

oversight thereof." And here it is necessary to bear in mind that there are two classes of elders in the church—those who rule only, and those who both rule and teach. A distinction which is implied in the Apostle's words to Timothy when he says, "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, specially they who labour in the word and doctrine." As implied here all rule, but only a certain number of them devote themselves to public teaching. Now in the direction of our text to take the oversight, we must understand those who are called lay elders as well as those who are commonly called ministers. Not but that the lay elders have also a responsibility in connection with the instruction imparted, but it is in the work of exercising government that their services are more directly given. And in this we would notice as among the things included—

First—Maintaining purity of membership. This it is true can only be attained in a relative degree. For, according to our Saviour's own teaching, the tares will grow up among the wheat, and the Gospel net will enclose bad as well as good. In the small band which He Himself formed there was a traitor, and in the churches which the Apostles planted there were enemies to the cross of Christ, and those who, though among the believers, were not of them. But while absolute purity of membership cannot be secured, neither must indiscriminate admittance be given; ignorant and presumptuous persons, whose presence would be a scandal to the church, must be refused. In reference to such it is said "Purge out the old leaven." The building of worthless materials—wood, hay, stubble will not only occasion loss in the day of final trial, but such often cause much loss of peace and comfort in the present time. A competent amount of knowledge, some evidence of Christian experience, and a consistent life ought to be required of all.

Second—Watching over the spiritual welfare of those who compose the membership. Besides the attention of the pastor to this particular, the elders in their respective districts should acquire a knowledge of the members in regard to their circumstances,