

*interests of religion.* Such is what we should aim at making our visits to the homes of our people. We should bear in mind that we go to them on a specially religious mission. Wherever we find those who are manifestly in the danger and misery of a lost and perishing condition, we should seek to drive the arrow of conviction deep into their hearts. We should seek to arouse the careless, to awake those who are asleep in sin, and to beware of healing slightly the soul that is wounded by conviction of sin. We should make the full free *personal* offer of salvation through Christ to everyone who will accept of it. We should warn *professing* Christians against a mere formal religion, and urge the true child of God, to growth in knowledge and in grace. We should instruct the young, and seek to win them to an early faith in the Saviour. We should seek to bring the comforts of the Gospel to the mourning and bereaved, minister wisely to the sick, and seek that the dying may be cheered with a good hope of heaven.

Very tenderly should we seek to do all this, so that those with whom we deal may not be repelled from us, but rather drawn towards us, assured that we are seeking their highest welfare. But we should do it with great fidelity, remembering that "the blood of souls may be required at our hand." Such I believe is the true idea of pastoral visiting. As ministers let us aim at it, and teach our people to look for and expect it at our hands.

II. *As ministers we should realize the need of pastoral visitation. The minister himself needs it.*

Ordinarily a minister will not be an edifying preacher unless he does a certain amount of pastoral work. He will be kept at a distance from his people. He will not be in living sympathy with them. He will not be familiar with their circumstances,

and wants, and failures, their sorrows and trials and cares, and without this knowledge of his people, and without this vital sympathy with them he will not be able to suit his pulpit ministrations to their circumstances and needs. The minister, therefore, needs to be among his people that he may know them better, love them more, and be able to suit his teaching to their wants.

*But further, the people need such visiting.* Even many who are *professing Christians need it.* I believe those who are in the full communion of the church, and who are able Sabbath by Sabbath to attend the means of grace should never make demands upon their minister for visits or calls. They should rather spend what time and effort they can in helping the minister to do the work for others, and thus leave him as free as possible to minister privately to the aged and infirm who cannot attend the public means of grace, to the careless who neglect them, and to the young whom he may wish to see in the full communion of the church. But as things are, we find that many church members do need the stimulus of an earnest pastoral visit. They need to be stirred up to better things.

But especially do the *multitude of those who are careless and indifferent in regard to religion need to be visited in their homes.* Many of these come not near the sanctuary. They shut themselves out from the public hearing of the Gospel. They are on the highway to perdition, and appear wholly heedless of the danger. O, should not the minister of Christ pity such, and seek, by earnest prayer and repeated visits and fervent appeals, to secure their conversion, and by the grace of God to lead them to repentance, and win them to faith. And further the young, the aged, the sick, the infirm and the dying, all need the most tender and faithful attention on