do not give up their cause, but continue to speak comfort to them, and to pray for them; if indeed they be righteous, light and joy are sown for them,<sup>p</sup> and will come up again in due time; and we must wait for it, as the husbandman does for the harvest, with long patience. Remember it is a part of your charge, to be a helper of the joy of the Lord's people, and to be an instrument in the hand of the Spirit as a comforter.

8. You must faithfully and wisely intercede for the church of God, and pray for all the parts of it, and for the advancement of all its interests. God

has set the watchmen upon Jerusalem's walls for this purpose, that they may cry day and night to him, and give him no rest until he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.<sup>q</sup> Receive this charge therefore among the rest, to pray constantly and earnestly for the peace of Jerusalem; yea, and for the welfare of all men, and the fruits of divine compassion to the whole world that lies in wickedness: for so extensive must your intercessions be, not only for all saints, but, in the first place, for all men.<sup>r</sup>

Public persons must be of a public spirit; which Christ intimated when he taught his disciples to pray, *Our FATHER*, as taking along with them all that can call God FATHER, even those to whom he is so only by creation. You are especially to bear Zion's concerns much upon your heart; as Aaron did the names of all Israel in his breastplate, when he went in to minister; hereby you must testify your love to the whole family that is named from Christ, and must keep up the communion of saints, and do your endeavour to enlarge the hearts of those among whom you minister, to a catholic concern for all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours.<sup>s</sup> As in our family worship we should pray for all Christian families, so in our public worship, for all Christian assemblies, which you, as presiding therein, have the charge of.

In times of desolating, threatening judgments, when the hand of God is gone forth against a people, it is expected that Aaron stand between the living and the dead, with his censer in his hand, to stay the plague; that the priests, the Lord's ministers, weep between the temple and the altar, saying, *Spare thy people, O Lord;*<sup>t</sup> that they beseech God that he will be gracious to us.<sup>u</sup> *If they be prophets, says Jeremiah, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them make intercession to the Lord of hosts.*<sup>v</sup> If we cannot otherwise be serviceable to the public, we may and ought to be so by our prayers: and how much the issue of the struggle between Israel and Amalek in the valley, depends upon the constancy and faith of the intercessors in the mount, who hold up their hands to God,<sup>w</sup> we cannot tell; but it would be very sad if, by our neglect to pray for it, or by our formality and carelessness in prayer, the righteous, glorious cause of God and religion should languish and be lost.

9. You must, faithfully and wisely, transmit that good thing which is committed to you, pure and entire, to the next generation; you must not only keep it yourself, but keep it for, and leave it with, those who shall come after you, that one generation may praise God's work unto another. Timothy must commit what he has heard and received to faithful men.<sup>x</sup> That which was commanded our fathers, is

<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

<sup>n</sup> Isa. xl. 1, 2.

<sup>o</sup> Isa. i. 4.

<sup>p</sup> Ps. xcvi. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.

<sup>t</sup> Joel ii. 17.

<sup>u</sup> Mal. i. 9.

<sup>v</sup> Jer. xxvii. 18.

<sup>w</sup> Exod. xvii. 11.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 2.

made known to us, that we may make it known to *our children*, and they to the *children which shall be born*, who shall *arise and declare it to their children*;<sup>7</sup> such care as this must be taken (and may the grace of God make it an effectual care) to preserve the entail of religion, that that light may not die in our hands, nor that treasure be buried in our graves.

We charge you with the *lambs* of the flock;<sup>8</sup> have an eye to them, a tenderness for them: the first charge Christ gave to Peter was, *Feed my lambs*; and the same charge is given to all the under shepherds, not only by the precepts, but by the example, of the chief Shepherd, who with a particular care gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads them. If Christ have such a concern for them, he expects you should; and you may expect that, *therefore*, your concern for them shall not be in vain.

Lead them, therefore, into the green pastures, and feed them beside the still waters; lay before them *that* in the word of God, which is *milk for babes*; let your doctrine drop upon them as the rain; and labour to instil into their hearts, betimes, the pleasing, but commanding, principles of love to God and Jesus Christ, delight in the word and prayer, good thoughts of religion and the ways of God, and joyful prospects of the glory to be revealed, and every thing that may invite them, and win upon them, to set their faces heavenward.

In preaching, in visiting the families under your charge, you must be a teacher of babes, for Christ is so, and a very meek and compassionate one. The catechising of youth is a very good work, either publicly or privately, and if the blessing of God go along with you in it, it will contribute very much to the good progress and success of all your other work. Invite, encourage, and persuade those who are young, to *join themselves to the Lord* in the days of their youth, and to *subscribe with the hand* to be his;<sup>9</sup> and if we do our endeavours, though we should not gain our point, it will be a comfort to us to have been found in the way of our duty.

And now, brother, you see what the trust is that is lodged in your hand, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus. You hear your charge; what do you think of it? I doubt not, but you have considered it before you came under these bonds, and have already sat down and counted the cost; and therefore, I hope, the repeating of this charge, though you see how great your work is, and what difficulties you must expect to meet with in it, yet it does not make you repent your choice, nor wish yourself at liberty again; nor make you despair of going through with the undertaking. This use you should make of it, To be brought to see your own utter insufficiency for it, by any ability of

your own. "Is all this to be said? Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak it, for I am but a child, unless God give me a mouth and wisdom. Is all this to be done? Ah, Lord God, I cannot do it, unless God *work in me both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*.<sup>c</sup> Who is sufficient for these things? Whoever is, I am not."

But instead of being disheartened by the greatness of your work, and the difficulties that attend it, you should rather, thereby, be animated and stirred up to set about it, and go on in it, with resolution such as becomes the Christian hero, the good soldier of Jesus Christ, who knows *whom he has trusted*, as well as *what he is trusted with*, and how to commit that again to Christ, which Christ has committed to him against that day.

Let me therefore say something in the close, both to quicken you to your work, and to encourage you in it, and not you only, but myself and other my brethren, who have laid our hand to this plough.

1. Let us propose to ourselves such considerations as are proper to quicken us to our work, and to the diligent, faithful discharge of the trust reposed in us.

(1.) The things we are employed about are of vast importance, and such as highly deserve our utmost care and application. Our business lies not in the little trifles of sense and time, in the merchandise of silver, or the gain of fine gold; no, it has reference to the upper unseen world, the world of spirits; to the future state, the state of retribution, and to this present state, only with regard to that. Let us often consider, that we are dealing for an eternal God, with immortal souls, about their everlasting state, and we shall see how well worthy our business is of the whole man. What an awful thought should *that* give us, which the apostle speaks, concerning the work of ministers, that they watch for *souls*.<sup>d</sup> It is no time to trifle, when there is a soul in the case, and its endless weal or woe.

Those who are concerned about the lives and estates of their *patients* and *clients*, have need to be both skilful and careful; much more should those be so who are concerned about precious souls, one of which is of more value than the whole world of inferior creatures. What greater care can lie upon a man, than the care of *souls*, which Christ purchased with his own blood, and thereby taught us how to put a value upon them.

Our business lies in the *things pertaining to the kingdom of God*;<sup>e</sup> (his kingdom among men;) concerning *those*, we have received instructions; and in comparison with those things, what are all the affairs of the kingdoms of this world, but children's play? It is the word of reconciliation that is committed to us, that word by which we must all be judged, shortly; and therefore we are concerned to be skil-

<sup>7</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 5, 6.    <sup>8</sup> Isa. xl. 11.    <sup>9</sup> Isa. xlv. 3, 5.    <sup>b</sup> Jer. i. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. xlii. 17.

<sup>e</sup> Acts i. 3.



ful masters of our business, and faithful, careful ministers to it. We work for God; and therefore should see to it, that we do our work well. We work for Christ; who did his work for us with indefatigable industry, and did not fail, nor was discouraged, nor gave it up, till he could say, *I have finished the work that was given me to do.* Mr. Perkin's motto was, *Minister Verbi es, hoc age—If we be ministers of the word of God, we must mind our business; for it is a word that will be a savour either of life unto life, or of death unto death.*

(2.) Our Master's eye is always upon us, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing; whatever we say, whatever we think, he perfectly knows it, its principles, and all its circumstances. He sees us when we trifle, and do the work of the Lord deceitfully; when we offer the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice, how plausibly soever it may be palliated before men. If we aim at self, and at our own praise, when we should seek the honour of Christ, he is acquainted with those corrupt glances of an eye that goes astray from him.

Now if God has such an observing eye upon us, we ought to have a jealous eye upon ourselves, and upon the frame of our spirits. God's servants need not do better than to serve him with eye service, because they are always under his eye; ministers who are more immediately employed for him, are more immediately observed by him. Those who execute the priest's office, are said to *walk before God*. O that we could thus walk before him, as always in his sight, that that consideration may not only restrain us from every thing unbecoming us, but engage us to go on in our work with the more cheerfulness and courage. As it is the terror of the slothful and wicked servant, so it is the pleasure and encouragement of the good and faithful servant, to be under his master's eye. If we take pains in studying, be constant and lively in prayer in our closet, he sees our *secret services* to his name, as he does also the *secret springs* of our public performances, which men cannot judge of; and if in these our hearts be right with him, and we approve ourselves to him, we may have the satisfaction of this, that He approves of us; and then we may reckon it a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment. He who judges us, is one who knows us, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.

(3.) Our time is very precious, and our day is hastening toward a period. When we see what a deal of work we have to do, and what a little time we have to do it in, we shall see how strongly we are bound, by a close application of mind, to do a double work in a single day, that our work may not be unfinished when our time is done, or (which perhaps may be much sooner) when our opportunity is done.

We cannot but be conscious to ourselves, that we have lost a great deal of time: how many empty spaces are there in our best days, and how many more in our worst? What a great deal more good might we have done to the souls of others, and got to our own souls, than we have, if we had been busy! Now though the time that is lost cannot be recalled, yet it may be *redeemed*, may be *bought back*, with a little self-denial and industry, in the improvement of the present time. Thus a spend-thrift, when he sees his folly, and begins to take up, knows he has no other way to recover his past losses, but by being so much the more frugal for the future. O that we would all learn this good husbandry, to be very sparing in our expenses of time, not to lavish away any of the precious moments of it in trifles. "An hour saved is an hour got," is a more valuable principle of good husbandry, than "A penny saved is a penny got."

We know not how little time may yet be before us, nor how soon, and how suddenly, we may be sent for home. Our commission runs, *durante bene placito—during pleasure*; and we may be displaced at less than an hour's warning; may be commanded away by death, or rendered useless by sickness, or may be silenced and driven into corners; or, some way or other, laid aside as despised broken vessels; and therefore, we should be quickened to work the work of him that sent us, while it is day, because the night comes.<sup>f</sup> Peter stirs up himself, to stir up others, and by preaching and writing to be a remembrancer to the churches, with this consideration, that *he must shortly put off this tabernacle*.<sup>g</sup> If Christians must exhort one another, surely then ministers must exhort *them, so much the more as they see the day approaching*; <sup>h</sup> the day of trouble, the day of restraint, the day of death; <sup>i</sup> and therefore, improve the day of opportunity. If we find death working in us, it concerns us to be so much the more busy in the work of life, and whatever our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our might; it will be time enough to rest when we come to heaven. It well becomes us to abide by that resolution, *Non propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas—Not for the sake of life, to lose the intent of living.*

(4.) If we obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, there is hope that we may obtain this further mercy of him, to be useful. It is true, there are many who faithfully do their duty, and yet are disappointed of the success: they *toil all night, and catch nothing*; they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought; and go in the bitterness of their souls because of this. But yet, if we do not the good we wish, we may hope that, through grace, we shall be instrumental to do *some* service to Christ and the souls of men; and the prospect of that should quicken

<sup>f</sup> John ix. 4.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Pet. i. 13, 14.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. x. 25.

<sup>i</sup> Isa. lili. 10.

us to diligence. Our Lord Jesus was animated to go on in his work, with an assurance that he should *see his seed*; should *see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied*, and that the *good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands*.<sup>k</sup>

Let this, therefore, quicken us, that we know on whose errand we go, and carry a word that shall not return void. St. Paul was quickened by this consideration, that he did not *run as uncertainly*, nor *fight as one that beats the air*.<sup>l</sup> It is good work we are about, and we are not without hopes it may turn to a good account; that though we are the weakest and unworthiest of all our Master's servants, yet we may by his grace be instrumental to save some soul from death, to turn some sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; we may have some who may be our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. By a holy ambition of such an honour as this, let us be spurred on to the utmost diligence and courage in the service of Christ. The more we magnify our *office*, though we have all the reason in the world to be ashamed of *ourselves*,<sup>m</sup> the more we shall think it worth our while to take pains in it.

(5.) We must shortly give account of our ministry; either with joy or grief, according as we are, or are not, diligent and faithful in the ministry. O that we were filled with this, and influenced by it, That the talents, put into our hands to trade with for our Master's honour, must be reckoned for; after a long time it may be, but at the set time.<sup>n</sup> And whether, upon inquiry, we shall be found among the good and faithful servants, or among the wicked and slothful servants, is now worth while to consider; for it is what our everlasting weal or woe depends upon.

Blessed Paul stirred up himself to the utmost care and diligence in his work, with a holy fear, lest while he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away at last:<sup>o</sup> much more reason have we to quicken ourselves with such a consideration. We have souls of our own to save; and if we prove false to our trust, and the souls of men perish through our treachery and neglect, it will be a righteous doom upon us, *Thy life shall go for his life*; thy soul for theirs. We are watchmen; and ought to watch for souls, as those who must give account, and know not how soon. And woe to us if the blood of souls come to be required at our hand.<sup>p</sup>

Let us, therefore, be humble, diligent, and faithful in our work, and often calling ourselves to account whether we are so or no; and wherein we find we come short of our duty, let us judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord, and get our accounts balanced, by the satisfaction of Christ;

then shall we lift up our heads, with joy in our hearts, when our Lord comes, and enter into his joy; when the servant, that because his Lord delayed his coming grew insolent and abusive, shall have his portion with the hypocrites.<sup>q</sup> That work had need be done carefully, which will have this serious issue.

2. Let us also furnish ourselves with such considerations as are proper to encourage us in our work, and to support and comfort us under the difficulties we meet with in it; that the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, may be strengthened and confirmed, and we may go on in our work, not only with resolution, but with cheerfulness.

(1.) We are employed in work, wherein God is working with us, and we are workers together with him.<sup>r</sup> Nothing could be more encouraging to those, whom Christ has sent to preach and baptize in his name, than that parting promise of his, *Lo, I am with you always*, you and your successors, *even to the end of the world*.<sup>s</sup> The tokens of his presence immediately appeared; for when the apostles went forth preaching, it was evident that the Lord was *working with them*, and *confirming the word by signs following*; which was an early specimen of the lasting fruits of that promised presence of his with his church and ministers, which they are encouraged to depend upon.

If Christ have sent us, he is with us; and his word in our mouth shall not return void, but, as the rain from heaven, shall *accomplish that for which he sends it*<sup>t</sup> by us, whether it be sent, as Elihu says of the rain, *for correction, or for his land, or for mercy*; and though Israel be not gathered, they who are faithful shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord;<sup>u</sup> and we shall be a sweet savour unto God in them that perish, as well as in them that are saved.<sup>v</sup> And if our labours have not the desired success, yet they shall have the designed success; our peace shall rest on the sons of peace; and if it find none to rest upon, yet we shall be no losers, it shall return to us again.

(2.) We shall find God's grace sufficient for us, if we be not wanting to ourselves in making use of it. It was with reference to the many difficulties and hardships Paul met with in his ministerial work, that Christ said to him, and in him to every faithful minister, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*.<sup>w</sup> He knows what measures of grace we and our work call for, and will be sure to give what is requisite; for not only all our supply is from him, but such a supply as is a sufficiency.<sup>x</sup>

If we go about our work in the strength of Christ, depending upon it, and deriving from it, we shall find, that as our day so shall our strength

<sup>k</sup> Isa. liii. 10.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. xxv. 19.

<sup>l</sup> Luke xli. 42-46.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 26.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Cor. ix.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. xi. 13.

<sup>p</sup> Heb. xlii. 17.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 1.

<sup>r</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

<sup>s</sup> Job xxxvii. 13.

<sup>t</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>u</sup> Mark xvi. 20.

<sup>v</sup> Isa. xlix. 5.

<sup>w</sup> Isa. lv. 10, 11.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 13.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

be, and we shall be enabled to do all things through Christ strengthening us;\* all those things which Christ has appointed us to do for him. And the more humble the sense we have of our own insufficiency, the more confidently we may depend upon his all-sufficiency. Whatever charge is given us, grace is promised with it, to enable us to discharge it, if we will but by faith fetch in that grace as we have occasion for it, and make use of it. The Spirit of Christ was sent, to assist the disciples as ministers, to teach them who were to teach others, to lead them into all truth, who were to be the guides of the church, and to bring all things to their remembrance, as they had occasion for them; and it is a comfort to us, that that presence and power, that influence and operation, of the Spirit is to abide with the church and its faithful ministers always. If, therefore, we do not quench, and grieve, and resist the Spirit, and provoke him to withdraw; if we pray to God to give his Holy Spirit to us, as he has promised to give to them who ask him, and walk in the Spirit, and act in a believing dependence upon him; he will work all our works, in us and for us; and then, and then only, we shall be able to work for him.

(3.) We serve a Master, who, if our hearts be upright with him, is ready to pass by and pardon our many failings and defects. It is a great encouragement to all Christians, and to ministers particularly, that though our work be great and difficult, and our strength no way proportionable to it, yet we are under grace, and not under the law. The rule is strict, and we must aim at perfection in our conformity to it; but though in many things we come short of the rule, and cannot do so well as we should, yet if with a willing mind we do as well as we can, we shall be graciously accepted through a Mediator, and what is amiss shall be passed by and pardoned upon our repentance.

Let not this comfortable word be abused to the indulgence of our sloth and negligence, but rather let it quicken and encourage us in the service of such a God, with whom there is forgiveness that he may be feared.<sup>b</sup> Blessed Paul, the most active, zealous servant that ever our Master had, found cause to complain of a body of death he carried about with him, by reason of which he could not do the good that he would;<sup>c</sup> and if that which was his complaint be ours, that which was his comfort may be ours too, *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*<sup>d</sup>

It was a strict charge which Christ gave his disciples, when he sent them forth. But we find them defective in many instances; in their faith, in their humility, and in the diligence of their attendance on him, witness their sleeping in the garden; yet

because they truly loved and honoured him, and believed in him, he not only continued them in his family, but favourably excused their infirmities, imputing them to the weakness of the flesh, while he *knew* the spirit *was* willing;<sup>e</sup> and praised them, at parting, for continuing with him in his temptations.<sup>f</sup>

(4.) We have many encouraging examples set before us, of those who, in their day, experienced the grace of God, and his consolations bearing them up, and carrying them on cheerfully in their work. Our fathers bore their testimony to the goodness of God, and the truth of his promise, and the power of his Spirit; they received the same charge that we have done; laboured under the same infirmities, and struggled with the same difficulties, that we do; and yet they were enabled to go on in their work, to persevere to the end, to finish well, and to give up their account with joy: and they owned to the last, it was by the grace of God that they were what they were, and did what they did; they were no better than that grace made them. Whenever they told us what God did for their souls, and what he did by their ministry, they were sure still to ascribe all the glory to free grace.

Now this is a comfort to us, that how weak soever we are, we have the God of our fathers to trust to, and depend upon; who did not fail *them*, and therefore, we hope, will not forsake *us*. He says to us, as he did to Joshua, when he was called to carry on that work which Moses had been long employed in, *As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.*<sup>g</sup>

We who have had our hands for many years at this plough, can assure you from our own experience, if that will be any encouragement to you, brother, that we have all the reason in the world to speak well—of our *Master*; he is our best friend—and of his *work*; it is its own wages. We have cause enough to be ashamed of *ourselves*, that we have done our work no better; but the *gospel of Christ*, which we are intrusted with the preaching of, we hope we shall never be ashamed of.<sup>h</sup>

(5.) Great will be our reward in heaven, if we be faithful. Though we can merit nothing at the hand of Christ, but when we have done all, must say *we are unprofitable servants*,<sup>i</sup> much more when we have done so little, nay, though there is so much sin and folly mingled with our best performances, as might justly cut us off from all hope of acceptance, yet, through Christ and his merit, we are encouraged to look for that crown of glory, which the chief-Shepherd, when he appears, shall bestow upon all the under shepherds who are faithful to him.<sup>k</sup>

Our Master himself had an eye to the *joy set before him*. And this enabled blessed Paul to triumph, when he was now ready to be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand, not only

\* Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. cxxx. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. vii. 19.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Matt xxvi. 44.

<sup>f</sup> Luke xxii. 28.

<sup>g</sup> Josh. i. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. i. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xvii. 10.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Pet. v. 4.

that his warfare was accomplished, and his toilsome course finished, but that thenceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness; and not for him only, but for all those who love both the first and second appearing of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Your success in your ministry will add to your comfort; the souls you win for Christ will be your joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord,<sup>2</sup> which should engage you to *aim* at success in your work: but though you should not be honoured with much of that, God will not be unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, and if but little encouraged here, it shall without fail be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19.

You must count upon sufferings. When Christ sent forth his disciples, he told them, not only what great things they should *do*, but what great things they should *suffer, for his name's sake*; <sup>3</sup> persecution and opposition from without, contempt and contradiction from within. Suffering ill for doing well you may think *hard* of, but must not think *strange* of; your Master is before-hand with you in his sufferings, and will not be behind-hand with you in his recompences; your journey may be tedious, and your voyage perilous, but hold out with faith and patience, you will be at home shortly, and one hour in heaven will make amends for all.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ix. 16.