

ministers. In addition to this high notion of servant, the term, ambassadors for Christ, carries in it a peculiar emphasis of meaning. An ambassador is more than an ordinary servant, as he represents the person of the sovereign, and in a special manner speaks and acts for his sovereign; nor must it escape notice that, when an ambassador is sent to treat with rebels and offer them pardon, his function has ever been held as peculiarly sacred and honourable, inasmuch as he then is supposed to speak not only in the name but with the highest delegated authority of his prince. Now, says the apostle, we, as ambassadors for Christ, beseech men that they would be reconciled to God. Proud and foolish priests have debased the dignity of the Gospel ministry by the earthly titles they have assumed, whereas the titles God bestows on His servants are every way significant and honourable. They are the ministers of God—they are the ambassadors of the King of kings. Nay more, they are co-workers with God Himself, so that the very work in which the Divine Spirit is engaged is that in which they are engaged as the instruments of the Spirit. Does the Spirit teach, so do they—does the Spirit warn, so do they—does the Spirit console, so do they. They do this instrumentally, the Spirit does it efficaciously, but the work is the same. Co-workers with God, what an office of dignity and responsibility!

This will appear all the clearer when you reflect that those that are now ambassadors were themselves rebels, that those that are now servants of God in this high vocation were once servants of the world, the devil and the flesh. The treasure is thus put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of it may be seen to be of God. It is even so, and when through the grace of God these earthen vessels have been prepared to carry forth this precious treasure, or, to drop the figure, when depraved man has through grace been fitted for this great work, what a marvellous honour has God put on him! The office then to which you are looking forward is eminently honourable.

Any office of which this can be said must have high ends. Let me notice a few of the chief ends to which you should make all your labours tend. First, you will aim at the conversion of sinners. When the command was given by the Saviour, "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature," a world lying in wickedness specially needed the Gospel the apostles were commissioned to unfold. But the world is still in need of this, for men are still by nature estranged from God, and thus must lead to degradation and misery. Ministers now are sent just as the apostles were, to tell men of their guilt and danger, and to call upon them to repent of their sins, and receive the mercy of God through Christ. Not the heathen or Mahomedans merely, or others sunk in superstition, need to be converted, every child of Adam needs this—the child of the most godly parents as much as the child of an idolator. "Except a man be born again," said the Saviour, "he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." You believe this, hence you cannot but believe the necessity of conversion, not only to enter heaven but also to escape eternal damnation. You know that the unconverted, if they die in their state of estrangement from God, must be eternally miserable. If there were no hope for such, then nothing needs be said, no warnings need be given, and no appeals made. But, blessed be God, there is hope. For, if His Word tells us that "the wages of sin is death," it also tells us that "the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the ground which the ambassador for Christ can occupy, and hence can call sinners to repentance—can call on them to flee from the wrath to come, can entreat them to be reconciled to God, can strive

to pluck them as brands from the burning,—for, although they are on the verge of hell, yet, if he can induce them to turn and fling themselves into the arms of Jesus, they shall be saved. But then you cannot convert sinners—no, all the angels of heaven could not of themselves convert one soul. But, although you cannot be the efficient agents in this, you may be instrumental, you may be co-worker with God in it. Now, as you cannot look at the fearful condition of the unconverted without the most painful emotions, so you cannot, if you realize your obligations to them, but labour with your whole soul and strength for their conversion. You will do this when you are preparing matter at your desk for their understandings and consciences: you will do this with all earnestness when you deliver that matter to them from the pulpit, and at a throne of grace in secret you will agonize for the conversion of sinners. No faithful minister will look with indifference at unconverted souls around him. Alas! it is true, he may utterly fail, yet he will not fail till he has exhausted all the means in his power to bring sinners to the Saviour. The minister that does not feel that he has a message from the Lord of Hosts to sinners, which he should deliver in a very agony of love and fear, plainly overlooks the great end of his mission. That man may incidentally utter many true things, and may often utter many pretty things, but, if he cries not, as the Baptist did, Repent ye, and as the Saviour Himself did, then is that man where he ought not to be, for plainly he sees nothing aright, and will on the whole do nothing aright.

But this, although much, is not all that he who loves souls will strive to do for them. "What we desire" said the Apostle, "is your sanctification." Every minister must say the same. Indeed he who seeks the conversion of souls will seek their growth in grace. Without holiness the soul could have no suitable preparation for glorifying God upon earth, or enjoying Him through eternity. As sanctification is the restoring of the Divine image to the soul, so, just as far as this is done, to that extent does man possess moral beauty, fitness for the Divine service, and true happiness. This is indeed the very highest education which a rational, and immortal creature can receive. In this the Divine Spirit is the efficient agent, yet, let it be borne in mind that the Spirit in this works by means, such as the Word and ordinances of God and also His providences. It is no disparagement to other means to say that the minister with Bible truth in his heart, and that truth flowing from his lips, and developed in his life, is of all instruments the most effectual for the sanctification of souls. Hence an able and pious minister is a grand educator of souls for the service of God and the joys of heaven. No teaching so grand in its principles, none so beneficial in its ends as that which is given by a godly minister. For, if it be a post of high honour, whether in school or college, which is occupied by him who labours to prepare young minds for usefulness and happiness on earth, how very high is his position who is giving lessons to immortal souls which will fit them for taking their place before the Throne, and for engaging in the services and joys which occupy the powers and gratify the tastes of the highest angels in heaven. This is neither fancy nor exaggeration. For every addition that the minister makes to the knowledge, righteousness and holiness of minds under his care, he is just so far preparing them, for the highest destiny to which creatures can look. It is true he is able to reach merely the elements of this heavenly education, still these elements are indispensable to the great lessons and duties on which souls are to enter after death. But more truth is not all that is

needful to complete sanctification and fit the soul for glory. For this the graces of love, humility and meekness are indispensable. Now here again we remark that the Spirit is the all-efficient agent in producing these graces, yet, inasfar as a faithful minister is instrumental in this, he is a co-worker with the Spirit. Hence he who is cultivating the graces in the hearts of his hearers is giving them that spiritual training and sanctification which will prepare them for glory. Now, as I hold that no man can be a faithful minister of Christ who does not seek the conversion of souls, so neither is he faithful who does not seek their sanctification, for this is really to seek their glorification. As the true minister of Christ will ever keep this in view, so he will ever labour zealously in season and out of season for the advancement of grace in the hearts of those for whom he watches, and just in proportion as he is successful in this will his own heart be gladdened. This then is another high end of ministerial labour.

But, in fine, the glory of God should be the chief end. This is indeed inclusive of all. Now, while it is true that this should be the chief end of all men, there is surely special reason why it should be that of the minister of Jesus. They profess in a very peculiar way to have devoted themselves to the service of God with the strong wish in all things to advance His glory. As the essential glory of God is infinite, all creatures can add nothing to it. But, as all created, "in one way or other show forth the glory of God," so may godly ministers do this in a way superior to all other men. The manifestation of the Divine perfections shows the Divine glory, so it follows that, the more fully these perfections are unfolded, so all the more fully is God glorified. Now, if it be proper to speak of a higher and more subordinate glory of God, then we may soberly affirm that in the unfolding of the moral perfection of God His higher glory is seen. Hence, when He would show His great glory to Moses, He gave him a clear view of His perfections and holiness. Now, inasfar as man by speech or conduct manifests the Divine holiness, so far does he in the highest sense glorify God. But pious ministers are constantly engaged in this very thing: for they do this when they preach the Gospel with fitness and clearness. What a work of God is the Gospel! It is indeed, the whole moral perfections of God made visible in a way at once very simple and yet peculiarly grand. "I have shown you the Father," said Jesus, and again says He, "These who have seen me have seen the Father." Now this was true not only of the person of Christ but of the Gospel of Christ. Inasfar as men preach the Gospel so as to unfold its grand principles and effects, they glorify God who is the Author of them.

But there is another sense in which they may do this still more emphatically. The faithful minister not only presents the Gospel in the abstract, and so glorifies God, but he is really striving by his lips and his life to make living images of God's glory in the souls he converts and sanctifies. He is, therefore, not only showing what the beauty of God's holiness is in the abstract but what it really is in the concrete. To speak it plainly: Every soul brought to God under his ministry, and who has been brought to reflect the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, will, in a very high sense, glorify God. There is not on earth a more glorious sight you can have of God than a sanctified soul. Now, admitting in the fullest sense that a minister is nothing more than instrumental in this, yet what a great thing does he accomplish even as the instrument of the Spirit! I do not know that the highest angel in heaven is engaged