

While, however, yours is the highest and most momentous office which can be entrusted to men in the ordinary ranks of life, it is obviously at the same time the most difficult and responsible. It requires your best efforts for its right discharge. It requires of you, first and above all, to have the faith and godliness of the Gospel in your own hearts; what you preach to others to preach also to yourselves, and to practise for yourselves; and, while you call upon others to follow Christ, first to follow Him for yourselves. It requires of you to study and be deeply imbued with the spirit of the Word of God, in which your instructions for the mission on which you have been sent are contained,—of that Gospel which it is yours to endeavour to carry home to the hearts and consciences of your hearers. It requires of you to teach, according to Apostolic example, both publicly and from house to house, and to be concerned that every sermon which you deliver bear throughout upon the edification of your people. It requires of you to cultivate in yourselves all the graces, the uprightness, the kindness, the holiness, the truthfulness, and the order of the Divine life, that others also, beholding the light of your Christian example, may be led to glorify your Father who is in Heaven. And it requires that your intercourse with the people among whom you have been appointed to minister be marked by an unassuming deportment, by mingled firmness and gentleness, and patient and unremitting effort, so far as in you lies, for the welfare of each and of all.

In the view of such considerations well may we exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" These are duties which no mere man will of himself perform. They who do not feel their own insufficiency can have no real sense of the high honour and responsibility and momentous objects and duties of the ministerial office, and no saving knowledge of themselves or of the Gospel. The saving knowledge of the Gospel would have taught them not only that all their faculties both of soul and of body, but their own experience of its repentance, peace, consolation, watchfulness and steadfastness in works of faith and labours of love are all from God alone. And the knowledge of themselves would have taught them their own ungodliness and vileness, the folly of their own wisdom, and the nothingness of their own strength. Were you indeed required to look for your sufficiency for your work to yourselves, you would have every reason to be dismayed and overwhelmed by the difficulties of the undertaking in which you are engaged; but your sufficiency is and can be only of God. And the very feeling of the depth of your own utter need will lead you, in the exercise of faith in the power and willingness of Him with whom nothing is impossible, to earnest and persevering supplication; and whatsoever necessary grace you thus ask you shall re-

ceive. You will be thus directed in every service of your Master to which you may be called, you will be strengthened and upheld by the God of your salvation, He will illuminate your understandings in the knowledge of Divine Truth, and touch your spirits with the living fire from His holy altar, and thus you will be enabled with heads full of light, and hearts full of love, to discharge the various duties incumbent on you to the benefit of your own souls and the profit of your people, and at last receive the gracious approval and reward of good and faithful servants of the Lord.

2. The words of our text teach us, in the second place, that *the success of ministers is from God alone*. The necessity of the blessing of heaven on the labours of the husbandman, causing them to yield their joyous return, is more palpable to the natural sense; and dependence upon it, therefore, is in such a case more generally felt and acknowledged. In the successful cultivation of the spiritual soil the Divine agency is less seen, and, therefore, its necessity is less generally and habitually recognized. But it is, if possible, more necessary in this case than in any other. The husbandman requires to employ means of various kinds for the tillage of his fields, and among others, in more parched and southern climes, not only the planting of the seed but the watering of the soil; but God alone makes the seed to grow, and renders it fruitful, and crowns the year with plenty. And so the diligent labour of the minister in the fulfilment of his duties is indispensable, and cannot in any measure be neglected without loss. *One may be more useful in converting the sinner, and another in the edification of the Christian, but all their usefulness is from God.* However laborious their endeavours may be, the blessing comes only from Him, and He alone makes them effectual. We have read and heard of ministers whom we should be disposed to deem among the most faithful in the service of Christ, and whose names are still cherished by the Church as such, whose efforts yet seem to have been attended with comparatively little effect among those for whose spiritual welfare they toiled. Doubtless much good, unperceived by man, may have nevertheless been done by them, the seeds of which were only lying dormant for a season, yet more decided and abundant fruits of their labours might have been expected. Doubtless also their want of success may have been in a greater or less degree a punishment of the sins of their people, and not so much attributable to any failure in pastoral prayerfulness and diligence. It may, however, at the same time have been in some measure owing to that tendency to self-dependence, and that fainting in prayer to God to bless their exertions, to which even good men are sometimes apt to give way. And, if this may be the case in some degree even with faithful ministers, how certainly will failure follow

the efforts of those who, practically at least, rely mainly on themselves in the work of winning souls to Christ, on their own talents, learning and industry, on their own powers of eloquence and persuasion, by the words which man's wisdom teacheth, and their exactness in the performance of the routine of duty, and not in the effectual working of God's grace. Men may be versed in all the literature and knowledge of their profession, valuable as instruments though these things be, and may speak with the tongues of men and of angels; but, so long as in the pride of their heart they cast not down every high thought and every lofty imagination, and seek not unto God for the blessing, they will be neither faithful nor successful ministers. They virtually forget that the Word which they preach is made effectual only by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the Spirit of God is the great agent in the work of the repentance, faith and holiness of their people, and that without His blessing on their studies and their efforts, and His saving operations on the hearts of their hearers, all else will be of little or no avail, and they can look only for the most bitter disappointment. This, it is to be feared, is a not uncommon though a most fatal error, withering every energy, and blasting every hope. Is it not to be apprehended that much of the barrenness and ill success which attend the exertions of ministers arises from a presumptuous self-confidence, and a want of implicit dependence on that Mighty Power by which alone they can be saved themselves and made useful in the salvation of others?

Did success depend on yourselves, my Brethren, the conversion even of a single soul might well be regarded as altogether hopeless and impossible. You have no reason, however, to faint or be discouraged. The cause which you plead is the cause of God; and, going forth in reliance on His promised Spirit, you will have His blessing on your endeavours. You will have the blessing of your Heavenly Master, who while upon the earth called by His grace sinners unto Himself, whose parting promise to those, whom He sends forth to make known among all nations the glad tidings of the way of salvation from sin and woe, is, that He will be with them in the fulfilment of this charge "always, even unto the end of the world," and who will give efficiency to your faithful and prayerful efforts in His service.

What then, my Brethren, are the conclusions with reference to the duties of both ministers and people, which we ought to draw from the consideration of the passage before us?

Plainly, in the first place, as all ministerial qualifications and success are only from God, and His grace is to be obtained only in the exercise of fervent and believing supplication, that you ought to be men of prayer. This is absolutely necessary for your own sakes. It is no less neces-