

DUTIES OF A PASTOR AND DEACONS:

RECOMMENDED

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. MR. THOMAS FLOWER, JUN.

AS PASTOR;

AND

MR. T. KENWARD AND MR. S. STINTON,

AS DEACONS:

APRIL THE 29TH, 1736

AT THE MEETING-PLACE IN UNICORN-YARD, TOOLY-STREET
BY SAMUEL WILSON.

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Jeremiah 3: 15.

And I will give you Pastors according to mine Heart, which shall feed you with Knowledge and Understanding.

THE province assigned me in the service of this day, is to address myself to you, my worthy and beloved Brother, the now ordained Pastor of this Church: And I apprehend I cannot better answer the End proposed, than by endeavoring, as the Lord shall assist, to explain and improve the Promise above read: or as I trust you are given in Mercy to this Church, as an Answer to the many fervent Cries which have been sent up by them to Heaven, for a Pastor after God's Heart, so my earnest Desire and Prayer for you is, that you may as such obtain Mercy, every way to fulfill the Ministry committed to you to the Honor of your Great Master, the Comfort of your own Mind, and the spiritual Advantage of all who may attend upon you.

I shall not detain you with an Account of the Call of this Prophet to his Office, with the encouragements given him, as he was to minister to a most rebellious and provoking Generation. That which introduces my Text, is a Command issued out in the 12th Verse, Go and proclaim these words towards the North, and say, Return thou Back sliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you : For I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep Anger for ever. Where you will observe with me, the Crime of this People : They had ungratefully and treacherously departed from their God; notwithstanding which, they are kindly invited to return, and encouraged by a Promise founded in the Divine Mercy, that he would not proceed to that Severity which their Transgressions had deserved. And to this is added, a Direction as to the Manner of their returning; *Only acknowledge thine Iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.* And what less than this could be required of them?

How just and reasonable for those who had forsaken the Fountain of Living Waters, to come before him with Weeping and Supplication, confessing with suitable Sorrow and Shame, their Folly and Disingenuousness. And effectually to convince them that Judgment is God's strange Work, and Mercy his Delight; that he never proceeds to Extremity, but where his Justice and Holiness demand it; the Invitation is repeated, Turn, O backsliding Children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you, and I will take you one of a City, and two of a Family, and bring you to Zion. The latter Part of this Promise seems to be designed to remove any

Objection which might arise from the Smallness of the Number of those whose Hearts the Lord might incline to return ; that though there were but one of a City, or two of a Family, yet they should be accepted, and under a gracious Conduct be brought unto Zion; and to these the Promise runs, I will give you Pastors after mine own Heart: As if the Lord had said, Know that it is not for your sakes; you have nothing to expect at my Hands, but to be rejected, and cast off for ever; but for my own Name's sake, as an Instance of sovereign Grace, I will give you, and a great Favor it will be, Pastors after mine own Heart.

How far this, in the Concern which the Church had with it, in the Prophet's Days, might relate to wise and faithful Rulers and Governors, such as Nehemiah and Zerubbabel; or to godly and zealous Scribes or Priests, such as Ezra and Joshua, I shall not at present determine. But inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, is¹ promised under this Character ; and in the Apostle's Enumeration of Church Officers, he takes notice of² Pastors as well as Apostles, Evangelists, &c. whom Peter advises to³ feed the Flock of God ; I humbly apprehend we may warrantably apply this Promise to a standing Ministry, which, if it answers the End of its Institution, must be carried on by Pastors after God's own Heart, whose Concern it will be, to feed the People with Knowledge and Understanding.

The Duty of such in general, is to preach the Gospel to Saints and Sinners; to administer the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; to preside in Matters of Discipline; to visit the Flock, especially those who are under Indisposition of Body, or Darkness and Distress of Spirit; and to be Examples to their Members, in Faith, Charity, and universal Holiness. And I am aware, my dear Brother, upon this short Representation, you are ready to say, *And who is sufficient for these things?* Sure I am, none is of himself; not the best or wisest of the Children of Men. A Pastor therefore after God's Heart, is one who,

1. Has his whole Furniture from him, as the God of Nature, Providence and Grace; that is, he has all his natural Endowments from him; for it is the Lord who makes us wiser than the Beasts of the Field. And his Improvements in useful Knowledge arise from the Divine Blessing on his Labor and Study; and all those Gifts and Graces which are necessary to

¹ Ezekiel 34:24

² Ephesians 4:11

³ 1 Peter 5:2

qualify him for the faithful Discharge of his Office, descend from the same Fountain from which comes every good and perfect Gift.

A Minister is supposed to have a Share of good Sense, in common with the rest of Mankind; to have spent a considerable Time in Reading and Meditation; to have some Degree of Elocution, or Aptness to speak pertinently to a Subject; to be capable of leading the Church in their Addresses to the Throne of Grace; and of speaking a Word in Season to Souls who are weary. But the whole is from God and under the Influence of his Blessing; for if the great Apostle acknowledged himself, and his Cotemporaries in the Ministry, inefficient as of themselves to think any thing, Experience as well as Modesty should engage us to join him in the humble Confession. Paul had his Strength of Reasoning, Cephas his honest Plainness, and Apollo his Charms of Eloquence, from one and the same Spirit, who divides to every Man as he will. All the Qualifications of a Pastor being designed for the Good of the Church, they are derived from the God of all Grace: and he who is wholly destitute of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, will be useless to Zion, and soon weary of his Work.

2. A Man thus divinely furnished, will sooner or later be called of God to the Exercise of his Ministerial Gifts, for the gathering in of Sinners, and the Edification of Saints; and if he is after God's own Heart, he will be directed to wait for, and duly to attend this Call. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself rushed not precipitately into his Office as our Great High Priest, but was called of God, who said to him, Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedec. And as to his prophetic and kingly Offices, he could truly say, in the Discharge of every Part of them, This Commandment have I received of my Father.

We are by no means indeed to expect such a Call from God as the Prophets of Old, or as the Apostles and first Preachers of the Gospel had; or to imagine that God will speak to us out of a burning Bush, as he did to Moses; or that Christ will call to us out of Heaven, as in the Case of the Apostle Paul. The Church is now settled, and fully empowered to choose its own Officers, and to call whom they judge faithful to minister in Holy Things. Nor is it sufficient, that a Person may think himself qualified, or find a sort of Impulse upon his Spirit to preach the Gospel; he is not to run before he is sent, but to let the Church hear and judge of his Abilities: and we may be assured, that if God has any Work for him to do, he will bring him forth, in the Course of his Providence, to public Service. And it's an Observation

that has been too much verified, that where any venture upon this sacred Work, without the Consent, and contrary to the Advice of the Church, they have commonly soon become a Scandal, and have had some visible Marks of the Divine Displeasure attending them. A modest humble Saint, with the largest Share of Learning, and the greatest Reach in Divinity, in a View of the Awfulness of the Work, will be ready to say with Moses,⁴ O Lord, send, I pray thee, by the Hand of him thou wilt send; only let me be excused. Nor will he dare to go forward, but as the Lord is plainly calling him to it: Instead of a Check or Restraint, he will need all the Encouragement the Church is capable of giving him.

3. A Pastor after God's own Heart is one whom he is graciously pleased to assist in the Discharge of the several Duties he is calling him to the Performance of. Ministers, as well as private Christians, have their Stock of Grace in Christ's Hands, and from his fullness they are daily supplied. And every faithful Laborer may depend upon the Presence of his Lord with him, and that his Grace shall be sufficient for him, and his Strength made perfect: in his Weakness. Not that all who are called to this Office are equally assisted, or any one Minister finds at all times the Presence of God alike with him. Sometimes the Work goes on heavily, and God has wise Ends in leaving his Servants for a time to a dull frame of Spirit. But in the main or principal Course of their Ministry, where they are faithful, they shall find, though they can do nothing of themselves, they can do all things through Christ strengthening of them.

4. A Pastor after God's Heart will endeavor, as the Lord enables him, to feed the flock with spiritual Knowledge and Understanding. Some bring out the Stones of needless Controversies, instead of the Bread of Life; others entertain the People with the Husks of Man's Merit and Righteousness; whilst many are spreading the Poison of Heresy, and Soul destroying Errors; but a Scribe well instructed, will bring out of God's Treasury the wholesome Words of sound Doctrine, and not dare to deliver any thing but what is sound in Scripture, and what, under a divine Blessing, may have a Tendency to nourish up the People, unto eternal Life. He well knows a few fine Words, or finished Periods, will do nothing to the satisfying the craving Appetite of one spiritually hungry. As the Cry of such is, Christ! Christ! None but Christ! So, with the Apostle, he determines to know nothing but Christ, and

⁴ Exodus 4:13

him crucified. St. Paul could appeal to the Church of Ephesus, he had⁵ kept back nothing that was profitable, nor had shunned to declare the whole Counsel of God. No Part of Truth is to be concealed; but those important Articles of the Christian faith, which relate to Worship and Communion with God, to the forgiveness of Sin, the Justification of a Sinner, the Sanctification of our Natures, the Security of Zion, and the manifold Obligations we are under to universal Holiness and Obedience, will be chiefly insisted on, by one who aims at the Glory of God, and the Good of immortal Souls.

Lastly, A Pastor answering the Description in the Text, is one who is blessed of God in his Labors, and, for the sake of Christ, approved of by him who calls him to his Work. It is certain the one depends not upon the other; for many skilful, judicious, and faithful Laborers have been denied the Blessing of remarkable Success, and have had great Reason to complain, Isaiah⁶ Who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? And these are, notwithstanding their Discouragements.⁷ A sweet Saviour to God, in them that perish, as well as in them who are saved. For Acceptance, where Ministers are upright and diligent, depends not upon Success. But as this will be more manifest in the great Day of Accounts, at present, where God is pleased to give many Seals to the Ministry, and Sinners are converted, and Saints refreshed and comforted, a Pastor of a Church is more visibly under a Divine Direction and Influence. And when this is the Case, the People are loudly called upon to bless God for him, as an Instrument, whilst they ascribe the Glory to the Most High; who, though a Paul should plant, or an Apollos water, God can only secure the Increase.

Thus I have briefly shown you, that a Pastor after God's Heart, is one who has his Furniture from him, is called by his Providence to labor in the Word and Doctrine, assisted by his Spirit to feed the People with Knowledge and Understanding, owned with some Success, and accepted in his Work for the Redeemer's sake.

What I have farther to offer upon this Occasion, is not so much to inform you, my worthy Brother, as to stir up your pure Mind by way of Remembrance. Your Work is great and awful, and I would have nothing wanting on my part which might contribute in any Degree to assist you in

⁵ Acts 20:27.

⁶ Isaiah 53:1.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 2:15.

the Discharge of it. Forgive me then, if I Charge you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and as you hope to give up your Accounts with Joy another Day, seriously to attend to and carefully weigh the following Advices.

I. Neglect not the Concerns of your own Soul. Remember you profess to be a Christian as well as a Minister of the Gospel, The one indeed is essential to the other for he who is unacquainted with the spiritual Part of Religion himself, must: be very unfit to recommend it to other? I am well persuaded, you are inlaid with Divine Principles, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious; that God has translated you out of Darkness into his marvelous Light. But I need not tell you, you are just entered your Race; take care of wandering or loitering: The Crown is before you, forget then the things that are behind, and press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus. Sad will it be for you, if while you are keeping others Vineyards, your own should lie neglected. You feel, and I doubt not groan under, the Pressure of a Body of Sin and Death; nor are you ignorant of Satan's Devices. You are treading among Snares, and the Enemy is watching for your Halting ; what need have you then to be upon your Watch, praying.⁸ Be a Surety, O Lord, for thy Servant for Good: Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe? Perhaps the Apostle had something of this in his View, when he says to Timothy,⁹ Take heed to thy self. Satan will try every Method to seduce you, well knowing how the Wicked triumph, the Enemies of Piety blaspheme, and Saints mourn, when those, who by their Character and Office should be Examples to the flock, are lest to turn aside to folly.

It is certain there is nothing more unjust, than to reproach Religion for the Miscarriages of its Professors: But what Heart bleeding Work must it cause, in one who has a proper Regard for the Honor of Christ, to think that he has been so unhappy, as, by his unguarded Conduct, to give Occasion for the Ways of God to be evilly spoken of.

And be not only careful, as God shall assist you, to keep your Garments clean and unspotted, but often call yourself to an Account as to your Progress Heavenwards; whether you are growing in Grace and in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ; whether Faith and Hope, Love and Joy, are not only in you, but abound. And remember the Church is concerned in this as

⁸ Psalm 119:22.

⁹ 1 Timothy 4:16.

well as yourself, for if the Savour and Relish of Divine Things abate and decline in your own Soul, it is very likely your public Ministrations will be proportionally dry and barren. Let this then be often upon your Mind; I have something to do with, and to receive from God myself, as well as to instruct his People whose spiritual Good I am concerned for: I have an immortal Soul myself, and must one Day give an Account. Lord forbid, that while I am preaching to others, I myself should be a Castaway.

2. Let the Bible be your principal Companion: And next to that matchless Volume, converse chiefly with those Authors who are most remarkable for Spirituality, and holy Affection, as well as for Accuracy of Style, and Solidity of Judgment. One great Reason why Christ is so much left out of the Pulpit, by many of our modern Divines, may very probably arise from the sad, Neglect of the Bible in the Closet. God's Word is the infallibly Rule by which you are to live and preach; content not yourself therefore with daily reading a little Portion of it, and a few slight Thoughts on what you read, much less with a bare Attendance to a Verse or two which you may have fixed on as the Subject of a Sermon: but search the Scriptures, and let them be your delightful Study Day and Night. There you will meet with every thing which is necessary to enrich your fancy, to improve your Judgment, and furnish you with all the Beauties of Language; for it may truly be said, That, for the Matter, Method, Metaphor, and Style, there is not Such another Book in the World. It was the Glory of our fore-fathers, that they were mighty in the Scriptures. I am sorry to say, too many of their Successors are better acquainted, and some of them ready to boast of it, with Philosophy, Mathematics and History, than with the Word of God. No Part of useful Learning should be neglected; but the most celebrated of profane or even religious Authors, should veil before Christ, and bear no Competition with the inspired Writers in your Esteem and Regard. Remember what Paul says to Timothy, that the¹⁰ Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And upon a conscientious Attendance to them, you will find, that as they were given by Inspiration, they will, under a Divine Blessing, be profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction and Instruction in Righteousness. And the better you are acquainted with them, you will be more likely to approve yourself a perfect Man of God, thoroughly furnished to all good works. Besides, if you would be acceptable to the more serious, who's Good you are to aim at, you must speak in Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. And

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 3:15, 16, 17.

constant Experience confirms the Observation which some eminent Divines have made, that those Discourses have generally been most remarkably owned, which have been chiefly made up of Scripture Phrases.

And might I venture to point out to you any among the many valuable Writings of our ancient and modern Divines, for your Entertainment, next to the Bible, I believe you will find your Account in looking some-times into the Works of Mr. Brooks, Mr. Flavel, and the Excellent Mr. Bunyan; as well as the more sublime Productions of Dr. Owen, Goodwin, and Bates. And it may be a profitable Diversion, sometimes to turn to the Book of Martyrs, or Clerk's Martyrology. But I forbear, being sensible you have not been without proper Hints as to these things, from your judicious and learned¹¹ Tutor, whose Praise is in all the Churches which are acquainted with his Worth and Piety.

3. Make it a Matter of Conscience, before you take your Bible into your Hands, or begin to prepare for your public Work, seriously and fervently to entreat the Lord. That he would direct you to a Subject which may be suitable and serviceable; that he would point out to you that Method which may be most easy and natural, and give in that Matter which may be grave, sound, and spiritual; and that he would furnish you with Liberty of Mind, and Freedom of Speech, when you come to deliver the Message from him to his People.

There's not a single Circumstance attending any of your Members, or Hearers, which the Lord is not fully acquainted with. He is immense and omniscient, searching the Hearts, and trying the Reins of the Children of Men, and can at pleasure direct you to Words which shall be like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver; so very seasonable, that the Weak or Ignorant, the Unstable or Backsliding, the Doubting or Tempted, shall be ready to judge you have been some way informed of their Case, and aimed at them in particular. And it is not enough, that you are directed to a Part of God's Word, which may be well adapted to the Circumstances of your Auditory, you will sometimes find a Difficulty in ranging your Ideas and dividing your Matter. And if your Method is never so just, there will, in some Instances, be a Straightness upon your Spirit, and you will be greatly at a Loss for Matter, but as helped of him in whom all your Springs are. Many godly Ministers

¹¹ The Reverend Mr. Forsket of Bristol.

have declared they have gained that in Prayer, which in vain, perhaps for Hours or Days, they had been pursuing in Thought and Meditation.

And if you are favored with the greatest Liberty of Mind in your private Preparations, you will equally need the Presence of God in your public Ministrations; not only to bring your former Thoughts to remembrance, but especially to warm your Heart with Divine Truths, that you may speak feelingly, and with proper Zeal and Earnestness, as one who is thoroughly concerned, in the Hand of God, to be useful to the Souls of Men. A Preacher, who is visibly unaffected with what he delivers to others, is not likely to engage the Attention, or be of any considerable Service to those who hear him. Pray then to him with whom is the Preparation of the Heart, and who made the Mouth, that whilst you are musing in private, the Holy Fire of spiritual Affections may burn, and that when you are preaching the Gospel, you may have all proper Utterance.¹² That your Tongue may be as the Pen of a ready writer.

4. Endeavour, as a Workman who need not be ashamed, rightly to divide the Word of Truth, giving to every one his Portion, and every Truth its proper Place. When you are speaking to Sinners, deal plainly and faithfully with them. Lay the Axe to the Root of the Tree: Fear not to threaten the finally Impenitent and Ungodly with ever-lasting Misery and Destruction. Thus, whether they will hear or forbear, will you be clear from their Blood, and deliver your own Soul. When you are speaking to Saints, forget not there is Milk for Babes, as well as Meat for strong Men; and you may find your Account in it sometimes to trace the Believer from his first Experience of the Grace of God in Regeneration, to his being made thoroughly meet for his Inheritance in Glory. And be sure to be mindful of your own Difficulties and Temptations, with the several Ways God makes for your Escape? Thus will you be the better furnished instrumentally to bind up the Broken-hearted, and revive the Spirit of the Contrite ones.

Might I advise, let no Discourse be wholly confined either to Saints or Sinners; but when you are opening the Privileges of the one, let some instructive Hint be given to the other, that neither may complain they are forgotten or overlooked.

¹² Psalm 45:1.

And as the Gospel is the most confident System of Truth in itself, labor to see every Point of Doctrine in its proper Light: Here Revelation is to direct you. Take Care when you are exalting the Riches of Sovereign Grace in the Salvation of a Sinner, that you drop nothing which may be interpreted by the Injudicious or Licentious, as if Holiness were unnecessary, without which it is impossible to have Communion with God here, or see his face with Comfort hereafter. And when you are recommending Purity of Heart and Life, as the amiable Ornament of the Christian Character, be equally cautious it is not substituted in the room of, or joined with the Righteousness of Christ in our Justification in the Sight of God. I need not tell you, the one is our Title to the heavenly Bliss, and the other preparatory to the Enjoyment of it. If you are called to explain and enforce any of the Duties of Christianity, be sure mention the Spirit's Aid, without which we can do nothing; and let this not only close the Performance, but run thro' every Part of it. Some Divines, after pressing the Audience in Language full of the Creature's Power and Sufficiency, have in vain attempted to atone for it by a formal Compliment to the Holy Spirit, who at last is brought in, to prevent the Censure of the more Evangelical of their Hearers, rather than give him that Glory which is his Due, as the Author of all Grace. Venture rather the Charge of Tautology, than leave out the Grace of God, or the Influences of the Spirit, when you would persuade your Hearers to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. And if there should be any Difficulty at first in watching your Style, it will soon lessen, and, by Use, evangelical Phrases will become natural and familiar.

5. Follow every Sermon and every Ordinance with fervent Cries to God for a Blessing: For though you may have taken the utmost Pains in your private Preparations, and experienced much of the Presence of God in the Pulpit; yet were you a Paul for Reasoning, or an Apollos for Persuasion, all would be success-less, but as he is pleased to give the Increase. Entreat then that he would put your Hearers upon endeavoring to recollect the Word which has been preached; and that, whilst they are meditating, he would bring to their Remembrance especially those Truths which are suited to their Case; and that the Holy Ghost would convince, illuminate or comfort them, as they are either dead in Trespasses, or of a broken Heart, and a contrite Spirit. It is not enough that you sow the Seed, and do it faithfully; but you are to wrestle with the great Master of Assemblies, that he would water it, that it may bring forth Fruit to his Glory, and the Good of Souls. Your Members, if they are suitably concerned for their own Salvation, will be

praying for you: Join your Requests with theirs; and remember every Instance of Success in the Conversion of Sinners, or the Edification of Saints, will be hereby enhanced to you, as a gracious Return from him, whose Glory it is to hear and answer Prayer. And if at any time you fail of Success, it will yield you a great deal of Satisfaction, when you can truly say, nothing has been wanting on your Part, according to that Measure of Light and Grace bestowed upon you.

It has usually been observed, where God designs a Minister shall be remarkably successful, he is proportionally stirred up to besiege the Throne of Grace with unwearied Importunity, that the Arm of the Lord may be revealed; that he may not labor in vain, or spend his Strength for naught. O! how will such a one plead with the Lord to gather in his Elect, and particularly that it may be said of that Part of Zion to which he stands related, that This and that Man is born in the Midst of her. And from a Conviction that the Gospel, though admirably adapted to saving Purposes, will leave the Sinner where it finds him, or prove a Saviour of Death unto Death, but as attended with the secret Energy of the Holy Spirit; such a one, when he leaves the Pulpit, will enter the Closet, and commend what he has preached to the Blessing of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.

6. In visiting and converging with your Members you will find a great Measure of Prudence necessary. As much of your Time as can be spared from Reading and Study, should be given to the Church; and it will be your Mercy to know how to address the Members of it, according to the Variety of their Dispositions and Circumstances. I need not tell you, that without insulting the Rich, you may sometimes make the Vanity of the Creature, the Folly of Pride, and the Idolatry of Covetousness, the Subject of your Conversation. And it will much engage the Affections of the Poor, when they observe Courtesy, Compassion, and Kindness, run thro' your Behavior. And I must say, the more you converse with such, especially when eminent for Piety and serious godliness, the better. Many an instructive Lesson is to be learned from the Poor of this World, when Rich in Faith: And this will take off the Objection too often made to the Ministers of the Gospel, as seeking their own, rather than the Things of Christ. And, as often as Providence gives you an Opportunity, be sure to drop a Word for your Lord; and fear not to ask of all from Fathers to Babes in Christ, how the best Things go forward, What Progress they are making, and how far the Word and Ordinances of the Gospel are useful and comfortable. This may prove a Means, in the Hand of the Spirit, to quicken the Drowsy, and awaken the

Careless, as well as to strengthen weak Hands, and encourage the Feeble-minded. Many a godly Minister has been directed to do that in a Visit, which perhaps has been long attempted to little or no Purpose in a Course of Preaching.

There are two Extremes which you should carefully avoid; a sullen Moroseness or false Gravity, ever offensive but to the Ignorant or Bigots; and a gay frothy Levity, which will sink you in the Esteem of the more Pious and Injudicious: The latter is especially to be guarded against by a Minister who is naturally inclined to Freedom and Cheerfulness. And is at any time you meet with an Invective or Representation of the Character or Conduct of a Brother, in his Absence, to his Disadvantage, is you can't suppress the Conversation, which you should endeavor, reprove by Silence, and upon no Account be prevailed with to join the Censure, lest before you are aware, you are made a Party to a private Quarrel, and in the End run the Hazard of losing one, is not both your Friends. And it may be of great Service in the Evening of every Day to look over the Particulars you have discoursed on, where what has been imprudent will soon appear, and be a useful Caution for the Time to come. In a Word, my dear Brother, you should be always preaching in the Families of the Saints, as well as in the Assembly; remembering you are Part of the Salt of the Earth, whose Language should answer your Character. And as Saints will expect more from you than a common Professor, so Sinners will generally bear that from you, which would be ungrateful from another Hand.

7. Rule in the Church with all Gentleness and Moderation; and when you use the Authority Christ has given you, labor to do it in such a manner as may convince every one, that Necessity, Conscience, and the Good of the Church, oblige you to it. Endeavour to preserve inviolable a proper Order and Decorum in every Debate at Church-Meetings. Suffer no one, no not the richest, or your greatest Favorite, or most intimate Friend, to break in upon a Brother whilst speaking.

Let no Charge of a private Nature be introduced to the Church till the Gospel Rule has been First attended to: And where it may be, endeavor to accommodate lesser Matters privately, without bringing them to the Church. If the Honor of Religion should call for public Censure, let the Accused have proper Notice, with a Copy of his Charge, and an Account of the Evidence by which it is supported, with full Liberty to offer every Thing he can for his own Vindication ; and then, after solemn Prayer, let the Church judge: And

if you are called to pronounce the awful Sentence, let it be with the utmost Gravity and Concern, attended with an Exhortation to the Party cut off, which may satisfy him that you heartily wish well to his soul, though contained to separate him from the Fellowship of the Faithful.

And it has been a Rule with me, and I have found my Account in it, in Matters of considerable Moment, to consult with the more judicious of the Brethren in private. This will very much endear you to them, and make things run smoother and easier in your Church-Meetings.

And though you are by no means to lord it over God's Heritage, there may be some Degrees of Familiarity indecent and dangerous.

Remember you personate the glorious Head of the Church, and are President by the Voice of the People. Endeavour to act in Character, and let the mean between Haughtiness and Cowardice be carefully attended to. Tyranny is hateful in every one, but especially in an Ambassador of Peace. If you suffer the Reins of Government to be seized by every one who may have Ignorance or Impertinence enough to think he is able to manage them, all will soon run into Anarchy and Confusion. And in this be particularly cautious in setting out; for some are weak enough to plead a precedent, and are not easily persuaded to give it up, how irrational so ever in itself, or hurtful and dangerous to the Community.

Indulge the Church in any of those Customs or Forms of conducting things, which are lawful, and for which they may plead Prescription, though they should not appear so necessary to you; till by good Usage, and gentle Reasoning, they may be persuaded to lay them aside. And carefully avoid bringing in any thing new, till they are thoroughly convinced it is Matter of Prudence, Interest or Duty. For want of attending to this, many a religious Society has been thrown into Confusion? The People not easily admitting, that every new Pastor should bring in new Laws.

In the Admission of Members, examine them with the Faithfulness of a Minister, and Affection of a Friend; and endeavor, by leading Questions, to draw out, not dictate, to them their Experience. Never forget to charge them in the Presence of God to offer nothing but what is real and genuine. Let every Member have Liberty to ask any proper Question; but always thro' you, the Mouth of the Church. And if any are dissatisfied, let them converse with the Person proposing; upon which, if they are easy, your way is clear :

but is otherwise, and they declare it to be Matter of Conscience, I need not tell you, one is by no means to be received to the driving away of others.

Take an Opportunity sometimes at Church-Meetings of treating on the Comeliness and Beauty of brotherly Love; and, by your own Affability, endeavor to lead them into the Knowledge and Practice of it. If any attempt to make Divisions, mark them, and follow them close with proper Rebukes or Exhortations; and if they appear irreclaimable and unruly, let the Gospel-Rule take place, lest the Evil grow, and endanger the Peace and Welfare of the Community.

8. Be ready to do every good Office for your Members; but intermeddle not with their Family-Affairs, any farther than you are plainly called by Providence to it.

A Minister is not indeed to spend all his time in getting Places for some, and Business for others of his Members, as some of them may be ready to desire and expect; and who, when he fails after the utmost Diligence and Care, are very ready to censure him: But if it fairly lies in his way, and he can do it consistently with his Character, and a due Attendance to Reading and Meditation, should discover an Inclination to do Good unto all Men, and especially to the Household of Faith, of whom he is to prefer those to whom more immediately he is related in the Bonds of the Gospel.

Common Prudence will dictate how dangerous it is for any, but especially Persons in a public Character, to meddle between near Relations, Masters, and Servants, one Friend and another, when at variance. We are indeed to attempt to make Peace, but it should be rather by some softening Expressions to both, than as making ourselves Judges of the Debate, which will be always troublesome, and commonly dangerous.

And if it so happen, that same Body must interpose, rather leave it to the Deacons, or elder Brethren, than meddle too much yourself. This will preserve your Mind from that Ruffle and Discomposure which attend Strife and Contention, and secure you from the Blame of either Party; which you must expect from one, let your Determination be never so just and righteous.

Finally My Brother, often consult Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and, according to his Advice, Holdfast the Form of sound Words preach the Word in Season and out of Season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with

all Long-Suffering. Speak the things which become sound Doctrine. In all things shew yourself a Pattern of good Works; in Doctrine, Incorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech, which cannot be condemned; that he who is of the contrary Part may be ashamed, having no Evil to say of you.

For your Encouragement, remember you are engaged in a most honorable Work. You serve a good Master; one who can help you through every Difficulty by the way, and gloriously reward you in the end. You have his Promise, Lo I am with you always, even to the End of the World; and if he is with you, and for you, whatever Opposition may attend the faithful Discharge of your Duty, you shall be carried comfortably through it, to his Glory, and the Satisfaction of your own Spirit. And what a Pleasure must it be to you, if God should own you for the Conversion of Sinners? If many such should have Reason to bless him for you to Eternity, whilst the Saints are fed and nourished up unto eternal Life? That Promise in Daniel is a proper Motive to the utmost Diligence, and may serve to bear up your Spirits under any Discouragements:¹³ They who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever. And that of Peter¹⁴ is of equal Force, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.

I have only to add, May the Head of the Church pour out all those Gifts and Graces on you, which may render you a burning and shining Light on Earth; and, after you have fulfilled your Ministry here, may you enter into your Master's Joy and in the great Day, meet a Crowd of Converts as your Crown of Rejoicing; saying with Transports of Joy, to the Father of Spirits, Here am I, and the Children thou hast given me.

Here I had closed, had not the solemn Investiture of two additional¹⁵ Officers in this Church, called upon me to say a few things as to the Office of a Deacon.

You all know what gave Occasion to it in the Apostolic Age¹⁶; according to which it appears, none should be chosen to this Office, but those who are Members of the Church. Nor is every such one duly qualified for it: for though extraordinary Gifts have long since in a great measure

¹³ Daniel 13:3.

¹⁴ 1 Peter 5:2, 3, 4.

¹⁵ Mr. Thomas Kenward, and Mr. Samuel Stington.

¹⁶ Acts 6:1, 2, 3.

ceased, nor are we to expect a Stephen or Philip in our Day; yet the Holy Ghost has been very express in the Description of the Persons who are proper for the Church to call to this Office. Thus they should be Persons who¹⁷ have a good Report, or Men of Character and Esteem in the Church and the World. And the Apostle adds, they should be grave, that is, serious solid Persons, not airy light Professors; not double-tongue, speaking the Truth at all Times, and to all Persons, plain, sincere and upright in their Conversation ; not given to much Wine, that is, temperate sober Men, not using God's good Creatures to Excess; not greedy of filthy Lucre, lest they be tempted to alienate any Part of the Church's Stock, and convert it to their own Use, or the Service of their Friends: On the contrary, they should be open, generous, charitable Christians, and stir up others, by their Example as well as Entreaties, to be concerned for the Support of the Interest of Christ, and the Relief of the Poor.

They are likewise to collect the Money advanced by the Church for the Poor; to hear and examine the Circumstances of the Objects who desire Relief. Here they are to judge impartially, and the most necessitous and companionate Cases are to be first and principally regarded. When they distribute the Church's Bounty, it should be with Cheerfulness and Affability, which will double the Kindness to the Poor. Moreover they are to visit and pray with the Members when afflicted in Body, Mind, or Estate; and not leave the whole of that Work to the Minister, who will have time little enough to attend extraordinary Cases, and fulfill his stated Ministry.

And if at any time there is a Matter of Difference between the Members, they are to endeavor by all proper Arguments to bring them to a forgiving Temper; and to convince the Offender how reasonable it is to acknowledge his Fault, when it appears he is truly blame-worthy.

Another Branch of their Office, is to see that the Elements and every thing necessary for the reputable and honorable Celebration of the Lord's-Supper, be provided and in Readiness against the Time the Church has occasion to make use of them; and, when the Pastor has solemnly set them apart, the Deacons are, with all becoming Gravity, to distribute them to the Members, taking them as they set, without making any Distinction whether they are rich or poor.

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 3:3, 9, 10.

And, whilst they are concerned about the Lord's Table, and providing for the Poor, they are by no means to neglect that of their Minister, whose Subscriptions they are to take the Charge of seeing that they bear some Proportion to the Circumstances of the Persons giving, and the Occasions of the Pastor receiving. And if these at anytime should be remarkably pressing, they are to use their Interest with the Church to exert themselves accordingly: Nor should they suffer their Minister, if they can prevent it, to have occasion to make the disagreeable Complaint, that he is hindered in his Work from the Straightness of his Circumstances.

Remember, my Brethren, you are in a more particular manner to be the Friends of your Pastor. Be sure to treat him with Respect and Affection. This will greatly influence the rest of the Members to carry it well to him. And whoever disagree, labor to preserve Union and Peace between him and you. While you have a good Understanding, the Affairs of the Church will generally go well; but if you should be so unhappy as to differ (which God forbid) it will make way for the Enemy to destroy the Comfort, if not the Being of the Society.

I earnestly pray, that you may be furnished with that Experience, Skill, Industry and Compassion, which your Office calls for ; and that your Labor of Love may meet with Acceptance from the Church, whilst you purchase to yourselves a good Report, and great Boldness in the Faith: And, that you, with the rest, of your Brethren the Officers and Members of this Church, may meet your Pastor at the Right Hand of Christ, and give up your Accounts with Joy ; when he will graciously acknowledge every kind Office done to his Interest or People: Saying, Inasmuch as ye have done it to any of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.¹⁸

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¹⁸ Matthew. 25:40