

Luke xxii. 32, we have the example of Christ praying for Peter. In various parts of John's gospel, we have instances of Christ praying for his disciples: let his example be imitated by you. In i. Samuel, vii. 5, we find Samuel praying for all Israel: let this example also be followed by you. In Jeremiah xxix. and xlii., taken together, may be found an example of a command to pray for others, of a gracious answer to prayer for others, and also of some—indeed, many—of the benefits to be expected from prayer for others. Of the importance and efficacy of intercessory prayer we have examples from the earliest periods of the history of the human race. A remarkable one is recorded in the xx. chapter of Genesis. But it is unnecessary, we hope, to multiply proofs of the necessity, importance and efficacy of intercessory prayer. The minister who either neglects this duty, or but formally engages in it, cannot prosper in the divine life himself, nor has he reason to hope that his labours will be blessed for the good of others. But he who with regularity, sincerity and faith, performs this duty, will bring down heavenly blessings upon himself, and also upon the souls of which he has the care.

3. Another important part of a minister's duty is *pastoral visitation*. His labours are not to be confined to the pulpit and the sabbath. As far as time for due and careful preparation for the public preaching of the gospel will permit, when a seasonable opportunity offers, and when the case of any of his flock peculiarly calls for it, he will profit both himself and his people by going from house to house, and instructing them, reading the scriptures to them, and praying with them privately. On such occasions he will be best able to find out the particular wants of his hearers, and so be able to accommodate his instructions to their understandings, and to bring them home to their hearts and consciences with greater closeness of application than he could do in public. And farther, by thus visiting and conversing with his people he will come to know better how to address them in public. In the discharge of this part of your ministerial duty, the condition of the aged, the sick and the dying, will have a strong claim upon your attention. Persons in such circumstances stand peculiarly in need of those consolations and supports which the gospel of peace alone can afford; and it will be your duty to minister to their necessities.

4. The next part of a minister's duty, which I would briefly notice, is the dispensing of the ordinances of the gospel—baptism and the Lord's supper. Perhaps by some it may be thought unnecessary to advert to this part of the gospel minis-

try. Such, however, is not the case. This topic is not usually introduced on occasions like the present; but the very low state of religion in this country and the mixed character, in almost every congregation, of its inhabitants, have suggested it now. However small a minister's congregation may be, it is very probable that in it are persons from different parts of the world; and thus it becomes difficult for him, at least for a time, to acquire an adequate knowledge of their sentiments and characters. However conscientious and desirous to be faithful, he may, and very likely will be, imposed upon and induced to administer the ordinances to which we refer, to some who are unworthy to receive them. This difficulty may exist under the most favourable circumstances, but in the present state of religion in this country, a minister is peculiarly exposed to it; and in order to save himself from being a partaker in guilt with those who may unwarrantably ask and receive the sacraments, he will not unfrequently be under the painful necessity of withholding them from such as apply for them, but give no evidence of being entitled to them. How few, for instance, have that degree of scriptural knowledge, and possess that degree of christian character, which can warrant a minister to admit them to the Lord's supper! And in a case where neither father nor mother is a member of the church, nor at all fit for being received as such, the children are not entitled to baptism. To baptize their children, would be to encourage such parents to live on in their carelessness and irreligion, and to be the occasion of adding to all their other sins, the great guilt of receiving, or rather profaning a holy ordinance never intended for them in their present condition. How necessary, therefore, is it in a minister to be strict and conscientious in this matter; for to be so is the best, because the scripture way of promoting the great object of the pastoral office.

5. The only other topic on which I would address you, is the preaching of the word—the gospel of the grace of God—the glad tidings of salvation to guilty, lost and helpless sinners, through the incarnation and humiliation, the obedience and sufferings, the death and resurrection, and the ascension and intercession of the eternal Son of God, and the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. This duty of your office I have designedly reserved for the last—not as being the least, but as being the greatest—the most important—the principal duty which a minister of Christ has to discharge. On this part of the subject let me suggest the following things.

The word ought to be preached with much plainness. It is to be feared that ministers not