

thoroughly ourselves, and, when we are taught its doctrines, how difficult to convey to others that understanding of its contents so as to leave the mark, or produce an impression! How impossible for us to govern the sentiments or control the passions of others, for the tastes of our hearers are so different that what suits one disgusts another! Nay, so changeable are they that what is approved of to-day is condemned to-morrow. To strip vice of ornament, to clear virtue of all imputation and false appearance, to display religion in all its native loveliness and inherent beauty, is no easy work; nay, do we not find it a work of impossibility to persuade men to hate what is evil and to choose what is good. The very preaching of the Truth is of itself liable to give offence, and thereby to mar our usefulness. And is it not a truth too palpable, that we find a faithful minister of the Gospel, even whilst engaged in the due performance of his work, reviled and designated as a troubler of Israel? And is it not to be deplored that the less faithful, or those who have not the heart set on the work, faint and stumble, and give the enemy cause to triumph over their weakness?

Bear with me, Fathers and brethren, whilst I would strongly urge on your remembrance that, occupying the position we do, we have to stand alone or singly, even as the man stood alone by the brazen altar, and went forth alone to his work in the city. Such also is the case with us, we stand alone and isolated, we stand prominently before the eyes of all, of those who are not able to judge properly of us, even of the multitude who are incapable of discussing the motives by which we are actuated, or the principles by which we are governed. We are like the Athenian of old, who was ostracised because he bore the name of "Just." Our station is elevated, our position is conspicuous, and we are thereby exposed to the inspection of all. Many eyes are upon us, and remember the majority of observers will not give the same allowance for our short-comings, as they do for their own. Though we could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we cannot thereby allure our hearers, into lives of piety, or convince them of the beauties of religion. We must exhibit this in our lives and conversation, we must practise what we preach, we must not only explain doctrine, but we must illustrate and exemplify it in our own experience. As we move in a peculiar and individual sphere, we must shine as lights in the world, we must avoid every appearance of evil, we must consider not only what is just and pure, but also what is lovely and of good report. The world expects that we should do honour to our profession, that we should keep up the dignity of our character and fulfil the duties of our office. This we cannot do without acquiring, cultivating, and exercising every accomplishment, gift and grace by which our usefulness in the ministerial office may be promoted. Our

preaching must not be the result of mere human reason, nor to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. We are not to urge speculations as truths, or new schemes, however plausible, if unsupported by Scripture. Blessed is that preaching which has the seal of the Spirit attached to it. Delightful is that eloquence which flows from those streams of wisdom which are so pure and unsullied. Glorious is the Gospel in all its native lustre. Nourishing is the milk of the Word in all its richness and purity. Sweet to the taste is the Bread of Life in all its vitality and vivifying energies. And in our preaching proper respect must be had to the whole of the human family, giving to every one his portion in due season, teaching the young and the ignorant the first principles, giving strong meat to those who are of full age, who have their senses exercised to discern good from evil, to convince those who are lying in error by sound reasoning, mixed with heavenly wisdom, and to this we must add the holding forth of the law of God in all its extent, spirituality and strictness.

Another difficulty of the ministerial office is, that those that fill it are, like other men, compassed about with infirmities, and on account of this are exposed to impediments and opposition from within. Their own natures are unholy, their hearts are depraved, so that they are liable to much disquietude and vexation; and from this cause we have too frequently to lament the unfaithfulness of some and to mourn over the improper behaviour of others. Such amongst us are always to be regarded as heavy judgements from God on that portion of the Church on which they fall. Such always afford the careless a pretext for deserting the ministration of the Word, so that their precious souls are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge. The profane laugh and sneer at Religion in general, and delight in bringing railing accusations against ministers, whether they be innocent or guilty, and, instead of lamenting that outbreaks exist, they turn it as a handle against Religion in all its bearings.

Oh, the deplorable condition of such ministers, who thus bring disgrace not only upon themselves, but on all connected with them, who are stumbling-blocks in the way, on which others stumble and fall. The misconduct of ministers brings not only condemnation upon themselves, but judgement on the impenitent and profane, for not only are their own consciences dead and seared, but they force others to believe that Religion is a farce and its professors hypocrites. We hold this up as a warning to those who are so ready to blame ministers, and find fault with those whose characters are so open to view. It may be that such are themselves unfruitful, and thus are the means of bringing down the judgements of Heaven, by suffering disgrace to fall on the persons of those who ought to be patrons and guides. Of all persons in the world, ministers of the Gospel are

most exposed to misrepresentations and reproach. They are like a city set on a hill which cannot be hid, their faults and infirmities are seen by all, every blemish in the ministerial character is examined with wonderful acuteness, every fault is looked upon as a heinous crime, and the slightest infirmity disqualifies him for the office. If a malicious report be once raised, how assiduously is it propagated, and, however groundless and improbable, it is declared as a truth and easy of proof.

We do not make the above remarks with the intention of covering unfaithfulness, wherever it may exist, or of screening the guilty, wherever they may be found: but we make it chiefly as an argument that we ought to take heed to our ways, and to walk warily in slippery places.

Oh, what a pinnacle is that on which ministers stand! They are feeble men invested with an important office, the burden of which they are unable to bear alone; they are men who are exposed to the malice of sinners, and the assaults of devils; they are persons who are accountable for the manner in which they discharge the duties of their office. Hence these very things are apt to depress and discourage their minds, and it is matter of grateful thanks that mistakes and failures are so few, and the deviations from the rule of duty are so rare.

Brethren, what strong claims have we on the prayers and sympathies of our people, that, like Moses, whose arms were stayed by Aaron and Hur, so we require to be borne on the arms of prayer. Hence the truthful saying, "a praying people makes a faithful ministry."

On examining our text, we find that there is no account given by "the man" of the amount of work done, or of the time spent by him in the work, or the numbers of those who were sealed. We are only informed that, after having received the command, he went forth immediately to the performance of the orders given him, that he obeyed the command readily, and upon finishing he returned to the place where he had received his instructions, and reported that he had obeyed, that he had gone through the city and done as he was commanded. In this view of the subject there is a solemnity surrounding it, which awes us as we approach it. The command has been given us, to go forth and do the work of evangelists. We have gone forth to this work, each in his own sphere; and these are as varied and various as our own relations to one another. Did time permit, I would willingly endeavour to depict the scene of these labours, whether in the crowded street or in the narrow alley of the city, or rather the regularly organized congregations, the population scattered throughout this widely extended country, the mission-field in its boundless extent, with the difficulties, the toils and the hardships attendant thereon. But it is not to the scene of our labours, however varied