

our God, and He will abundantly pardon. And, at this halting-place in the history of your congregation, let it be the part of all of you, my hearers, to make up your books, to look into your accounts, to heal your backslidings, to amend your ways, and to enter on a new term of improvement.

So much for the past. I must, however, hurry on to direct your minds, briefly, to the future.

It would be easy for me, like Paul, to dwell on my own future. I might say, in words similar to those which he employs: And now, behold, I go bound for another land, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost, in the Word, testifies that a minister of the Gospel, if he do his duty, may expect to meet with difficulties, trials, and temptations, manifold, in whatever portion of the Lord's vineyard it may be his lot to labor.

But it will be more profitable for you that I direct your thoughts to your own future. If the last six years have been productive of so many changes, who can tell what the next few years that are to come may bring forth?—when, away in a distant land, I may hear of one and another of those to whom I ministered, and from whom, while among you, I received no little kindness, being cut off. There are many among my hearers who are becoming advanced in life, and who, in the ordinary course of nature, cannot have many years before them. Once more, therefore, would I say to one and all, Be ready. Ask yourselves, my friends, individually, Have I taken the steps necessary for death when it comes, whether at cock-crowing, at noon, or at midnight? Will I be able to meet it without dismay? Seek, day by day, to exercise repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and to grow in all heavenly feelings and dispositions; so shall you become more and more meet for inheriting the mansions of the saints in light.

Let me say a word to the young. On you, my young friends, the future of this community depends. Soon, your fathers will be stretched in their graves, and you must fill their places. On you, under God, it depends, what the men and women of the next age, it may be of many succeeding generations, are to be. Yours, therefore, is a very great responsibility; and surely you ought to be fired with the noble desire that in your hands the race may improve—improve in all that is manly and noble and good, and not degenerate. Yours ought to be the laudable ambition that the children do better, and not worse, than their sires. Is this, my young friends, the tendency of existing things? Seek that it be so more and more.

And now for the dangers in store for you. "For I know this," says Paul, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

The dangers to which a congregation, without a fixed pastor, are liable, are manifold. Not merely are they apt to fall into careless desultory habits, to be scattered abroad as sheep without any shepherd, to imbibе pernicious doctrines, but any good they may have already received runs the risk of being undone. The best wish, therefore, that I can form for you is, that you may very soon have another pastor laboring among you. Use every means, my friends, to accomplish this, so soon as possible, and let your chief desire and prayer be that God may send among you a thoroughly devoted man—one who shall preach to you by his daily life as well as from the pulpit, and who to active effort shall join unceasing prayer in your behalf—one, in fact, who is vividly alive to the responsibility of his office. Let this, my friends, be your chief and only object—to obtain the services of a thoroughly faithful minister. Feel that it is better, a hundred times, that you have a good man, than even one of the highest talents, if void of piety. Realize, my friends, of what unspeakable importance this matter is to yourselves, to your little ones, and, it may be, to your descendants of the third and fourth generation, so shall you be likely to act in it with such deliberation and in such a prayerful spirit as God may be expected to smile on. Believe me, my friends, I feel as much interested in this matter as you yourselves can. I would leave you with a satisfied mind did I know that there was to come after me one more faithful, and better qualified to guide your feet in the way of life, than I have been. I would be less apt to reflect on my own deficiencies, for I would know that, in this case, they would be productive of less harm, and I would feel more confident that any little good I may have been honored to do would not be lost through neglect. Realize, my friends, that your future as a community may very much depend on the man whom God, in answer to your prayers, may send among you.

Whoever may come, let him have your full and hearty co-operation. Let him know, by your conduct, that he is your minister, and he only, and that your affections are not divided with any other, for this is as unkind, and unjust, and likely to be productive of as pernicious consequences, as for a woman to divide her affection for her husband with another man. (The relationship is, if possible, more sacred in the one case than in the other.) Treat him ever with that deference and respect to which his office is entitled, and show that you have confidence in his fitness to be your spiritual guide by accommodating yourselves, so far as possible, to his wishes in spiritual matters. Bear in mind that the peculiar training he has received enables him to form a more correct judgment, in regard to such things, than a people can be expected to do.

Meanwhile, it is my privilege, like Paul,