

As "shepherds," we are intrusted with the care of God's sheep. As watchmen, we are placed in charge of the city. As sent out into a benighted world, we have continually to "hold forth the lamp of light" in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. As ambassadors of God, we are ever to uphold the honour and dignity of our Master: ever to consult His wishes, and as far as in us lies to promote His interests.

And our responsibilities are immeasurably heightened by the momentous fact, that our office chiefly regards *eternity*. This is an awful peculiarity of the christian ministry. The merchant, if he fails in his enterprise, loses only his property: the statesman, if unsuccessful in his measures, injures the kingdom, with which he has been intrusted: the minister of God, if he fails in his duty, ruins the soul intrusted to his care. In the two first cases instanced here, the consequences of their failure are bounded by the present brief space of existence; and on the great day of judgment it will matter little what estates or kingdoms have been won or lost; but in the case of the minister of God, the effect will be extreme—everlasting, infinite. The lost soul must live for ever, and will be the wretched monument of his negligence and guilt! Oh! that each of us, my brethren, may ever bear in mind the fearful responsibility which belongs to our office—that our ministry hardens and kills, as well as softens and quickens—that we are set, like our Divine Master, for the full rising again of many in Israel,—“to the one, we are the Saviour of death unto death, and to the other, the Saviour of life unto life.”

As the work with which we are intrusted is important, the dignity of our office great, and the responsibility attached to it almost overwhelming; so are the difficulties and trials connected with it of no ordinary character. It is part of our duty to turn men's attention away from the things