

and entreat you to abandon all thought of this great work, until your own soul was in Christ justified, renewed, and saved.—It must follow, however, that the higher your degree of spiritual attainment,—the deeper, more earnest, more absorbing your personal godliness, the better fitted must you be for a work of which this is the primary requisite. Baxter says truly—"nothing is well done by him that beginneth not at home; as the man is, so is his strength and work." Every consideration points to eminent personal piety as the one thing needful in a minister of the Gospel. It is not the only qualification, but it is that of chief account.

A low standard of godliness unfits a man to meet the demands of this solemn office.—Like other men we are sinners—we hope pardoned sinners. As they are, so we are accountable to the one moral government before whose tribunal there is no respect of persons. But we are called by our office, to serve God in the performance of higher duties than others. The many have mainly secular and earthly cares—their chief anxieties and trials have relation to the present life—they deal with the material interests of men. If we are truly faithful, our anxieties, cares and trials will grasp both worlds, and will fasten their interest sympathy upon the well-being of the immortal soul. We shall appreciate the importance of our testimony to perishing men, remembering that the time is short, and that while eternal interests are suspended upon the issue, this may be our last opportunity. How much is eminent piety needed to meet claims like these! Without this qualification, the peculiar temptations to which a Minister is exposed will be too strong for him and will overcome him. These vary in their nature much the same as the respective temperaments of the men vary. Some are naturally very sensitive in regard to the opinions of others. They are liable to be puffed up by applause or cast down by depreciation. Others have little natural skill or firmness in seasons of difficulty, and their temptation is to enter tortuous and crooked paths, either in statement or conduct, in order to rid themselves of the pressure,—whereby they damage their character and injure the cause of Christ. The very prominence involved in the office of the Minister of the Gospel, gives to his peculiar temptations augmented power, and to his mistakes and falls most fearful momentum in the promotion of evil. We need great watchfulness and eminent godliness. Be convinced, that the only sure means of eminent success in the Ministry of the Gospel is a spirit of entire self-consecration to the sacred work—a heart glowing with love to Christ—and a holy zeal for man's salvation. These are features of eminent piety: and these are demanded by the claims of the community.

And we are not to forget that the general community have a really important stake in this matter. They do not usually think or feel much about such stake and they often say and do hard things—they are often not only argus-eyed, but unreasonable and perhaps uncharitable. They seize with avidity any defect in conduct, for the purpose of criticism and reprehension. But the best way to meet this, is to give them no occasion to speak reproachfully. The Apostle Peter urges upon Christians to "have a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Nor, after all, is the world's estimate of what Ministerial character should be too high. We ought to be indeed "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," like our Divine Master—little other than religion incarnate. Our character will assuredly affect their estimate of the nature and value of religion, it must also materially influence the force of our teaching upon their minds. With what overwhelming power was the Apostle's entreaty to men—"Be ye reconciled to God" invested by the high-toned, seraphic godliness of his character. Their knowledge of the consistent spirituality of a Minister's mind and course retracts upon their consciences as they listen to his instructions, clothing them with the might of reality, and investing him with the power of a man most truly in earnest. Only thus, in fact, can the sympathy of men be called forth. They will cast from them as a worthless thing, the utmost clearness of statement and earnestness of appeal from a Minister whose course is practically inconsistent with his profession. And they will be affected favorably by the teachings of a Minister of Christ very much in proportion to their estimate of his