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SERMON LII.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, PRINCETON, N. J.

CHRIST THE MODEL OF GOSPEL MINISTERS.*

MATTHEW 4:19.—*And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

WE have here at once the *call*, the *commission*, and the *directory* of a gospel minister. *Simon Peter* and *Andrew*, his brother, had become the disciples of Christ some time prior to the transaction here recorded. But *now* they were called habitually to attend upon him; to be "with him," as the evangelist *Mark* expresses it; that is, to be with him *stedfastly*. And in a short time afterwards they were regularly set apart, and sent forth among the number of his apostles.

It is observable that these men, when called thus immediately by the Master himself to be his ministers, had enjoyed nothing of what we are accustomed to style a regular learned education. They were illiterate fishermen, taken immediately from their boats and nets, and sent forth to preach the gospel. It is obvious, however, that this is no argument in favor of an unlearned ministry. The apostles were, for three years, under far more able and unerring instruction than any candidates for the sacred office can now enjoy, in the very best Colleges and Theological Seminaries that Christendom affords. Give to ministers now the same advantages which the first bearers of the gospel message enjoyed, and they might well afford to dispense with all the ponderous volumes and unwearied studies which are, at present, and justly, deemed so important. We know, however, that this extraordinary state of things did not continue even to the close of the first century. A man of eminent learning was very early introduced among the apostles, and became by far the most laborious and useful of the whole number. That distinguished minister of Jesus, too, knowing by experience the value of mature study, and directed by the Holy Spirit, solemnly exhorts *Timothy* to "give

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himself to reading," as a preparation for his official work; and enjoins upon him, further, not to "lay hands" upon any who are not "apt to teach," and of course, competently instructed in divine things. And, in strong accordance with this injunction, the history of the church, from the apostolic age to this hour, bears uniform testimony to the fact, that those ministers whose labors have been most eminently blessed to the genuine revival of religion, and to the permanent advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, from time to time, have been men in whom sound learning and fervent piety were remarkably united.

The address of the Savior to these brethren was simple and plain, and yet most strikingly appropriate; that is, it was, agreeably to his wonted manner, admirably adapted to convey his meaning with force and point, to persons of the occupation and habits of those to whom he spoke. Like most of what he uttered, it was at once level to the capacity of the most illiterate, and adapted to instruct and impress the most elevated and enlightened mind. *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

Without further preface, the doctrine which I shall derive from these words is this: **THAT CHRIST OUGHT TO BE THE GREAT MODEL OF GOSPEL MINISTERS; AND THAT THOSE MINISTERS WHO ARE MOST FAITHFUL AND DILIGENT IN FOLLOWING HIM, HAVE THE BEST PROSPECT AND PLEDGE OF SUCCESS IN THEIR WORK.**

This general doctrine presents **TWO POINTS** for our consideration, viz. **WHAT IS THAT "FOLLOWING CHRIST" TO WHICH THE PROMISE IS MADE? AND WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE?**

I To "follow Christ" is a phrase which, in the language of the Bible, implies much, and expresses much. To "follow" a man, is to adopt his opinions, to come under his influence, and to be devoted to the advancement of his plans and interest. All this, and more than this, is included in "following Christ." Our Savior himself explains the phrase by the use which he makes of it in other places. *My sheep, says he, hear my voice, and follow me.* And again, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* And again, *If any man will serve me, let him follow me.* And again, *He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* In all these passages, as well as in our text, the Savior obviously does not mean merely *walking after him*, as a mere *bodily attendant*, during his earthly ministry. Thousands did much of this, who were never his "followers" in the sense of our text. Neither does he intend the mere reception of a set of *speculative opinions*; for thousands have done this also, who yet "held the truth in unrighteousness," and of course never deserved the name of Christ's disciples. But he means something moral; something which implies reverence, affection, discipleship, conformity and devotedness to his holy will. When applied to ministers of the gospel, therefore, we may consider the command to "follow Christ" as importing, in general, *four things*;—implicitly submitting to him as our **TEACHER**; diligently imbibing his **HOLY SPIRIT**; making his **EXAMPLE** the model of all our public and private ministrations; and being supremely and earnestly devoted to the **ADVANCEMENT OF HIS KINGDOM.**

1. Ministers may be said to "follow Christ," when they **IMPLICITLY YIELD THEMSELVES TO HIS GUIDANCE AS THEIR TEACHER**; when they humbly take all the doctrines, which they adopt or preach, from the word of the Master himself. The gospel which we preach, my beloved brethren, is not *our own*; it is **CHRIST'S GOSPEL**. And as man did not invent it, so man is not capable of mending or improving it. *The gospel which I preach*, said the inspired Paul, *is not of man, nor by man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*. Son of man, said Jehovah to the prophet of the ancient church, *preach the preaching that I bid thee. Hear the word from my mouth, and give them warning from me*. Ministers, then, while they undertake to teach others, ought ever to place themselves, and to feel as humble learners at the feet of him "whose they are, and whom they serve." Are they *servants*? and shall they not constantly look for direction to their Master? Are they *ambassadors*? and shall they not sacredly govern themselves by the instructions of their Sovereign? Are they *stewards*, entrusted with the truth and ordinances of the Savior's household? and shall they dare, for any consideration, to depart from the declared will of their heavenly Employer? Surely that professed servant of Christ who suffers himself to wander into the regions of speculative philosophy; who subjects Christian doctrine to the torturing ordeal of unsanctified reason; who begins by deciding, upon philosophical principles, what truth *ought* to be, and *must* be, and then recurs to the Bible to see what it *is*; and who is more intent on the honor of being thought an "inventor" and an "original" in theology, than on simply ascertaining and proclaiming "what God the Lord hath spoken;" surely such a servant cannot be said to "follow Christ." On the contrary, he may be said to have embraced, whether he be aware of it or not, the radical principle of the worst heresy, and, indeed, of all unbelief. The minister who truly follows Christ, regards his word as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. He approaches the sacred volume with reverence; studies it with humble and devout diligence; and makes its simple declarations the test of truth. He faithfully employs his reason, indeed, in examining the Bible; but he employs it only to decide two questions—**HAS GOD SPOKEN** in that Bible? and, if he have spoken, **WHAT HAS HE SAID?** Having ascertained this, he humbly bows every power of his soul to the heavenly message, and is cordially willing, with meekness and docility, to make it "the man of his counsel," and the sovereign guide of all his instruction. In short he considers the great subjects of his ministry as made ready to his hand; and feels that his only business is to bear them faithfully, clearly, and without alteration, to a benighted world.

2. Again, to "follow Christ" is to **IMBIBE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**; to have a large portion of "the same mind that was also in him." Men may hold the truth with intelligent accuracy, and contend for it with earnestness, without submitting to its power. He who receives with ever so much speculative exactness the genuine doctrines of the gospel, just as the Savior left them, cannot be said, in the best sense of the word, to "follow" him unless "he give him his heart;" unless he receive his truth in the love of it; unless he unfeignedly yield to him his love and confidence, as his great High Priest and King, as well as

his Prophet. That gospel minister, then, who truly follows Christ, is not only "sound in the faith," but also a **CONVERTED MAN**; a cordial, devoted, experimental Christian; a man "full of the faith and of the Holy Ghost;" who speaks that which he knows, and testifies that which he has experienced; who loves his Master and his work above all things; and who accounts it his highest honor to be like Christ, and "his meat and drink" to do his will. He rejects the aspirings of carnal ambition. He is willing to "learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart," and to be himself nothing, that Christ may be "all in all." In a word, he is one who lives daily under the power of that religion which he preaches to others; who "walks with God;" who maintains a life of "fellowship with the Father of his spirit, and with his Son, Jesus Christ;" and who studies daily to "grow in grace," to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," and to have his meditations and desires as well as his treasures in heaven. His hatred of sin, his self-denial, his meekness, his forgiveness of injuries, his benevolence, his conscientious regard to truth and justice in every thing, his deadness to the world, his condescension to the poorest and weakest of the flock, his disinterestedness, his holy zeal and diligence, all bear witness that the love of Christ constrains him; that the imitation of Christ is his "ruling passion;" and the glory of Christ the great end for which he lives.

3. Further, the minister who "follows Christ," **MAKES THE SAVIOR THE GREAT MODEL OF ALL HIS OFFICIAL LABORS**. He not only studies to preach the pure gospel; but also in his manner of preaching it to make Christ his guide and pattern. He consults the word of Christ day and night, not only as a Christian, but also for light and counsel as a preacher. He delights to address his fellow men in "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." He endeavors to declare the whole counsel of God, and "rightly to divide the word of truth;" that is, to exhibit every part of gospel truth in that connection, in that proportion, in that order, and under that solemn, practical, heart-affecting aspect, in which it was left by the Savior and his inspired apostles. He affects no novelties; resorts to no unauthorized modes of doing good; ventures not to teach for ordinances the commandments of men; but makes it his supreme desire, and habitual aim, to imitate, as far as he dare, both in matter and manner, the preaching and the conduct of him who "spake as never man spake;" who was the most perfect judge of human nature that ever addressed a perishing world; and who promised to be with his ministers as long as they taught men "to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them."

He who "follows Christ" does not affect either the spirit or the manner of the "disputers of this world." He "contends earnestly, indeed, for the faith once delivered to the saints," and will not, knowingly, give up a single truth of the Bible. But he contends with the "meekness of heavenly wisdom;" and with as little of the *polemical character* as possible. "Speaking the truth in love" is his divinely inspired motto. The great object which fills his mind is not to silence a disputant, or to exult over a vanquished foe; but to recommend his Master's truth, and to win souls to the love and power of

his Master's reign. To complete the character of the minister who "follows Christ,"

4. He is SUPREME AND EARNESTLY DEVOTED, BY ALL THE MEANS IN HIS POWER, TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. He is not content with the strictest doctrinal orthodoxy; with the prevailing hope that he is a converted man; or even with a general consciousness that he desires to imitate Christ, and to walk according to the order of his house. The extension of the Redeemer's kingdom is the great object which fills his mind; which occupies his thoughts, which governs all his plans and calculations, which impels him in going out and coming in, and which prompts him to make every sacrifice for its promotion. Of all this, the Master himself set the most impressive example. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; that we through his poverty might be rich." He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us" from pollution, misery, and death. He submitted to hunger and thirst, to reproach and shame, to unceasing labor and privation, that we might be delivered from ruin. Nay, he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that we might be rescued from deserved condemnation and wrath, and raised to eternal blessedness. Now the same spirit which actuated the Master in all that he underwent for the salvation of fallen man, must actuate his ministers, and is implied in the language of our text. While we are constrained to say of worldly men, and of worldly-minded ministers of the gospel, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;" the occupant of the sacred office who really "follows Christ," seeks above all "the things that are Christ's." He can say, in some good measure, with the devoted and heroic *Paul*, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Nay, he can say, "neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom swallows up every other interest in his estimation; and prompts him to say, in spirit, if not in words, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Such is a minister of the gospel who "follows Christ," and to whom the promise before us is given. He is not always the most learned divine, or the most eloquent preacher, that best answers this character: but the most spiritual man; the most humble, heavenly-minded, laborious, self-denied, disinterested, devoted man; who, with unceasing perseverance and zeal, preaches Christ, his divine person, his mediatorial offices, his atoning blood, his justifying righteousness, his sanctifying Spirit, and all the moral duties by which obedience to the Savior is manifested. He is one who preaches in some degree as his master preached; who lives, in some humble measure, as his Master lived; who is the active, zealous minister of the gospel *out of the pulpit*, as well as *in it*; who "goes about doing good;" diligently visiting the people of his charge, not to partake of their luxurious hospitality, but to benefit their souls; not to shine in their domestic circles, as an entertaining com-

panion; but to endeavor to promote his Master's reign in their hearts. He is one who carries instruction, as the Savior always did, into the parlor; into the occasional conversation; and even to the convivial table; who, in short, in every situation and walk of life, abroad and at home, in the house and by the way, in sitting down and rising up, "watches for souls as one that must give account;" so that none who approach him, can fail of perceiving that he is a holy man of God; a minister of peace and love and salvation to a perishing world; intent, not on his own personal aggrandizement, but on promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of his fellow men.

I will only add, under this head, that he who follows Christ, does all that has been described under the habitual impression that he can effect nothing of himself; and that, unless the Holy Spirit accompany his efforts, they will all be in vain. He is, therefore, as much engaged in **WRESTLING FOR** his people at the throne of grace in private, as he is laboring **BEFORE THEM** in public. He remembers that "he that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing, but God who giveth the increase." He, therefore, desires and longs that the power of the Holy Spirit may continually accompany his labors. He often, as it were, agonizes in prayer for this indispensable blessing. He cannot pass a day contented without some visible fruit of his work in winning souls to Christ. His unceasing cry is, "O Lord, revive thy work! Pour out thine Holy Spirit from on high! O for times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!"

Such is the minister who may be said to "follow Christ." Now to such—

II. A BLESSED PROMISE IS GIVEN. "*I will make you fishers of men.*" This promise, though delivered, originally, to two of the ambassadors of Christ, is certainly not to be considered as *confined to them*, or as even *restricted to the twelve apostles*. A promise of the same substantial import is found in various parts of scripture, as applicable to faithful ministers in every age.

The promise before us, you will perceive, is conveyed in figurative language; language drawn from the original employment of the persons addressed. *I will make you fishers of men.* Or, as the Savior said to one of the same brethren, at another time, when astonished, and almost terrified, at the immense draft of fishes, *Fear not, for henceforth thou shalt catch men.* He intended perhaps, to intimate that there is an analogy between taking fishes in a net, and drawing men, by the moral influence of truth, applied by the Holy Spirit, into the kingdom of God; and especially an analogy between the qualities requisite for sustaining a fisherman in his laborious occupation, and the fortitude, patience, and indefatigable perseverance necessary for him who would spend his life in "watching for souls," and endeavoring to "draw them to Christ."

But what is it, in the sense of the text, to be *fishers of men*? Is it merely to ensnare them in the toils of sectarianism? Is it to inveigle them, by artifice, into a favorite church? Is it to make them the blind and implicit dupes of some system of ecclesiastical ambition? Such, I fear, have sometimes really been the aims and the efforts of narrow sectarians; and such have been much more frequently the aims *charged* upon the ambassadors of Christ by an

unbelieving world. But nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of the Bible; nothing more foreign from the mind of a faithful minister of Jesus. His supreme object is to win men to the Savior; to draw them from sin to holiness; from Satan to God; from misery to happiness; from everlasting perdition to an incorruptible crown, an undefiled inheritance, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. All this, and nothing less than this, is implied in the figurative language of the promise.

The import, then, of the promise under consideration, I understand to be, that, if ministers of the gospel do really follow their Master, in the nature of the gospel which they preach; in the spirit with which they preach it; and in the life and conversation with which they accompany it, their labors shall be crowned with a blessing; they shall succeed in bringing men, *some men* at least, to the knowledge and love of the Savior. What precise *measure* of success they shall have; what *number* of their fellow men shall be given them as the reward of their labors, is not specified, and cannot be foreknown, from this, or any other promise of scripture. But the general assurance, that such ministerial fidelity and zeal as has been described, *shall be crowned with success, shall not be in vain in the Lord*, seems to be positive and unquestionable. And I suppose, further, from the language of scripture, and from the light of experience, that we may, in ordinary cases, anticipate a measure of success in some degree *proportioned* to the amount of holy fidelity manifested. Not that *all* truly pious, or even eminently pious ministers, will be precisely alike successful; or that the *same man* will be alike successful at all times, and in all places. To assert this, would be to contradict all history, divine and human. Still, if I am not greatly deceived, the whole current of God's word, and the whole experience of his covenanted people, at once illustrate and confirm the spirit of our text; namely, that the most truly spiritual, wise, devoted and faithful ministers will, in general, ever be found the most successful in convincing and converting sinners, and in *building up believers in faith and holiness unto salvation*.

I know it may be objected here, that even Christ himself, whom his ministers are called to follow, was not, to say the least, a remarkably successful preacher; that notwithstanding all the wisdom, power, and transcendent excellence of his ministrations, the number of converts brought in by his personal ministry was comparatively small. We may grant this to have been the case without at all contravening the doctrine of our text. When the Master himself preached, he did not, for obvious reasons, make a complete disclosure of those precious doctrines concerning his kingdom, which his ministers, after his death and resurrection, freely proclaimed, and which were then found so effectual in *turning men from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan unto God*. It is also important to recollect that; when the Savior himself preached, the *Spirit was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified*. The time, in fact, had not yet come for displaying, in their glory, the conquests of the gospel. The New Testament church was not yet set up. But afterwards, when the *Spirit was poured out from on high*, though the disciples were certainly *not above their Lord* either in skill or fidelity, their preaching was attended with a power before unknown,

and was gloriously successful. And although we have reason to believe that the preaching of all the apostles, after the Holy Spirit was given, was attended with success; yet it is worthy of notice that *the apostle* whose gifts, and graces, and diligence, and devotedness were pre-eminent, even among his brother apostles; who *labored more abundantly than they all*, seems also to have been by far the most successful of the whole number in bringing men to Christ, and in extending the borders of his kingdom. Not that even the heroic, devoted, and heavenly-minded *Paul* was equally successful every where. He preached as faithfully and powerfully, for aught we know, at refined and polished *Athens*, and at imperial *Rome*, as he did in the splendid and luxurious cities of *Corinth* and *Ephesus*; yet a far greater blessing seems to have attended his preaching in the latter cities than in the former. But his success was generally signal and extensive; and he appears to have labored no where wholly in vain.

I need not say, indeed, to a Christian assembly, what was before hinted, that every measure of success which ministers of the gospel enjoy, is the result of the Holy Spirit's influence. This, indeed, is plainly implied in the very language of our text. *Follow me, and I WILL MAKE YOU fishers of men.* Yes, my friends, it is a truth, which, while it humbles the faithful minister, at the same time encourages and animates him in his labor that **SUCCESS IS ALL OF GOD**, and of a SOVEREIGN GOD. Even when the inspired *Paul* planted, and the eloquent *Apollos* watered, the increase was not of themselves, but of him alone who sent them forth, and gave them their message. Their most stupendous miracles, and extraordinary gifts, never wrought the conversion of a single heart. The same divine influence which was effectual when the weakest of their contemporaries were the preachers, was just as necessary for *their* success, as for that of any others. And, to this hour, when the most able and faithful minister on earth is made an instrument of saving good to any, we know that *the excellency of the power is of God, and not of the earthen vessel* by whom the treasure is conveyed. Yet, in grace, as well as in nature, there is an *adaptedness*, as well as a *connection*, between means and ends; and a connection which is neither capricious, nor blindly accidental. The ministry of the gospel is the ordinance which God has appointed for bringing men to the knowledge and love of himself, and which he has promised to bless. And the more simply, earnestly, and perseveringly the ordinance is dispensed, the larger, in general, the amount of blessing which, upon every principle of scripture and reason, may be anticipated.

The scope of the promise, you will observe, is not that every one who preaches the gospel shall be crowned with success in his work; not even that every truly *pious* minister shall be honored with *distinguished* success, or even with *any* visible success. But that those who really "follow Christ" in their ministry; that is, who follow him with some good degree of *fidelity*, *consistency*, and *diligence*, shall be crowned with a blessing, in a greater or less degree. It is, no doubt, with ministers of religion as it is with those who fill other stations. Great excellencies, nay, perhaps, even the greatest, may be neutralized, or counteracted by great defects. An *instructor* of

youth, for example, may be an honest man, a profound scholar, and extremely lucid in his mode of imparting knowledge; but he may be, with all, so indolent, so impatient, so undignified, so petulant, or so morose and repulsive, as to conciliate none; arrest the attention of none; and, of course, improve none in knowledge. In like manner, a *military commander* may have great energy of character, determined bravery, and uncommon quickness of perception and decision; but may be, at the same time, so entirely destitute of judgment, as never to win a battle. So it may be with him who bears the sacred office. A minister may be hopefully pious, and yet, in a great measure, without skill in illustrating and applying truth. He may shine as a "sermonizer," according to many of the established canons of that art, without being truly a "gospel preacher." He may be approved and admired by all *in the pulpit*; but may manifest so much coldness, levity or worldliness *out of it*, as wholly to counteract the influence of his preaching; nay, to render him one of the most efficient instruments of the adversary. He may be capable of delighting, by a beautiful discourse, on general truth; while he is so little versed in Christian experience, as to be utterly unqualified wisely and safely to counsel anxious souls. One may have zeal without knowledge or prudence; another may have both knowledge and prudence, but no zeal. One may appear to great advantage in occasional efforts, and fervent appeals; but may have no taste, and scarcely any capacity, for the details of persevering labor. Another may go, year after year, a round of abundant labor; but it may be a dull and lifeless routine, which has not about it a single kindling or spirit-stirring attribute. Now, that such ministers should not be found extensively useful; nay, that some of them should never have been apparently instrumental in the awakening and conversion of a single soul, is surely no marvel. It would rather be marvellous if it were otherwise. For it cannot be said of any of them that they really "follow Christ." It is not denied, indeed, that a minister who is himself destitute of piety, *may be made a channel* for conveying piety to others. "A sovereign God," as an old divine strongly expresses it, "may, now and then, by way of miracle, raise a man to life, even by the bones of a dead prophet." He *may*, and there is reason to believe he sometimes *does*, honor his own word so far as to make it effectual to salvation, even though it fall from unhallowed lips. The ministry of *Judas Iscariot* was, probably, not altogether without benefit to the church of Christ. But such a result is not, in ordinary cases, and certainly not in any considerable degree, to be expected.

But where a minister of Christ really discharges the duties of his office **IN THE TRUE SPIRIT OF HIS MASTER**; where his temper, and his life; his preaching and his practice; his labors for his people in public, and his unceasing prayers for them in secret, are all in harmony with his profession; I consider the word of God, in our text, and in various other passages, as giving a pledge that he shall not labor in vain. Success, in a greater or less degree, will assuredly follow. *As the rain cometh down from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, saith Jehovah, it shall not return unto me void, but*

shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. A minister, I say again, who thus faithfully, unostentatiously, and perseveringly labors, will not lose his labor. He will see some precious fruit of it, silently, perhaps, but effectually, springing up around him. To some extent, the truth, like leaven, will take effect; the careless will be roused; the ignorant will think and inquire; the obdurate will feel; the secure will become anxious; the impenitent will repent and believe; the dead will live.

Why should it not be so? Was it not thus in apostolic times? Is not the gospel the same now that it ever was? Are not the Holy Spirit and the divine promises the same *now* that they were when Paul preached? Is not that gracious pledge—*Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world,* as availing and as precious at this hour, as it was eighteen centuries ago? Yes, my friends, the words of the inspired apostle to the believers of *Corinth* are as true of the Christian minister, as of any other follower of Christ. *Be ye, therefore, steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Let none say, as an objection to this statement, that God is a *sovereign*, and that some of the best ministers in the church of Christ have been, in a great measure, without success. Jehovah is indeed a sovereign; and every creature ought to rejoice in the glorious truth. But so also is he a sovereign in dispensing *temporal blessings*. He makes the sun to shine, the rain to descend, and the wind to blow, when and where he pleases. And yet, I suppose it may be laid down, as a general principle, which all experience confirms, that the most wise, vigilant, laborious, and persevering husbandman, will commonly reap the most abundant harvest. Now, the same great principle applies, I believe, quite as extensively, and with even more certainty, in the kingdom of grace. It is true, indeed, in the most favored portions of the church, and under the most faithful ministerial culture, that the eye of man has ever witnessed, there may be seasons of comparative drought and barrenness. But was there ever a wise, deeply pious, humble, faithful, laborious, devoted minister, who was entirely without success? who had *no souls given him for his hire*? I will venture to say such a case never existed. Even though a truly faithful servant of Christ were sent to prophecy in a valley of desolation and death, filled with *dry bones, exceeding dry*; we have never failed to see more or less evidence that his Master was with him, and that his gospel was *the power of God unto salvation*. We have never failed to see some degree of spiritual verdure and beauty spring up, where all was arid and sterile before. We have heard a shaking, and seen a movement in the valley of vision; *bone coming to his bone, and flesh to his flesh*, until there stood up, if not an *exceeding great army*, at least a *goodly company of witnesses* to the power of the truth. Was it not so with *Whitefield*, and *Tennent*, and *Edwards*, and *Davies*, and *Schwartz*, and *Brainred*, and *Payson*, and *Oberlin*, and hundreds of others like them? Did such men ever labor long together without profit? I firmly believe not. And if the fidelity and zeal of *such* ministers were habitually kept up to the proper elevation; if even *they* were not apt, in many cases, to fall into seasons of relaxation and depression in regard both to feeling and action; I will not say

that they would be favored with a perpetual revival of religion; yet I believe they would witness a silent, but constant turning of one and another to the right way. They would seldom, I am persuaded, pass a week without hearing of one or more awakening from the slumber of death, and *asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward*. And, accordingly, when that blessed period shall arrive, of which the evangelical prophet speaks, when the "watchmen," placed on the walls of Zion, shall be not only really, but uniformly and perseveringly faithful; when they *shall not cease, day nor night*, to instruct and warn, it will be the signal for the arrival of that happy time when the church shall be no longer "forsaken" or "desolate;" but when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea*.

From the foregoing doctrine, we may infer—

1. That the duties of a gospel minister are not only the most *important*, but also the most *delightful* in which a mortal can engage on this side of heaven. What is the *nature* of these duties, and what is their *object*? The grand purpose for which the faithful minister of Christ studies and lives, is to be a "fisher of men;" to "win souls" to the best of Masters; to persuade his fellow men to be wise, holy and happy; to turn them from rebellion, condemnation and ruin, to obedience, pardon, peace, and eternal blessedness. Can there be an employment more exalted, more delightful, more godlike than this? If the contemplation of happiness, which we have been instrumental in producing, be one of the purest pleasures of which we are capable; what must be the pleasure of that man who spends his life in conveying to those around him the choicest gifts of heaven; in proclaiming, from day to day, the unsearchable riches of grace, and salvation, and glory, to those who must otherwise have perished? What must be his enjoyment *now*, if he have the spirit of his office? And, above all, what must be his enjoyment in *that day*, when the destinies of the soul, and the glories of redemption, shall have the light of eternity poured upon them? Surely, if there be any employment which ought to be "meat and drink" to him who engages in it, **THIS** is that employment. Surely, if there be a crown of glory infinitely superior to any earthly diadem, it is that which the faithful minister shall wear. **Why**, then, O why, is not this office more coveted, more eagerly sought than it is, by enlightened, ingenuous, high-minded young men? And why is it, alas! that those who actually sustain it, are not more completely occupied, delighted, absorbed in its blessed pursuits? *Verily, this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation!*

2. It is plain, from the foregoing representation, that the gospel ministry is a work, the due performance of which **REQUIRES THE WHOLE MAN**. If the duties of the office be such as you have heard, it is self-evident that they demand the whole time, the whole strength, the whole heart of him who undertakes them. The voice of reason, as well as of scripture, is, "**GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THEM.**" That minister, then, who thinks to discharge his duty by giving it only a minor part of his time, snatched from secular employment, labors under an awful delusion. And that church, which, by withholding from her pastor a comfortable support, *compels* him to yield himself to the distraction of worldly cares, is deplorably infatuated. It is truly

interesting to observe how some of the ancient servants of Christ were accustomed to regard this matter. We are told of *Ambrose*, bishop of *Milan*, who lived in the fourth century, that he was, habitually, so incessantly occupied in *preaching*, *catechizing*, and *visiting* from house to house; and during the few hours not thus employed, so absorbed in *study*, that it was difficult to obtain an interview with him, unless on special business. *Augustine*, when a young man, spent several years in *Milan*, and though he earnestly desired to enjoy the society of *Ambrose*, he tells us he found it almost impossible to obtain access to him; not at all on account of any personal reserve; but from the multiplicity, and unceasing urgency of his official engagements.

Let no minister be ready to object, that such an unceasing course of labor will wear him out. **TO BE SURE IT WILL. AND WE MUST WEAR OUT IN SOME CAUSE.** Every man who does not die prematurely, is worn out in the service of some master. And which is best, to wear out in the service of sensuality, of ambition, of avarice, or of Jesus Christ? Can any man in his senses hesitate? What were life, and health, and talents given for; but to be **EXPENDED** in promoting the kingdom and glory of their adorable giver? A prudent care of health, indeed, that his life may not be cut short in the midst, is, undoubtedly, the duty of every one. The minister who, in laboring, goes beyond his strength of body and mind, is a madman. But the spirit of "self-indulgence" has been strongly, and not improperly, called **THE VERY SPIRIT OF ANTI-CHRIST!** Shall a minister, then, say either to himself or to any one else, on this principle, **SPARE THYSELF?** Did our Master "spare himself," when he came to die for us? Did the apostles "spare themselves," when they gave up all for Christ? Can we possibly do more than we ought to do, as far as our strength of body and mind permits, for him to whom we owe our being, our talents, our hope, our life, our all, for this world, and the world to come? Surely, then, of all men living, ministers of the gospel ought to feel that they have no time to lounge in the circles of gossip or amusement; or to waste on reading, or any other employment, which has no immediate tendency to prepare them for their momentous work. Surely they ought to be ready to say, with the pious and devoted *Nehemiah*, to every person or solicitation that would draw them from their appropriate sphere of labor, "We are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down: why should the work cease, while we leave it, and come down to you?"

3. If our interpretation of the Savior's words be correct, then, when a minister of the gospel has **NO GENUINE SUCCESS** in his work, he has reason to be **DEEPLY ANXIOUS AND ALARMED.** Must he not be irresistibly led to the conclusion, that there is something seriously defective in himself, and in the character of his ministry? I am aware, indeed, that when we hear ministers converse on this subject, nothing is more common than to find them referring chiefly to the *Divine sovereignty*, the *diversities*, and the entire *want of success*, among the laborers in the gospel vineyard. But I must think, my dear brethren, that we are apt to "lay this unction to our souls," much more readily and frequently than either scripture or reason warrants. I firmly believe that if we were more like Christ, more devoted, spiritual, diligent, and prayerful, we should all of us be more successful in "winning souls" to him;

and, consequently, that if we are seldom or never thus honored, it is *chiefly* because we so little resemble him. If we wish our message, then, to be effectual in rousing *others*, let us begin with **ROUSING OURSELVES**. O, if we were more "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" if we bore about with us more of the spirit and the example of the Lord Jesus, we should find imparted to our sermons, and our conversation, a life and power; a touching and kindling eloquence, which, without this spirit, can never exist. We, perhaps, all need an improvement in our method of preaching, making it less dogmatical: less philosophical, more simple, more biblical, that is, consisting more in the illustration of scripture by scripture; more direct; more pointed; more affectionate; more full of heavenly unction; more, in short, like a message from God, than a human oration. The late excellent and lamented Dr. *John H. Rice*, in the last letter that I received from him, made the following remark: "I am convinced that, in the present state of this country, there is nothing which can control the religious principle, and give it a salutary direction, but **BIBLE TRUTH, PLAINLY EXHIBITED, AND HONESTLY URGED ON THE UNDERSTANDING AND CONSCIENCE**. And I am persuaded that all settled pastors, and all missionaries too, ought to do a great deal more than they now do in *lecturing*; or, as some express it, *expounding*. There is too much *reasoning*, and too much *dogmatizing* in the pulpit. I throw out this hint, that, if it is worth any thing, you may drop it before the students, of your Seminary." The sentiment is worth much, and I repeat and record it for your benefit. "The word," as the pious and venerable Mr. *Baxter* somewhere observes—"the word is divine; but our preaching is human; and there is scarcely any thing we have the handling of, but we leave on it the prints of our fingers." We need more exclusive devotedness to our great mission; more decision of spiritual character; more ardor and steadfastness of zeal; more urgency in our benevolent suit; more unwearied endeavors to adapt our ministrations to the benefit of the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the learned and the illiterate. O, if we had more of all this, our labor would, certainly, not be "in vain in the Lord." If we desire greater success, then, in our work, the way to it is plain. It is to humble ourselves before God with deeper abasement; to pray with more fervent importunity for the gift of the Holy Spirit; and to gird ourselves with new decision, enterprize and zeal for our work.

4. Finally, we learn from this subject, what **AMPLE ENCOURAGEMENT** ministers have to **PLAN AND LABOR FOR CHRIST**. Surely no laborers ever had higher encouragements set before them than those who are now called of God to the ministry of reconciliation. For such a Master in such a cause, and for such objects, who would not be willing to live and to die laboring? That brighter days await the church of God, and that those days will be introduced and adorned by a band of ministers more faithful and devoted; more totally absorbed and unwearied in their Master's work, than we have ever seen, cannot, I think, be doubted by any serious believer in God's word. Such of us as are now in the decline of life, will, probably, not live to see those days ushered in: but cannot the oldest and the feeblest of us contribute something to hasten on their arrival! And can we consent to live another

year, or another month, without aspiring, while our time lasts, to the labor and the rewards of such a holy enterprize!

Our lot, beloved brethren, is cast in a most interesting and momentous period of the world's history. We see a large part of Christendom in a state of excitement and action, such as no generation ever witnessed before since the gospel was preached among men. During the apostolic age, it is true, and for a hundred years afterwards, efforts and sacrifices were made for Christ, at the recital of which the heart of piety warms, and the coldness of modern zeal must hide its head. But to how small a part of the population of the globe these efforts and sacrifices were confined, and how short their continuance, we all know. During the later portion of the "dark ages" which followed, it may be said, that a large part of the wealth, and power, and activity of the civilized world, was given to the reigning church; but to *what objects* were that wealth and power devoted? To the spread of pure and undefiled religion? To the promotion of the virtue and happiness of man? Far from it. But to erect splendid cathedrals; to endow corrupt monasteries; to enrich and pamper a voluptuous and ambitious priesthood. When the *Crusades* occurred, they caused, it is true, a stupendous and truly memorable movement of the whole Christian church. But to what end? Was it to extend the reign of enlightened piety? By no means. But to prostrate education; to relax morals; to increase ecclesiastical tyranny and profligacy; to destroy two millions of lives; and to clothe almost every household in western Christendom in mourning. That so many blessings were indirectly and ultimately brought out of these enormous evils, is no matter of thanks to the deluded, fanatical actors in the wonderful scene. And, finally, when the *Reformation*, that "great moral miracle," electrified Europe, and shook to its foundation, "the kingdom of the beast," though it was the harbinger of countless blessings to the world, the consequences of which we are enjoying to the present hour; yet how soon was its glory clouded by strife and division; and in how small an amount of immediate exertion for benefiting the human family at large, did it result! But *now* a spirit is poured out, in some measure, if I mistake not, *peculiar* to the day in which we live. Such a spirit of Christian enterprize; such extensive and active combinations to benefit mankind, and especially to spread the glorious gospel, were, surely, never before known. And, although, it cannot be denied that some features of an unfavorable character mar the face of the day in which our lot is cast; yet, undoubtedly, its prevailing lineaments are those of high moral enterprize, of holy hope, and of animating promise. Such is the period in which the Lord of the harvest has placed us in his vineyard, and commanded us to "occupy until he come."

Beloved ALUMNI OF THE SEMINARY with which it is the happiness of him who now addresses you to be connected! do you not account it a privilege to live in such a day as this? Do you not regard it as at once an honor and a duty to cheer on, and, by all the means in your power to help forward, the glorious work which is devolved upon the men of this generation—the work of evangelizing the world? I trust there is not one of your number disposed to shrink from the arduous enterprize, or to say, "I pray thee have me ex-

cused." But remember, I entreat you, that the enjoyment of this privilege is connected with the most solemn responsibility. Yes, your situation is solemn and responsible beyond expression. Have you, or have you not, spirits girded for the plans and efforts of this day? Are you, or are you not, ready and willing to be unreservedly consecrated to Christ, to "spend and be spent" in his service? O that every one of us may be found ready, with the whole heart, to say, when the call of duty sounds, *Behold, here am I, Lord! speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth! Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Perhaps, as I am called to speak this evening, at the request and for the benefit of the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION of our beloved Seminary, it may be expected by some that I shall dwell particularly on the claims, the wants, and the interests of an Institution so dear to us all. But I have designedly forbore, and shall forbear to enlarge on this subject, because it appears to me that I have something infinitely more important to speak of than the claims of a single "school of the prophets," however worthy it may be of our affection and our prayers. My object is to recommend a spirit, and to contribute my humble instrumentality, under the divine blessing, to the formation of a character, which will render every one of you a blessing to the whole church of God, and to the world. Besides, if the beloved *Alumni* of our Seminary possess as much as they ought of that spirit which I have endeavored to illustrate and enforce, they will, I doubt not, love their theological *Alma Mater* as much as they ought to love her, and will take pleasure in every effort to provide for her wants, and to extend her usefulness. And if it be seen by the religious public that our Seminary sends forth many sons largely endowed with this spirit, the Christian community will love her as much as they ought, and will promptly second all your efforts to sustain her interests, and to enlarge her means of doing good. In a word, we can in no way so essentially and permanently benefit the institution for which we are associated to pray and labor, as by "following Christ," and continually manifesting the power of his Spirit in forming us to be the devoted benefactors of mankind. Cultivate this spirit, and then all will be well. Be filled with this spirit, and then "your joy will be full;" our churches will smile; our judicatories will be scenes of love, harmony and edification; and that Supreme Judicatory of our beloved Church, which we have come hither to attend, instead of being the theatre of conflicting opinions, and of party strife, will never meet but to bless the city in which it assembles; to rejoice the heart of every friend of Christ who witnesses its proceedings; and to give a new impulse to the progress of truth and righteousness in the world.

Beloved Friends and Pupils! to each one of you is committed a share of this mighty trust. Ponder well the magnitude of your duty, and the weight of your responsibility. Pray without ceasing that the spirit of truth, of peace, of love, and of zeal for the Lord of hosts may ever rest upon you all. Seek the peace of Zion; but remember that her *peace* may be consulted at the expense of her *purity*; that she can never be successfully and solidly built up but by a faithful adherence to the truth and order prescribed by her adorable Head; and that he who contributes towards the diffusion of the knowledge and spirit of Christ in our world, does more for the real welfare and happiness of

his species, than he could possibly accomplish by the most splendid endowments that wealth, and learning, and patriotism ever devised. Among the trials of the present day is a spirit of restless innovation; a disposition to consider every thing that is new as, of course, an improvement. Against this spirit let me warn you. However plausible, it is unwise and delusive. Happy are they, who, taking the word of God for their guide, and walking "in the footsteps of the flock," continually seek the purity, the harmony, and the edification of the Master's family! Who, listening with more respect to the unerring Oracle, and to the sober lessons of Christian experience, than to the dreams of morbid excitement, or the delusions of fashionable error; hold on their scriptural way, "turning neither to the right hand nor the left;" and considering it as their highest honor to be employed in winning souls to Christ, and in building up that "kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Need I remind you, beloved Friends, that we are all hastening to the judgment seat of Christ! Nearly **FOURSCORE** of those who once resorted to our Seminary, have been already called to give in their final account. Be ye also ready! And remember that the best of all readiness is that which consists in "following Christ." In following **HIM**, and **ONLY** in following **HIM**, you will be best prepared to meet your Judge. In following **HIM**, and **ONLY** in following **HIM**, you will be best qualified to promote the enlargement, the holiness, and the genuine edification of the Church of God. May this be your habitual aspiration, this your blessed attainment! And when the "Chief Shepherd shall appear, may you be so happy as to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away!" Amen! and Amen!