

REASONS

FOR MINISTERS USING THE GREATEST PLAINNESS
AND SERIOUSNESS POSSIBLE,

IN ALL THEIR

APPLICATIONS TO THEIR PEOPLE.

To shew the reasonableness that all Ministers should deal thus faithfully, and plainly with such as are under their Ministry, I will lay open somewhat of the case before you, and then judge reasonably of it as you are men. The eternal God delighting in the wonderful diversity of his creatures, hath made man of a middle nature, between brutes and angels, giving him vital power, reason and freewill. He hath placed him in this world, as for a race or warfare; resolving that as he behaveth himself it shall go with him in another world for ever: For though his body be dust, and must to dust return, his soul is from above, and liveth in blessedness or misery for ever. By sin we have all forfeited our right to heaven: but Eternal love hath given us a Redeemer, who is God and man, who as our surety became a sacrifice for our sins, and by his merits hath purchased a conditional grant of free forgiveness, and of renewing grace, and endless glory. And being ascended into heaven, possesseth it in our nature, and intercedeth for us, being now as Redeemer, Lord of all. He hath appointed the Ministerial office, that men might be his messengers to men, to acquaint them with his grace, and with the glory which he prepareth for them, that they may truly believe it, soberly think of it, duly value it, heartily choose it, and diligently seek it, and live and die in the joyful expectation of it. And as our souls converse not with our neighbours immediately, but in and by our bodies in which they work; so the Spirit of Christ doth not ordinarily work on men's souls without any means, but by his word and works which his Ministers must declare. Man is not now put upon satisfying God's justice, or purchasing his salvation by a price. Christ hath done these, and made a free gift of grace and glory to all that will but accept it. Under God's grace men's everlasting salvation now lieth on their own wills; no men or devils can damn or

undo any one soul, but by his own consent to the cause of his damnation. No men or devils can keep our souls from the heavenly glory, but by tempting him to refuse it, undervalue and neglect it, and prefer the pleasures of sin before it, and by keeping him from loving, desiring and seeking it: for every one shall certainly have it who had rather be a holy Christian on earth, and live in perfect love and joy with God in heaven for ever, than for his filthy pleasure to enjoy the prosperity of this world. To acquaint men with this, is our ministerial office; we are charged to set before them the great salvation which Christ hath procured, and importunately to beseech them to mind it, believe it, and accept it, that it may be theirs for ever: we believe God, and therefore we speak to men as he hath commanded us: we entreat them in his name, to turn from sinful enmity and folly, and to be reconciled to God, and be wise for their salvation: we tell them but what God's word sent from heaven, telleth us and them, that holiness is the love of God and goodness, and the hatred of sin; that the pure in heart are blessed, for they shall see God. But without holiness none can see him: We tell them from God, that heaven is won or lost on earth; and that none shall have it but such as hence learn to love a holy and heavenly life; and that the dislike of holiness is the forfeiture of happiness, and the beginning, or forerunner of hell: We assure them, that God will never say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, if they do not first by iniquity depart from God; and that God will not damn them, except they damn themselves, by the obstinate final refusing and resisting of his mercy. We entreat men therefore but to live as men should do that love them themselves, and that are not indifferent whether they live in heaven or hell for ever. We entreat them not to be worse to themselves, than the devil and all their enemies are, who cannot make them commit one sin against their wills: and yet after all this warning, entreaty, and importunity, there are thousands, and ten thousands that will not be persuaded, nor regard the warning given them from God; some will not believe but that a man dies like a dog; and what wonder if such live like dogs! And some will not believe but that they may be saved without regenerating grace and holiness, though Christ's own mouth hath protested the contrary, and told us verily that it cannot be. (John iii. 3. 15. 18, 19; Matt. xviii.

3; Heb. xii. 14; Rom. viii. 6—9. 13, &c.) Multitudes will not be brought to understand what we say; but when we talk of redemption, sanctification, and salvation, they hear us as if we spake Greek or Hebrew to them, and under teaching, grow old in sottish, grossest ignorance; multitudes are taken up with the love of prosperity, and the love of this deceiving world: multitudes are carried away with aspiring ambition and foolish pride; and more with the love of fleshly pleasures, and satisfying their appetites and lusts. Many poor people (who every where are the most) are so oppressed with want, and wearied with their daily labour, and taken up with cares to pay their rents and debts, and maintain their families, that they think it excusable in them if they little mind the pleasing of God, and saving of their souls; supposing that they have no leisure for it, and God requireth it not at their hands. And the same most servants think, who have time little enough for their master's work. Multitudes have such dead and hardened hearts, that, when we tell them that they must shortly be in heaven or hell, as they are here prepared, we speak almost as to blocks, or men asleep: they feel not what we say, as if they did not hear us.

We are bid cry aloud, and tell them of their sin and danger, and yet we cannot get them to regard and feel; God saith, "Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light;" and yet we cannot get them to awake, nor hear us like men that have the use of reason, and love themselves. Alas, how many thousands are there whom we could never persuade to consider with deep and serious thoughts, what will become of their souls, when they are dead, nor seek to be resolved of it from the infallible Word of God!

Sirs, this, this is the case of multitudes of our neighbours; and what would you have a Minister to do in such a case? Should we flatter and smooth them up in an unholy life, what thanks would they give us for this ere long, when they find themselves in hell?

Would you have us stand by in silence, and look on, while Satan thus leadeth thousands to perdition? Would you have us let them quietly go to hell, for fear of displeasing them or others, or seeming to be unmannerly or uncivil with them? Would you have us whisper to men that must be awakened or undone for ever, whom thunder and lightning will not awake?

Alas, we see men dying daily, and we are dying ourselves, and daily look when we speak our last, and when they hear their last, even all that ever they shall hear more for their salvation: We see how time doth pass away! much is lost already, the rest is short, and utterly uncertain: and the ignorance, unbelief, hardheartedness, fleshliness, worldliness, pride, malignity and unholiness of sinners, are deep-rooted, strong and damnable evils. We see men when they are convinced, that they must repent or perish, putting it off from day to day; when they are certainly to be gone ere long, and never certain of one more hour: and, alas, a long life is little enough for a willing, awakened, serious Christian to work out his salvation, and make his calling and election sure.

Sirs, tell us as Christians, or at least as men, what faith, and reason, and human love command us to do in such a case? Shall we forbear, or speak to them in formality as on a stage, as if we were players, and not preachers, and would persuade them not to believe what we say, should we let them alone, be damned, and take it for our excuse, that they or others were unwilling of our labours? Shall we pretend charity, and hope that they have already enough to save them, while we see not so much as knowledge, or any love to holiness, nor forsaking of mortal sin, nor any serious care of their salvation? Is it the office of charity to further men's delusions and damnation? If we believed not another life ourselves, and that there is a God who will reward them, and only them, that diligently seek him, (Heb. xi. 6,) we would quickly renounce this ungrateful ministry and work; we would wish that all the preachers in the world were silenced, and that the people would better use their tithes than to maintain such troublers of the world. But God hath shined into our minds with the heavenly convincing light. He hath given us the first fruits and pledge of glory: We believe a heaven and a hell, and the absolute necessity of a holy and heavenly mind and life; and we know why we do believe it. Here we have, upon our sober consideration, laid up all our hopes and comforts; and what should we persuade our neighbours to choose, but that which God hath taught us to choose ourselves? And woe to him that ever he was born, that maketh not this choice, and taketh not the heavenly for his portion.

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