

A SERMON

CONCERNING THE

WORK AND SUCCESS OF THE MINISTRY ;

Preached at the Tuesday Lecture, at Salters' Hall, June 25, 1710.

LUKE x. 5, 6.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it ; if not, it shall return to you again.

PROSPECT of success, as it is the spring of action, so it is the spur to industry and resolution. Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen, would never bow his shoulder to bear, and couch, as he does, between two burthens, much less could he rejoice in his tents of labour, but that he sees the land is pleasant,^a and from it he hopes to reap the precious fruits of the earth: nor would Zebulun, that tribe of merchants, be a haven of ships, and rejoice in his hazardous going out, but that he expects to suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.^b Whatever business a man has, he cannot long oblige himself to abide by it, unless he can promise himself to get by it.

Now it is worth while to inquire, what is the gain, and what the success, which we, who are ministers, have in prospect, and which we bear up ourselves in our work with the prospect of. What is it which we may feed ourselves with the hopes of?

1. Worldly advantages we must not promise to ourselves, in common with the children of this world: for the soldiers of Jesus Christ, though they walk in the flesh, do not war after the flesh;^c they negotiate the affairs of a kingdom that is not of this world.

They who deal in secular business, think they succeed well and gain their point, if they raise an estate, and advance their families, and make to themselves a name among the great ones of the earth; they rejoice because their wealth is great, and their

hand has gotten much, and say, *Soul, take thine ease.* But the ministry, though it is the best calling, is the worst trade, in the world; that is, it will prove so to those who make a mere trade of it, looking no further than to get money by it, and to enrich themselves.

We cannot propose to ourselves advantages of this kind, for the same Lord who ordained, that they *who preach the gospel should live of the gospel*,^d and live comfortably, has also told them, *In the world ye must have tribulation*.^e Nay, we may not make these things our end in undertaking or prosecuting this work: we debase our calling and contradict our profession if we do. Shall we, who preach the great things of another world to others, so far forget ourselves as to seek great things to ourselves in this world, when God in saying to Baruch has said to all his servants the prophets, *Seek them not*?^f

2. Spiritual and eternal advantages in the other world, if we be faithful, we may hope for, and encourage ourselves with the prospect of, in common with all good Christians. If we be sincere, and diligent in our work, and our hearts upright with God, we shall have the favour of God, and the testimony of our consciences for us, and eternal life in its earnest and first-fruits abiding in us; and it is much our own fault, if we excel not in graces and comforts, by our constant converse with divine things. And if through grace we endure to the end good and faithful servants, our Master's "*Well done*," the *joy of our Lord* into which we shall enter, and the *crown of life*^g which we shall receive when the chief Shepherd shall appear,^h will be an abundant recompence for all our services and sufferings; and we shall then say, we have had good success in our work.

Let us therefore fear, lest such a rest, such a glory,

^a Gen. xlix. 14, 15.

^c 2 Cor. x. 3.

^b Deut. xxxiii. 19.

^d 1 Cor. ix. 14.

^e John xvi. 33.

^f Matt. xxv. 21.

^g Jer. xlv. 5.

^h 1 Pet. v. 4.

being set before us, any of us should seem to come short of it,¹ and lest while we preach to others, and show them the way to heaven, we ourselves should be shut out, and become cast away at last;² and, being moved with this fear, let us walk very circumspectly, and take heed to ourselves, that we may not only save those who hear us, but ourselves in the first place. But,

3. There is a particular good success besides this, which faithful ministers have in prospect, which they aim at, and animate themselves with, in their work, and that is, doing good to the souls of men; and, as instruments in the hand of God, serving the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world. We are shepherds, we are vine-dressers, and we reckon we have good success, if the flock increase, and the vineyard flourish, and be fruitful, to the honour of him who is the great Owner of both. We are Christ's soldiers, and if we be instrumental to curb and restrain the enemies of his kingdom, and to reduce and protect the subjects of it; if by the blessing of God on our ministry the ignorant be instructed, the simple made wise for their souls and eternity, and the wise made to increase in learning; if the bad be made good, and the good made better; then do we prosper, and then have we good success. This is that we should have in our eye, and which we should lay near our hearts, with seriousness and concern to the last degree. That is that, for the compassing of which we should study and use the most apt and proper means, and should willingly spend and be spent; it is that fruit of the travail of our soul, which, if we see it, will be abundantly to our satisfaction,¹ and the pain will be forgotten for joy of it; but if we see it not, the case is more sad than that of a miscarrying womb and dry breasts,² and because of it we go on in heaviness, nay, in bitterness of spirit.³

But though so much of our comfort is bound up in the success of our labour, yet we lie under this disadvantage, above those of other professions, that we are at great uncertainty concerning it, and for the most part very much in the dark. The physician knows whether he cures his patient or no, and the lawyer whether he carries his client's cause or no: but we preach, from day to day, to *work upon* the hearts of men; and though sometimes the effect is visible either one way or the other, *some men's sins are open beforehand*, and the *good works of some are likewise manifest beforehand*,⁴ some are much our joy and crown, others much our grief and shame;—yet more often it is not so; we cannot tell who are savingly wrought upon, and who are not: but this makes the foundation of God to stand sure, *The Lord knows them that are his*,⁵ whether we do or no. And in this matter, which cannot but be very much upon our hearts, this text will give us both direction and

satisfaction: for it shows us how we must do our duty, and then leave the success with the grace of God,—as in the affairs of this life, we are to leave it with the providence of God.

The text is part of the *instructions* which our Lord Jesus gave to the seventy disciples, when he gave them their *commission*; for those two will go together: Christ sends none on his errand, whom he does not give in some measure to understand their message. These instructions here are much the same with those he gave to the twelve apostles; and what he said to them both in exhortation and encouragement, he says in effect to all his ministers, excepting some few things that were peculiar to the state and work of those first preachers of the gospel.

My text will give us not only a fair occasion, but good help too, to consider two things:

I. The work and office of ministers; wherever they come, they are to say, *Peace be here*.

II. Their success in the discharge of this office; which is according as they do or do not meet with the sons of peace. And the opening of these two things, I trust, by the blessing of God, may be of some use both to ministers and people.

I. We may observe here, what the charge and work of gospel ministers is, and what they are warranted and instructed to do; they are appointed by the Prince of peace to be the messengers of peace, and wherever they come, they are to say, *Peace be here*. If a minister be asked, as Samuel was, *Comest thou peaceably*, he may answer in the name of him who sent him, *Yes, peaceably*; and such their temper and behaviour ought to be, as to be able to answer so for themselves. They are heralds indeed to proclaim war against sin; but to the children of men they are sent as ambassadors preaching peace by Jesus Christ;¹ who himself first came (as one pleased he had such an errand to perform) and preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh;² and has appointed his ministers as residents to negotiate this great affair, while time lasts, for so long the treaty will continue.

1. The ministers whom Christ here sends forth are supposed to enter into private houses; and *that* under the character of Christ's ambassadors, and in the execution of their office,—the business of which they must be carrying on, not only into whatsoever *synagogue*, but into whatsoever *house*, they enter. We shall find them in *private houses*, either because thither their public preaching will be driven, or because thither they themselves will carry it.

(1.) Sometimes they were forced into such corners. Though the message they brought had every thing in it to recommend them to an universal acceptance, yet it is probable, in many places they were not permitted to preach in the synagogues; the rulers

¹ Heb. iv. 1.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27.

³ Isa. lili. 11.

⁴ Hos. ix. 14.

⁵ Ezek. iii. 14.

¹ 1 Tim. v. 24, 25.

² 2 Tim. ii. 19.

³ 1 Sam. xvi. 3.

⁴ Acts x. 36.

⁵ Eph. ii. 17.

there who had a jealous eye upon them would take care to keep them thence; and they then retired into private houses, and preached to as many as would come to hear them there. Those who cannot do what they would for God and the souls of men, must do what they can, and God will accept of them.

The gospel of Christ is never the less honourable in itself, nor should be ever the less acceptable to us, for any disadvantageous circumstances of this kind, which the preaching of it may be at any time reduced to. It is not the place but the heart that God looks at.¹ It was in the house of Cornelius that the Holy Ghost first descended, in the dew of Peter's preaching upon the Gentiles. The master of the feast sent his servants into the highways and the hedges, to invite guests to the wedding supper.

And those who, in such a cloudy and dark day, open their doors to God's ministers and people, out of a sincere love to Christ and his gospel, whatever inconvenience they may sustain, shall be no losers by it in the end; sure a church of Christ brought into a house (and we often in the New Testament meet with a "church in the house") cannot but bring as valuable a blessing along with it, though perhaps not so sensible a one, as the ark of God brought into the house of Obed-edom.² Simon Peter was soon repaid with a great draught of fishes, for lending Christ his boat to preach a sermon out of,³ and (which was a better reward) was made a fisher of men.

We have reason to be thankful to God that we are not reduced to such straits as our suffering brethren in France are at this day reduced to; but it is our wisdom to prepare for changes, and to resolve, that whithersoever the ark removes, we will remove and go after it.⁴

(2.) They always embraced such opportunities of spreading the gospel, and doing good to the souls of men, as visiting people at their houses gave them. Our Lord Jesus preached wherever he visited. Mary heard his word, and Martha should have heard it, in their own house.⁵ St. Paul, at Ephesus, taught not only publicly in the synagogue, and the school of Tyrannus, but from house to house;⁶ and the apostles, at Jerusalem, not only in the temple, but in every house continued to teach and preach Jesus Christ.⁷

Private and personal application would make our public work the more successful; and some, perhaps, will give a more earnest heed to that which is spoken to them, by themselves, about their souls and their salvation, than to that which they only hear in common with others. Peter must not only cast a net, but sometimes cast a hook, into the sea, with which the fish may be caught that had escaped the

net.⁸ And if the words of the wise be as *nails*, this will help to fasten them, as *nails in a sure place*.⁹ Hereby we may come to know what people have to say against being religious, and what their excuses are with which they support themselves in a sinful way; and by giving suitable answers to both, may help them over the particular difficulty that lies in their way.

Thus, we may express more condescension and compassion (two excellent principles in a minister) than we can in our public administrations. Thus, we may give more particular reproofs and admonitions, counsels and comforts, suited to the case of each person and family; may, with that which is indeed the tongue of the learned, speak a word in season;¹⁰ and may learn the better how to direct the arrow in public, that it may not always come from a bow drawn at a venture.

But if the priest's lips should *keep knowledge*, and have it ready to impart upon all occasions, the people should seek the law at his mouth,¹¹ and desire instruction. Ministers would gladly give you the best advice they can about your spiritual concerns, if you would *ask it*, or *give them an opportunity for it*; and, when they come to your houses, or you are in company with them, would ask, (as of old they used to do of the prophet,) *What hath the Lord answered thee?* and, *What hath the Lord spoken?*¹² *Watchman, what of the night?* They who would have the benefit of an oracle must consult it.

2. They are instructed to say, *Peace be to this house*; that is, to the inhabitants of it; to all under this roof; to the master of the family, for he ever so great he needs this blessing; and to all the members of the family, for he they ever so mean they are not excluded from this blessing. In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free. Ignatius's bishop was to take cognizance even of the servants of the families that belonged to his charge.

Peace be to you, was a common form of salutation among the Jews; but no doubt it is here intended for more than a compliment, or a piece of civility and good manners: it does indeed well become Christ's ministers to be very respectful and obliging to all. The just and undissembled expressions of honour and tenderness to those with whom they converse, will not only be an ornament to their profession, but may help to gain them an interest in the affections of people, improvable to the best purposes; as on the contrary, their ministry may be prejudiced more than they are aware of, by a rude and morose behaviour. But these words here, are to be used by them in the same sense, and with the same solemnity that Christ used them to his disciples, after his resurrection, when he stood in the midst, and said unto them, once and again, *Peace be unto you*;¹³ by

¹ Acts i. 24. ² Sam. vi. 12. ³ Luke v. 3, 4. ⁴ Josh. iii. 3.
⁵ Luke x. 39. ⁶ Acts xx. 20. ⁷ Acts v. 42.

⁸ Matt. xvii. 27. ⁹ Eccl. xii. 11. ¹⁰ Isa. i. 4.
¹¹ Mal. ii. 7. ¹² Jer. xiii. 37. ¹³ John xx. 19, 21.

which he lodged this peace with them, as a sacred deposit, to be communicated by them, as his agents, to the church: *Peace be to you*, and, in you, to all believers. Receive the olive-branch of peace, and carry it with you to all nations; receive from him who has authority to give it, and who can command peace to be the fruit of the lips, the fruit of *your* lips.⁵ They were to go into all the world, with these words in their mouths, *Peace be unto you*. They were for peace; but when they spake, the world was for war⁶—with them, with Christ himself.

Now the gospel they preach was an everlasting gospel,¹ and Jesus Christ is, in it, the same *to-day* that he was *yesterday*;² and, therefore, what *they* were to say, in the same name, *we* are to say, *we* do say: *Peace be unto you*. I say, (the unworthiest of all who are employed on this great errand,) *Peace be to this congregation*; Peace to everyone who hears me this day. *For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be unto you.*¹ That is,

(1.) We are to preach peace to all; to publish and proclaim the gospel of peace; to notify to the children of men the covenant of peace; to invite them to come and take the benefit of it, and for their greater satisfaction to administer the seals of it. When the first-begotten was brought into the world, the angels of heaven, in token of their communion with the church militant, sang, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace*;³ and when he was brought into *Jerusalem*, the disciples on earth, in token of their communion with the church triumphant, sang, *Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest*;⁴—so that both the upper and lower world share in, and give thanks for, this peace. The ministers of the gospel bring good tidings, for they publish peace.⁵ We are warranted to make a general offer of peace to all, upon easy and reasonable terms: *PEACE*, that is,

[1.] Reconciliation,—and no war. The case is plain that sin has been the parent of disagreement between God and man. As soon as ever man had eaten the forbidden fruit, his God, who made him, became his enemy and fought against him;⁶ in token of which, a cherubim was set, with a flaming sword that turned every way, threatening death, while he kept the way of the tree of life.⁷ The quarrel is hereditary; we are by nature children of wrath, because children of disobedience; the broken law lays us under the curse, and sets the terrors of God in array against us. And if God proceed in his controversy with us, it will certainly terminate in our endless ruin; for who knows the power of his anger?

But is the breach wide as the sea, that it cannot be healed? Is the case desperate? Blessed be God, it is not; the gospel we preach shows us that

God's thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace;⁸ that Christ undertakes to be our peace;⁹ and thus the counsels of peace were *between them both*.¹⁰ It discovers to us how satisfaction was made for the violation of the first covenant, and a foundation laid for a treaty of peace; how the enmity was slain by the cross of Christ, and a happy expedient found to bring God and man together again in a new covenant. Behold, *we bring you glad tidings of great joy*, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth, that *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*.¹¹ There is not only a cessation of arms, and a truce for a time, but methods proposed for a lasting, an everlasting, accommodation; Infinite Wisdom having found a ransom.

Now when we say, *Peace be unto you*, we thereby proclaim to the rebellious children, That whoever will may come and take the benefit of this act of indemnity; conditions of peace are offered them, which they cannot with any colour of reason except against; God is willing to be reconciled to you upon gospel terms; and, therefore, we as ambassadors for Christ beseech you in his stead to be reconciled to him.¹² You deceive yourselves into your own ruin, if you say you shall have peace though you go on still in your sins;¹³ but we court you to your own happiness, when we tell you you shall have peace, if you return, and repent, and yield yourselves to the Lord. The great God, by his prophet, has assured us, that he is not implacable, for fury is not in him;¹⁴ (righteous he is, but not furious;) yet withal that he is irresistible, and we are unable to stand before him, for *who would set the briars and thorns against him in battle?* which will be so far from giving check to a consuming fire, that they will bring fuel to it; he will go through them, yea, he will burn them together. What must a man do then who sees himself ready to be swallowed up by the divine wrath? The God of heaven tells him what he must do: *Let him take hold on my strength*, (take hold by a lively faith on Christ crucified, who is the power of God, and his arm revealed,) *that he make peace with me*; let him submit, and return to his allegiance, accommodate himself to his God, and to his duty, and *he shall make peace with me*; he shall have the comfort of it, and all shall be well.

[2.] Riches,—and no want. It is not only the extinction of an unhappy controversy, but the settling of a happy correspondence; *Peace be to you*, is as much as *All good be to you*. When the Psalmist prayed for *peace within Zion's walls*, he explained himself in the next words, *prosperity be within thy palaces*;¹⁵ and meant no less, when, for his brethren and companions' sake, he said, *Peace be within thee*. So when we say, *Peace be to this assembly*, we make

¹ Isa. lvii. 19. ² Pa. cxx. 7. ³ Rev. xiv. 6. ⁴ Heb. xiii. 8.
⁵ 1 Pa. cxxii. 8. Gal. vi. 16. ⁶ Luke ii. 14.
⁷ Luke xix. 38. ⁸ Isa. lii. 7. ⁹ Pa. lxiii. 10.

¹⁰ Gen. iii. 24. ¹¹ Jer. xxxix. 11. ¹² Eph. ii. 14. ¹³ Zech. vi. 13.
¹⁴ 2 Cor. v. 19. ¹⁵ 2 Cor. v. 30. ¹⁶ Deut. xxix. 19.
¹⁷ Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. ¹⁸ Pa. cxxii. 7, 8.

you in God's name a fair offer of life and all happiness; of all that which is agreeable to the nature of your souls, as you are rational and immortal creatures,—and to their necessity, as you are guilty and sinful; of the benefit of all those exceeding great and precious promises, which will make a portion for you, a *portion for ever*, for the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Peace be to you, that is, prosperity, soul prosperity, all the welfare of both worlds, the *unsearchable riches of Christ*,^a and all that substance which they who love wisdom are made to inherit;^b not only food that you may live, but gold tried in the fire that you may be rich.^c All the treasures that are hid in the new covenant, in that abridgment of it, *God will be to you a God*; they are all your own, if you please to make them so by a lively faith. This spiritual wealth and riches shall be in that house on which this peace rests, even righteousness that endures for ever.^d

Peace be to you, that is, comfort and joy, and a holy serenity and satisfaction of soul, such as the smiles of the world cannot give, nor its frowns take away; that peace which is the effect of righteousness, even quietness and assurance for ever;^e everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. This is that wine and milk, that nourishment and refreshment for the soul, which are to be bought without money and without price;^f that water of life, of which we may take freely, abundantly, and free of cost.^g *This day is salvation come to this house*,^h so our Saviour himself explains this comprehensive word: *PEACE be to this house*, all the THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION.

We are in God's name to make a general offer of this peace to all, not knowing to whom it belongs, or who will accept of it: as Cyrus proclaimed liberty to all the children of the captivity, though none shook off their chains, but those *whose spirits God raised to go up*. The offer is made to you this day, and we beseech you that you receive not the grace of God herein in vain. You are not sure that ever you shall have another offer made you, and therefore, for the Lord's sake, do not reject this.

(2.) We are to pray for peace to all; not only to make a tender of it, but to seek unto God for it. *Peace be unto you* is the benediction, which with grace, necessarily prefixed, the apostle Paul gives to all his friends to whom he directs his epistles, *Grace be unto you, and peace*. And all the ministers of Christ must give themselves to prayer as well as to the ministry of the word,^k must speak to God for you, as well as from God to you. The priests under the law were not only to teach the people the good knowledge of God, but to bless them in the name of the Lord, to bless them with this blessing in the text,

*The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*¹

Our prayers should be mixed with our preaching, as St. Paul's are with his writing, in all his epistles. A devout and pious ejaculation in the midst of a discourse, may help to raise the hearts of those we speak to, as well as our own. However, our preaching must be both prefaced and attended with our prayers, else we do but half our work, nay, we do none at all to any purpose. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls must give God no rest, but continue instant in prayer:^m and certainly we shall do so if we be in good earnest in our work, and desire to see the fruit of it; for it depends entirely on the divine blessing. We labour in vain, if God say of us as he did of some of the prophets of old, *they shall not profit this people at all*:ⁿ nor will our pains in dressing the vineyard turn to any account, if God command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.^o And the dews of this blessing must be fetched down by prayer. *God will for it be inquired of*, and it is fit he should.

It is certain that God's grace can bring people to heaven without our preaching: but our preaching can never bring people to heaven without God's grace; and, therefore, we should be as much in care, as much in earnest, to pray for the operations of grace, as to propose the offers of grace; and may better expect in that way to succeed. If we cannot preach people to Christ, let us endeavour to pray them to Christ; for in vain do we merely prophesy upon the dry bones, saying, *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord*, for though the effect of it may be a noise and a shaking, yet still there is no breath in them; we must therefore look up, by prayer, to the Spirit, as the prophet did, *Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain*; ^p and if a spirit of life from God enter into them, then, and not till then, we gain our point. God can persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem,^q when we cannot.

Let us therefore pray for the peace of the church—the house—the heart—into which we enter with the gospel: that is,

[1.] We must earnestly desire the welfare and salvation of precious souls; and not be cold and indifferent about it. We know not God's secret will, and therefore must concur with his revealed will; by which it appears, not only that he does not desire the death of sinners, but that he most pathetically wishes their life and happiness; *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandment!*^r says he; *O that Israel had walked in my ways!*^s And when they promised fair, *O that there were such a heart in them!*^t And thus should we stand affected:—"Here are precious souls, capable of eternal bliss, but in danger of eternal ruin; O that we could prevail with

^a Eph. iii. 8. ^b Prov. viii. 21. ^c Rev. iii. 18. ^d Ps. cxlii. 3.
^e Isa. xxxii. 17. ^f Isa. lv. 1. ^g Rev. xxii. 17.
^h Luke xix. 9. ⁱ Ezra i. 3, 5. ^k Acts vi. 4.

¹ Numb. vi. 26. ^m Isa. lxii. 6. ⁿ Jer. xxiii. 32.
^o Isa. v. 6. ^p Ezek. xxxvii. 7—10. ^q Gen. ix. 27.
^r Isa. xlvi. 18. ^s Ps. lxxxi. 13. ^t Deut. v. 29.

them to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on everlasting life! O that we might be instrumental to snatch them as brands out of the burning, and to present them as living sacrifices to God!"

We should earnestly desire the *salvation of all*, and the *success of the gospel in the hands of others*; St. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; and yet his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, That they may be saved,* and that the apostles of the circumcision might see of the fruit of their labours. But we should, in a special manner, be solicitous for the spiritual welfare of those to whom we are sent, and with whom we deal; the flourishing of the vineyards which we are made the keepers of. These were to the apostle as his children, his little children, whom he had a particular tenderness for, and of whom he even travailed in birth again to see Christ formed in them;† he was even pained to see the accomplishment of his desires and hopes concerning them. How greatly did he long after them *all in the bowels of Christ Jesus.*‡ The Lord fill all his ministers with such a love as this to precious souls; that, as Titus did, we may walk in the same spirit, in the same steps, with blessed Paul; being willing and glad, as he was, to spend and to be spent for their good.§

[2.] These desires of the salvation of souls must be offered up to God in prayer. We must look up to God, and beg of him to pity and help those whom we pity, but cannot help without his grace, that are yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and to deliver them from going down to the pit. We bring them the means of grace; but we must look up to him for a blessing upon those means, and for grace to go along with them, to make them effectual. When as friends of the bridegroom, we court the affections of souls for him, that they may be espoused to him, we must do as Abraham's servant did, look up to heaven for success: *O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day;* let the message of peace be entertained, and that faithful saying, which is so well worthy of all acceptance, be believed and accepted.

When we say, *Peace be unto you*, we mean, *The Lord of peace himself give you peace*, true peace, all peace, *always, by all means*;‡ that peace of God which will rule in your hearts,^a and make them holy, and which will keep your hearts and minds,^b and make them calm and easy. We can but *speak the words of peace*, it is God only who can *speak peace*, that can *create peace*, and in his hands therefore we leave the work. We do but go, as Gehazi, with Elisha's staff, which will not awake the dead child: nay, Elisha can but stretch himself upon the child; he must look up to the God of life for the spirit of life to enter into him.^c We cannot by any power of

our own make dead sinners alive, or drooping saints lively; we must therefore have our eyes up to the Lord, to say unto them "*Live,*"^d—to say, as one having authority, (for we can only show our good will,) *Peace be unto you.*

[3.] It is good to let those we preach to know that we pray for them. We must not only say to God, *Peace be to this house*, but we must say it in the hearing of those that dwell in it. St. Paul, in his epistles, often tells his friends what those things were for which he prayed for them, that they might be encouraged to hope they should obtain those blessings in answer to his prayers, and might with the more boldness ask them of God for themselves. The blessings which Christ's ministers pronounce on the congregations of his people, is not to be thought lightly of, but to be reverently waited for, and gladly received, because God, in it, puts his name upon them.^e And if we in faith say *Amen* to it, we may hope that God will, and then we are blessed indeed.

We should take all opportunities to make those we preach to sensible, how truly and earnestly desirous we are of their eternal peace and welfare; that, if possible, we may awaken them to a due concern about it, and convince them that we love them, which will very much facilitate the entertainment of our message. We should make it appear, even to those who turn a deaf ear to our calls, that nevertheless we dare not *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*. Our Lord Jesus by his tears and good wishes testified his good will to Jerusalem, even when the things which belong to her peace were hid from her eyes.^f

We now see our work, and something of the meaning of the words here put into our mouths; *Peace be to this house*, *Peace be to this congregation*. The Lord help us to carry them through all our preaching, and praying, with a sincere love to Christ and souls.

II. What the success of ministers is, and is likely to be, in their preaching and praying; what is the fruit of their labour, and what the effect of their going thus from place to place, speaking *peace* wherever they come, *peace and truth*.

As to themselves:—If they be faithful in the trust reposed in them, and their hearts upright with God in the discharge of it, whatever acceptance they and their message meet with among men, they are sure to be accepted of the Lord,^g and that they are ambitious of, and labour for. *We are a sweet savour unto God in those that perish, as well as in those that are saved,*^h if we be sincere in doing our part. Though we should not gain our point, yet we shall in no wise lose our reward; though it be not well succeeded, if it be said, "*Well done thou good and faithful servant,*" we shall *enter into the joy of our Lord.*ⁱ

* Rom. x. 1. † Gal. iv. 19. ‡ Phil. i. 1. § 2 Cor. xii. 15, 18
‡ Gen. xxiv. 12. § 2 Thess. iii. 16. ¶ Col. iii. 15.

b Phil. iv. 7. c 2 Kings iv. 31, 34. d Ezek. xvi. 6. e Numb. vi. 27.
f Luke xix. 41. g 2 Cor. v. 9. h 2 Cor. ii. 15. i Matt. xxv. 21.

Our Master himself, though as to the chosen remnant, he was sure to see of the travail of his soul¹ to his satisfaction; yet, as to others, he had recourse to this for his comfort, *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious.*² As we must deliver our message to those with whom we deal, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear,³ so when we come to return an answer, if we have delivered it faithfully, we shall give up an account of ourselves with joy, though of many we give up our account with grief. Though Wisdom herself calls, and yet is refused, she will be justified of all her children,⁴ and glorified of God; and so shall Wisdom's maidens. But,

As to those to whom we minister:—the success is varied; not the same with all. On some, the peace comes which we preach and pray for; on others, it does not. Some are the better for our preaching and praying: to them the word is a savour of life unto life,⁵ of life spiritual unto life eternal; they are our comfort, and will be our crown. But others get no good at all by the instructions given them, and the pains we take with them; even the word of life is to them a savour of death unto death; instead of making them better it makes them worse, hardens their hearts, and aggravates their corruption, and so they are twice dead.⁶ Those of the same family, the same fraternity, who have had the same education, have sitten under the same ministry, and have given to each other the right hand of fellowship, may yet experience the effects of the word thus vastly different. *Two in a bed together,—one taken for life, the other left to perish.*⁷

We are ready to think the case is so plain on religion's side, that with all to whom it is fairly stated it should of itself carry immediate conviction; that Christ and holiness have such beauty in them, without comparison, and without controversy, that all we preach to should presently be brought to be in love with them. But, alas, it is not so; after all, many do not believe our report;⁸ nay, few in comparison do. As it was among Pharaoh's servants, some took the warning given of the impending plague of hail, and housed their cattle;⁹ others did not, but left them in the field; so when St. Paul preached, some believed the things that were spoken,¹⁰ but others believed not, though they were spoken with such convincing evidence. Thus it has been constantly from the days of the prophets unto this day; and thus it *will be*: the good seed of the word falls on some ground where it is lost and thrown away; on other, where it takes root and brings forth fruit. The preaching of Christ and the apostles, was acceptable and profitable to some, while others contradicted and blasphemed it. And if we see the like still, we are not to marvel at the matter.

2. It is unknown to us what the success of our ministry *will be*, and perhaps what it is. When the disciples were to say, *Peace be to this house*, they could not tell whether the Son of peace were there or no; nay, it may be when they became better acquainted with the house, yet they could not with certainty discover whether their peace did rest upon it, or no: *The Lord knoweth them that are his,*¹¹ but we do not. God did indeed assure Paul, for his encouragement to preach the gospel at Corinth, that he had much people in that city.¹² But, ordinarily, we cast the net into the sea, not knowing whether any thing will be enclosed; nay, oftentimes we toil all night, and catch nothing, when we promised ourselves a full draught.¹³ And, on the other hand, after many disappointments, at Christ's word we let down the net, and enclose a great multitude.

Sometimes we meet not with the success we hoped for. Those who seemed very willing to hear us, yet we cannot persuade to heed us, nor to mix faith with what they hear. We are to them as a lovely song,¹⁴ but that is all. Paul was called, by vision, to Macedonia; and yet, at his first coming, there appeared but a slender harvest to be gathered in. Nay, those with whom we thought we had gained our point, sometimes disappoint us, and prove not as we expected; the hopeful buds and blossoms are blasted, and no fruit is brought forth to perfection. Those who seemed enclosed in the gospel net, slip through again and are gone; and after they had escaped the corruption that is in the world, are again entangled therein, and overcome;¹⁵ and forfeit the peace we hoped should have rested upon them. It was Christ's prerogative to know what was in men, and what they would prove.

Sometimes ministers have better success than they looked for. Nineveh repents at the preaching of Jonah; and the publicans and harlots were wrought on by John the Baptist's ministry, notwithstanding the great austerity of his conversation. The church has sometimes been herself surprised with the multitude of her converts, and has asked, *Who hath begotten those?*¹⁶ *Who are these that fly as a cloud?*¹⁷ The beginning perhaps was small, and as a grain of mustard seed; but the latter end greatly increases. The seed that seemed lost under the clods, springs up a great while after. One labours, and another enters into his labours;¹⁸ one hand lays a foundation, and another builds upon it. John the Baptist was sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, and much of the good effect of his ministry appeared when he was gone. Many a minister does more good than he thinks he does, more than he can know, and more than perhaps it is fit he should know. It will be all in good time to know what fish are enclosed

¹ Isa. liii. 11.

² Isa. xlix. 5.

³ Ezek. ii. 5.

⁴ Prov. i. 24.

⁵ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

⁶ Jude 12.

⁷ Luke xvii. 34.

⁸ Isa. liii. 1.

⁹ Exod. ix. 20.

¹⁰ Acts xxviii. 24.

¹¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

¹² Acts xviii. 10.

¹³ Luke v. 5.

¹⁴ Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

¹⁵ 2 Pet. ii. 20.

¹⁶ Isa. xlv. 31.

¹⁷ Isa. lx. 8.

¹⁸ John iv. 38.

in the net when it is brought to shore. There is a day in which the secrets of all hearts will be manifested; and let us judge nothing before that time.

3. The success of our ministry will be *according as people are*. So much is intimated in the text; according as the inhabitants are sons of peace, or not, accordingly our peace will, or will not, rest upon the house. The physic operates according to the constitution of the body; the same sun softens wax, and hardens clay; *recipitur ad modum recipientis—the effect depends upon the temper with which it is received*. The same parables which made divine truths more plain and familiar to those who were humble and willing to be taught,^a made them more obscure to those who were proud and prejudiced, and willingly ignorant.^c Christ himself is a precious stone to them who believe; but to them who be disobedient he is a stone of stumbling. There are scorers, who, when we have said all we can, will delight in scorning, and fools who will hate knowledge;^d but there are Bereans, who are more noble and better disposed,^e wise just men, who will receive instruction, and will be yet wiser, and increase in learning.^f If our gospel be hid, it is hid from those whose minds Satan has blinded.^g If it be revealed, it is to those who have the spirit of wisdom and understanding though they be but babes.^h

4. The success of our ministry will be *as God pleases*; according as he gives, or withholds, his grace. The word of God, like the rain, shall accomplish that for which he sends it,ⁱ and causes it to come, *whether* (as Elihu says of the rain) *it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy*;^j but whatever errand it is sent upon, it shall not return to him void. If Lydia attend to the things that are spoken by Paul, it is not because *he* is an eloquent preacher, or because *she* is a considerate hearer, but because the Lord opens her heart.^k *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God only that giveth the increase*.^l

We have but the dispensing of the means of grace; and we must be careful and faithful in doing it; but we have not the dispensing of the grace which is necessary to make those means effectual; God reserves that in his own hand, and dispenses it according to his own pleasure, as it is fit he should, for it is his own. In this, our blessed Saviour himself acquiesced; and thereby has taught us to do so; *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*.^m *Hath not the potter power over the clay?*

As to our success:

(1.) The text gives us encouragement to hope, that some shall be the better for our praying and preaching; we shall meet with those who are sons of peace, who are disposed to submit to the commands, and

qualified to partake of the privileges, of the gospel peace. As Wisdom is said to be justified by her children, so peace, to be welcomed by her sons; and on the houses where these sons of peace are, our Master does us the honour to tell us, that *our peace shall rest*. It is *his* peace; but he is pleased to call it *ours*, because we are concerned, in the first place, to make sure an interest in it ourselves; and because we are intrusted to make a tender of it to others. It is our peace, in the same sense that St. Paul calls the gospel *my gospel*,ⁿ because he was a minister and messenger of it. If the master of the family be a son of peace, your peace shall rest upon the whole house; they will all fare the better for his acceptance of your ministry; *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*.^o And the more diffusive your benign influences are, the more satisfaction it will be to you. We may comfort ourselves with this, as St. Paul does, that we so run, not as uncertainly, we so fight, not as those that beat the air;^p though some reject our message, to others it will be acceptable; so that whatever our melancholy fears sometimes may be, we shall not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for nought and in vain. But,

Who are the sons of peace, on whose heads, and hearts, and houses, the blessings of peace shall come? I answer,

[1.] Those who are so by the designation of the divine counsel; the chosen of God, whom he hath set apart for himself to be vessels of mercy.^q We read of those whom God has as his people, and whom Christ has as his sheep,^r who are yet to be effectually called, and brought home. As a son of death is one destined to death, so a son of peace is one predestined to peace. The elect are sons of peace; for they are heirs of it, and were from eternity, in the covenant of redemption, given to Christ who is our peace, and the Prince of peace, to be his children, to bear his image, partake of his nature, and be under his tuition, and as such to be presented to the Father; *Behold I and the children which God has given me*.^s *My peace I leave with you*. The covenant of peace between God and man, is grounded upon the counsel of peace which was between the Father and the Son^t from eternity, concerning the salvation of the chosen remnant.

Now it is certain, that all who were given to Christ, shall come unto him, and none of them perish;^u for he will be able to give a good account of them all in the great day, and none of them shall be missing. Therefore it is, that as many as were ordained to eternal life shall infallibly believe,^v for the election shall obtain, though the rest be blinded,^w

^a Matt. xlii. 13, 16.

^c Acts xvii. 11.

^e Matt. xi. 25.

^f Acts xvi. 14.

^g 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

ⁱ Prov. ix. 9.

^j Isa. lv. 10, 11.

^m 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

^d Prov. i. 22.

^g 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

^h Job xxxvi. 13.

^l Luke x. 21.

ⁿ Rom. ii. 16.

^r Acts xviii. 10.

^u Zech. xvii. 13.

^w Acts xlii. 48.

^p Acts xvi. 31.

^s John x. 16.

^v John vi. 39, 43.

^x Rom. xi. 7.

^q 1 Cor. ix. 26.

^t Heb. ii. 13.

because the foundation of God stands sure, and none of his purposes are abortive. Those whom God has ordained to glory shall be brought to it by the ordinary means of grace and peace; and ministers are sent in pursuance of that design, that the purpose of God according to election may stand.⁷

[2.] Those who are so by the operations of the divine grace. They are the sons of peace, in whom God has wrought a gracious readiness to admit the word of the gospel in the light and love of it; whose hearts are made soft to receive the impressions of it, so that they are turned as clay to the seal. Those come to Christ, and so come under the dominion of this peace, whom the Father draws⁸ by preparing grace, and whom, though unwilling, he makes willing in the day of his power,⁹ by opening their understandings, and making their hearts to burn within them; of which two great works of divine grace, one on the intellectual, the other on the active, powers of the soul, our Lord Jesus gave remarkable specimens while he was here upon earth, after his resurrection, Luke xxiv. 32, 45.

They are the sons of peace; that is, qualified to receive the comforts of the everlasting gospel; in whom there is a good work of grace wrought, that whereas they were by nature vain, and carnal, and worldly, are become serious, and holy, and heavenly; who are born again, born from above, and partake of a new nature. To those who are sanctified, and to those only, we are commissioned to speak peace. Therefore the apostolical benediction puts grace before peace; *Grace be unto you, and, then, peace.* Those only who have received the spirit of holiness, are entitled to the consolations of God.

(2.) Wherein shall those who are thus the sons of peace be the better for our ministry? We are here told, that our peace shall rest upon them, that is,

[1.] Our *prayers* for them shall be heard. And even with an eye to our prayers, and in answer to them, as well as to his own promises, and in performance of them, God will bestow upon them all that good which is necessary, and will be sufficient, to make them happy for ever and easy now. When we bespeak peace *for* them, God will speak peace *to* them, he will bless his people with peace;¹⁰ will pay out the legacy which Christ has left, by his last will and testament, to all who are his disciples indeed, upon our suing it out for them,—even his peace.¹¹ This is an encouragement to us to pray particularly for good Christians who are troubled in mind, and are of a sorrowful spirit; and to be humbly earnest with God in prayer for them, when it may be they cannot with any confidence pray for themselves—that it is here promised that peace shall be given, to all those to whom it belongs, in answer

to our prayers; so that the effectually fervent prayer of a righteous man may avail much:¹² and what a joy may it be to us, if we thus become helpers of the joy of the Lord's people! And though the answer of peace does not come quickly, we must continue to pray and wait, and hearken what God the Lord will speak; for, sooner or later, he will speak peace to his people and to his saints.¹³ Light is sown for them,¹⁴ and in due time it will come up in a harvest of joy, though it may be it was sown in tears.

When we pronounce the blessing of peace upon a *mixed* congregation,—as to them who are indeed the sons of peace, God will say *Amen* to the blessing, will put his *fiat*—*let it be done*, to it, “They are blessed and they shall be blessed.” We pray for *all*,—God will hear us for those who are the *children* of the covenant, and the promise; as Abraham prays for Ishmael,¹⁵ and God hears him for Isaac. As the hand of his wrath shall find out all his enemies;¹⁶ so the hand of his grace and blessing shall find out all his friends, wherever they are, none of them shall be lost in the crowd.

[2.] Our *preaching* to them shall answer the end, and be effectual. If they be the sons of peace, the glad tidings of peace we bring shall instruct them, and increase their knowledge; shall invite them to Christ, and strengthen their faith in him; shall work upon their affections, and inflame their love to him; shall govern them, and influence their whole conversation; shall comfort them, and enlarge their hearts to run the way of God's commandments. Our peace shall come upon them as a light shining from heaven to guide their feet *into* the paths of peace, and in those paths; nay, it shall come upon them as power from on high, both to rule their hearts,¹⁷ and give law to them; and to keep their hearts,¹⁸ and give comfort to them. It shall come upon them, as the rain comes copiously upon the earth to water it: and they shall drink in this rain, and bring forth *herbs meet for them by whom they are dressed.*¹⁹

But O what a comfort is it, to be instrumental in furthering the holiness, and joy, of the sons of peace; in carrying the heirs of heaven forward toward their inheritance! Herein, we have the honour of *being workers together with God*; and as under shepherds, serving the gracious purposes of the chief Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom.²⁰

[3.] The fruit of *both* shall *remain*; ^a your peace shall not only come, but rest, upon the sons of peace, it shall continue with them, and they shall never lose the power and benefit of it; it is a good part which shall never be taken away²¹ from those who have it; this peace shall take such deep rooting in

^y Rom. ix. 11.

^b Ps. xxix. 11.

^c Ps. lxxxv. 8.

^a John vi. 44.

^c John xiv. 27.

^a Ps. cx. 3.

^d James v. 16.

^f Ps. xcvi. 11.

^g Gen. xvii. 18, 19.

^k Phil. iv. 7.

ⁿ John xv. 16.

^b Ps. xxi. 8.

^l Heb. vi. 7.

ⁱ Col. iii. 15.

^m Isa. xl. 11.

^o Luke x. 42.

the soul that it shall never be extirpated ; it shall be a well of living water which shall still spring up to life eternal.* Our Saviour encouraged his disciples with this, when he sent them forth into his harvest,—That they were gathering fruit unto life eternal;† in which both he who sows and they who reap shall for ever rejoice together.

(3.) The text also shows us that we ought not to be overmuch discouraged in our work, though there be many who are never the better for our praying and preaching. If the sons of peace be not among those to whom we bring the glad tidings of peace ; if those to whom we minister be wilful and obstinate, and turn a deaf ear to the calls of the word, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmer ; if we cannot fasten any thing upon them, to convince them of their folly in a sensual indulgence of the body, and a senseless neglect of their souls ;—they who were filthy, are filthy still ; and all the day long do we stretch out our hands in vain to a rebellious gain-saying people.

In this case, our own hearts suggest to us many sad thoughts : It is a temptation to us to question the credibility and acceptableness of the truths we preach, when there are so many who cannot be brought to entertain them, and submit to them ; to question whether it be any advantage to have the oracles of God and the means of grace, and whether it were not as good be without them, since to so many who have them they are in vain. But we have ready an answer to this temptation, *What if some did not believe ?* (Nay, what if many did not ?) *Shall their unbelief invalidate the covenant of grace and peace, and make the truth of God of none effect ? God forbid !* We are told, previously, that so it would be ; and, therefore, it ought not to be a stumbling-block to us. And the reason why they do not believe, and are not sons of peace, is not because there wants any thing to recommend this peace to them, but because their minds are *blinded* by the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh, and they will not come to Christ for eye-salve, will not come to him that they might have life.†

It is likewise a temptation to us to question, Whether we have the presence of God with us in our ministry, or no ? We are ready to say, as Gideon did, *If the Lord be with us, where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of ?*‡ the wonders that were wrought by the powers of the word, in casting down imaginations, and bringing high thoughts into obedience to Christ : we now see not such signs ; there are no more any converts ; or, very few like the grape-gleanings of the vintage.

As to this, the text intimates that which may encourage us, and give us satisfaction. If we meet with those who are not the sons of peace,

[1.] It is true that our peace shall not come, or rest, upon them, as it does upon them who are the sons of peace ; our prayers are not heard for them. We know not who have sinned unto death, while there is life there is hope, and therefore we are to pray for the worst ; but if we did know, concerning any, as certainly as Samuel did concerning Saul, that God had rejected them, we should have very little reason to pray for them. *There is a sin, a sinner, unto death ; I do not say that he shall pray for it.*§ Our preaching speaks no comfort to them ; for we are to separate between the precious and the vile. And at the same time we say, *God has redeemed his servant Jacob, and they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts, we must add, yet there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.*¶ When this blessing is pronounced upon the congregation, those in it who are not the sons of peace have no part or lot in the matter,‡ it is not designed for them. *Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry.*• It is true, that grace and peace shall be with them all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ;† but it is as true, that if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is, and shall be, *anathema : maran-atha—accursed : the Lord comes.*‡ The blessing that rests upon the sons of peace shall never come upon the sons of Belial.

In God's name I therefore testify, to all who hear me this day, If you do not submit your souls to the sanctifying, commanding power of the gospel truths, they speak, they bring, no peace to you. You have no right to the blessings of the covenant, nor can lay any claim to its comforts, unless you come up to the terms of the covenant, and come under the bonds of it. Those and those only shall find rest for their souls* in Christ, who are willing to take his yoke upon them. You have many excellent ministers, and a great deal of lively, serious, powerful preaching ; you have precept upon precept, and line upon line : but all this will bring no peace to you, if you continue under the power of a vain and carnal mind,—nay, it will but aggravate your condemnation another day.

We dare not speak peace to those to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace ; nor tell those who go on still in their trespasses, they shall have peace notwithstanding ; we should be false to God and your souls if we did. However you may flatter yourselves, we dare not flatter you, in a sinful way ; we have not seen visions of peace for you, and therefore must not speak words of peace to you. To what purpose would it be to *daub a wall with untempered mortar*,‡ which would soon fall and bury you, and us too, in the ruins of it ? We must say to every impenitent sinner, as Jehu did to Joram's messenger, *What hast thou to do with peace ?*• True peace

* John iv. 14. † John iv. 36. ‡ Rom. iii. 3. § John v. 40. ¶ Job. vi. 13. † 2 Cor. x. 5. ‡ 1 John v. 16. • Isa. xlviii. 20—22.

• Acts viii. 21. † Isa. xlv. 13. ‡ Eph. vi. 24. § 1 Cor. xvi. 22. ¶ Matt. xi. 29. † Ezek. xlii. 10, 16. ‡ 2 Kings ix. 18.

thou canst not have without holiness. Be willing therefore, and obedient; and now at length, in this thy day, understand the *things which belong to thy peace*; for, (blessed be God!) yet, they are not hid from thine eyes.

[2.] The peace that does not find sons of peace to rest upon shall turn to us again. And this ought to satisfy us; as it quieted David, when he prayed for his persecutors, that though his kindness did not work upon them, nor were his prayers heard for them perhaps, yet they returned into his own bosom.^d

Our peace shall turn to us; that is,

(1.) We shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God, in discharge of our trust; and of having done our part toward their salvation, in love to their souls. This will be peace to us, though it be not peace to them. Abundance of peace we may have in our own bosoms, if we have the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have dealt plainly with them, have given them fair warning of their misery and danger by reason of sin, have said again and again, *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die*;^e have endeavoured to open to them the remedial law of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and have not wilfully kept back any thing that was profitable to them;^f though we have piped to them and they have not danced, have mourned unto them, and they have not lamented.^g We have done what we could, to frighten them from sin with the terrors of the law, and to allure them to Christ with the comforts of the gospel; but all in vain, they have not been wrought upon either by the one or by the other: yet their infidelity and obstinacy shall be no bar to our acceptance with God, who will have an eye to our sincerity, not to our success.

This peace will be our peace still, if we have some good hope, through grace, that though we cannot prevail with others to come to Christ, yet we have ourselves an interest in him; that we shall save ourselves, though we save not all who hear us;^h that whatever becomes of them, we shall not be cast away at last. If *others* be not the better for our labours, the peace may return to ourselves, if we be the better; for we preach to ourselves, and must edify ourselves; and the less good we think we do to others' souls, the more good let us endeavour to get to our own souls, and then take the comfort of it. When those disciples returned, to whom Christ gave these instructions in the text, though they had had wonderful success, even beyond their own expectation, yet Christ directs them to rejoice more in the assurances they themselves had of their own bliss, than in their triumphs over Satan in others: *In this rejoice not, that the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in*

heaven.ⁱ And this cause for joy every faithful minister has, though he has not the success he wishes for.

(2.) We shall have commission to go on in our work notwithstanding. Our peace shall turn to us again; not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be bestowed upon others, and communicated to them, to the next we meet with who are sons of peace. If one will not be wrought upon, it is to be hoped another will. Though many disbelieve our report, yet all do not; there are some who will bid it welcome. Though the body of the Jewish nation rejected the gospel of Christ, yet *at this present time*,^k (says the apostle,) when the ferment is at the highest, and the opposition given to the gospel is most violent, yet *there is a remnant according to the election of grace*, a remnant even of that nation, who are sons of peace. And when the Jews thrust the kingdom of God away from them by their unbelief, the Gentiles embraced it with both arms. The peace which the apostles made a tender of to them, but they refused, was still in their hands, to carry to the Gentiles: *Lo, we turn to them*.^l

It is indeed a temptation to us, when our message is slighted, to say, We will go no more on this errand; as Jeremiah was ready to say, when his ministry was ridiculed, *I will not make mention of the Lord, nor speak any more in his name*:^m but we must never yield to any temptation of this kind, for woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel, *as we have opportunity*, whatever the issue be. If men will not hear us, our God will; and will crown humble, honest labours in his service with comfort and glory, though they should not be crowned with any remarkable success.

(3.) We shall be witnesses against those who refuse so fair an offer. Our peace shall return to us again, as the summons is returned to the officer, if the party summoned is not to be found, that it may be produced in evidence, that he was legally summoned. The gospel is a testimony to us;ⁿ but if we receive it not, it will be a testimony *against* us.^o And the ministers of that gospel, who now follow you with importunity from day to day, beseeching you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, but all in vain, will give up a sad account concerning you; and you will be upbraided with all the pains they have taken among you; it will all be brought into the account, with a "*Son remember*;" that will enhance the reckoning, and inflame the torment. The servant who was sent to invite the guests to the wedding supper, when he met with a repulse, came and showed his lord all these things.^p Ministers bring in an account of the fruit of their labours. While the sons of peace will be their joy and crown of rejoicing, those who continue in a state of enmity will be for ever struck speechless by their testi-

^d Psalm xxxv. 13. ^e Ezek. xxxiii. 8. ^f Acts xx. 20, 21.
^g Matt. xi. 17. ^h 1 Tim. iv. 16. ⁱ Luke x. 20.

^k Rom. xi. 3. ^l Acts xiii. 46. ^m Jer. x. 2.
ⁿ Matt. xxiv. 14. ^o Matt. x. 18. ^p Luke xiv. 21.

mony against them: "Lord, we called, but they refused; we warned them, day and night, with tears, but they stiffened their necks and hardened their hearts, and sent us away grieved." Many a time they complained of it at the throne of grace, and it made their work go on heavily upon their hands, their souls wept in secret for it; but when they shall testify it before the throne of judgment, they will awfully applaud and acquiesce in the sentence past upon them, and be content to see them perish.

Let us now make some application of all briefly.

1. Let this awaken us who are ministers to be faithful, and serious, and diligent in delivering our message; as those who are in some measure sensible of the vast importance of the work we are employed in, and the dispensation that is committed to us. O that I could stir up my own heart, and yours, duly to consider the inestimable value of that treasure which is lodged in us, though we are but earthen vessels;^a that peace which we are to bring in God's name to mankind; those talents with which we are to trade till our Lord comes. Let us think who we are in trust for: for Christ and his honour, and the interests of his kingdom among men; for precious souls, and their everlasting welfare. We deal in matters of life and death; O let our care and zeal be proportionable; and let us make a business of our ministry, let us wait upon it,^b and give ourselves wholly to it,^c as those who must give account,—that our Lord when he comes may find us doing, *so* doing.

If we be unskilful, and know not how to divide the word of truth and peace aright;^d if we be unfaithful, and soothe men up in their sins, or any way handle the word of God deceitfully, seeking our own things more than the things of Christ; if we be slothful, and unwilling to take pains, not affected ourselves with the great things of God with which it is our business to affect others; if we be lifeless and careless in praying and preaching, and defeat the end of the matter of both by the slight manner of the performance;—we shall have a great deal to answer for another day. If the watchmen do not give warning, or not so that it is likely to be heard or heeded, the sinners will perish; but their blood will be required at the watchmen's hands.^e

And let us remember that we are to bring peace with us in all our ministrations, that peace of God which passeth all conception and expression; and therefore we ought to apply ourselves to that business, and not meddle with things that belong not to us. We are ambassadors of peace; let us not then sow discord, nor foment divisions; for if we do, we contradict our character, and forfeit the honour of it. Let us be at peace among ourselves, and covet the blessedness of those who are peace-makers.

2. Let us, when we have done what we can, look

up to God for the success. We ought earnestly to desire that our labour may not be in vain, and to be in care that nothing may be wanting on our part, in order to the good effect of it; we should do more good if we were but more solicitous to do good, and set ourselves to devise things proper for that end, to choose out words wherewith to reason with people about their souls. But still we must depend upon the blessing of heaven for their success; and must be earnest in prayer for that blessing. We can but speak to the ear, it is God only that can teach the heart, and seal the instruction there.

When we go to study, let us pray to God to put a word into our mouth that shall suit the case, and reach the consciences, of those to whom we are to speak; to direct us both in the choice and management of our subjects, to fill our hands, (as the Hebrew phrase for consecration,) that we may fill the people's hearts, when we go to preach. Still we need help from heaven to deliver our message as becomes the oracles of God; with purity, gravity, and sincerity; with an air of tenderness and humility, as those who know the worth of souls, and our own unworthiness; and yet with an air of assurance, as those who are confident of the truth of what we say, and who know whom we have trusted. When we have preached, we have but sown the seed; still we must look up to God to water it, and to give to every seed its own body. When we proceed to pray, we must fetch in the influences of the blessed Spirit, to help us against our praying infirmities. Nay, we must look up to God for a blessing upon every word of advice, reproof, and comfort that we give, that it may answer the end.

And as we are to pray for the success of our own endeavours, so likewise we must be earnest with God in prayer for the concurrence of his grace with the labours of others. Thus we *must* help one another; and thus we *may*, though we are at a great distance from each other, and cannot otherwise be helpful. When the apostle forbids wishing "good speed" to those who bring any other doctrine,^f it is intimated, that it was usual with the primitive Christians and ministers to bid those "God speed" who brought the true doctrine of Christ. Those who labour in Christ's harvest should be prayed for, as of old the reapers were, by them who passed by; *The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord.*^g God speed the gospel-plough!

3. Let us be very careful that we do not, by any irregularity in our conversation, hinder the success of our praying and preaching, and defeat the ends of them. If we be proud and vain, and loose in our walking; if we be intemperate, and indulgent of the flesh; if we be covetous, selfish, and worldly; if we be contentious, peevish, and passionate; or if any corrupt communication proceed out of our

^a 2 Cor. iv. 10.

^b Rom. xii. 7.

^c 1 Tim. iv. 15.

^d 2 Tim. ii. 15. ^e Ezek. xxxiii. 6. ^f 2 John 10. ^g Ps. cxxxix. 8.

mouth;—we pull down with one hand what we build up with the other; and not only tempt people, but even force them, to think, that we *ourselves* do not believe what we would persuade them to believe; and when we appear most serious in our public performances, do but act a part, and talk thus only because it is our trade: we do also provoke God to withdraw his presence from us, and to say, as he does of those prophets who walk not in his counsels, *They shall not profit this people at all.*^x

Let our conversation be not only blameless and harmless, but exemplary for every thing that is virtuous and praise-worthy; thus let our light shine, that others may be taught, and guided and quickened, by it. Then may we hope it shall be with us as it was with Levi of old, who, while he walked with God in peace and equity, turned many away from iniquity.^y

4. What success of our labours we have the comfort of, let God have all the glory of. Do we meet with any of those to whom we minister in holy things, who are awakened to a concern about their souls and eternity, and are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward?^z Are there any of the children we have catechized who hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, and have we the satisfaction of seeing them walk in the truth? When we look into the vineyards we are made the keepers of, do we find that the vines do in any measure flourish, and the tender grapes appear;^a that the souls we watch over prosper and are in health? We cannot but rejoice herein, rejoice greatly; yet let us rejoice with humility; for I am sure we have nothing to be proud of, nothing to boast of, but a great deal to be ashamed of, and great reason to admire God's gracious condescension, that he is pleased thus far to own us, to honour us, though most unworthy. Let us rejoice with thankfulness, with many thanksgivings to God, whose strength is perfected in weakness, and his praise ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. St. Paul, in his epistles, gives thanks to God for those churches that he had comfort in, and hopes of.

But let us rejoice with trembling, lest those whom we think espoused as chaste virgins to Christ should yet be beguiled, as Eve was, by the subtilty of the tempter; and let us always be jealous over them, as Paul was over his friends, with a godly jealousy,^b lest it should prove at last we have bestowed upon them labour in vain.^c

5. What disappointments we meet with, let us bear them patiently. Let us inquire whether we have not been wanting in our duty, and be humbled for our defects, and acknowledge that the Lord is righteous. St. Paul owns, that by the miscarriages of those among whom he had laboured, his God humbled him

among them;^d and the same good use we should make of the same trial, let it help to hide pride from us, and oblige us to depend upon the sufficiency of divine grace, and not upon any thing in ourselves, for without Christ we can do nothing.

When we suspect we do little good, yet let it be a comfort to us that we are going on in the way of our duty; that we are presiding in solemn religious assemblies, *from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another*, and so are serving Christ and his glory in the world. Good may be in operation, and we not aware of it; the gospel works like leaven, silently and insensibly;^e and like the seed cast into the ground, which grows up (we know not how) while we sleep, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.^f Nor let it be any uneasiness to us, that we are kept in doubt and in the dark concerning the success of our labours. When the net is drawn to shore we shall see what is enclosed; what good fish, and what bad:^g and let us judge nothing before the time; the great day will clear all, and we must wait till then.

But if there be those whose sins go before unto judgment, who manifestly hate to be reformed, and will go on frowardly in the way of their heart; though we cannot but look upon them many a time with a sad heart, yet in this we must be satisfied, that *God will be glorified*: if God be not honoured by them, he will get him honour upon them, as he did on Pharaoh. They to whom our labour is in vain are not sons of peace; and, therefore, it should not be expected that our peace should rest upon them; Christ will see his seed, and we must not think to see any other for ours. If divine mercy be not glorified in their salvation, divine justice will be glorified in their destruction; and they will have nothing to say for themselves, nor will their ministers have any thing to say for them: the dresser of the vineyard who had interceded for the barren fig-tree, will be pleased, if at length it bear fruit, but if not, he gives it up, *Then after that thou shalt cut it down.*^h

To conclude: Let this be an awakening word to all of you. You are, in this world, probationers for eternity; accordingly as you are, now, sons of peace or not, it is likely to be with you for ever. Are your ministers desirous to have their peace rest upon you, and are not you desirous of it? Are they in care about your souls, and will not you be in care about them? You have life and death, good and evil, set before you: choose life, that you may live, may live for ever. But if you will not come up to the terms of peace, but will perish in your rebellion, you cannot say but you have had fair warning given you of the consequences of it, so that your watchmen have delivered their souls, and left your blood to lie upon your own heads.

x Jer. xxiii. 32.

y Mal. ii. 6.

z Jer. i. 5.

a Cant. vii. 12.

b 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

c 1 Thess. iii. 5.

d 2 Cor. xii. 21.

e Matt. xiii. 33.

f Mark iv. 26—28.

g Matt. xiii. 48.

h Luke xiii. 19.