

the dead in sin awakened to a life of holiness, and thus through our instrumentality were a sight of all others fitted to rejoice the soul! But alas Brethren, is it not so, that few greet us as the messengers of good tidings to themselves, that few receive the prescriptions which we give for their spiritual diseases. Some appear studiously to evade any application of our doctrine to themselves, and thus they continue alike insensible to their guilt and danger, and indifferent about the Saviour. The word spoken to them, to keep to the figure in the text, is like the seed which fell by the way side and was not permitted to spring up. Others are offended at the reproofs which the truth conveys to them, and struggling against their own convictions, they are offended at the preacher also, counting him their enemy for telling them the truth. While some again, who seem to receive the word with gladness, and afford for a time a promise of fruit do yet never yield any; before the harvest comes round, the plants which had sprung up, wither and die under the adverse influences to which they are exposed.

Thus from the soil which the spiritual labourer cultivates, he has causes of discouragement and sorrow. In its natural state it bears only a useless or noisome vegetation; it must be laboriously cleared and dressed to the receiving of the seed: much of what is sown appears to be lost; and that which does spring up must be watered from springs that are without and beyond the soil itself; while the supplies from these are to some extent dependant also on the prayers and labours of the spiritual husbandman. In this way therefore ministers often plough and sow weeping.

I would yet add, that ministers have many occasions of discouragement and sorrow within themselves.

Vigorous ministerial exertions imply a healthy condition of religion in a minister himself. Our ministry is not fulfilled by the bare performance of religious offices private and public. We require a clear and vigorous apprehension of the invisible realities of the Kingdom of God, a devotedness of heart to his service and an affectionate regard to the souls of men; and we must give ourselves to the diligent study of the Divine Oracles, to laborious teaching and preaching, and to persevering prayer. These qualifications and employments do all evidently respect our own personal knowledge and experience of the Gospel; and hence, whatever obstructs the influence of the truth on our own mind, tells unfavourably on our Ministry. If our personal religion be in a languid or lifeless state, we are in a great measure incapacitated for our spiritual work. The truth we have to teach, and the condition of our people to which our instructions should have reference become all indistinct to our perceptions, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from us. And so too, all delight in the service of God in the Gospel Kingdom, ceases to be felt, and all genuine Ministerial zeal, and affection, and boldness decay when communion with God is intermitted. Thus, does every unhallowed affection which a minister entertains—every sin in which he allows himself—to go at once to enervate his ministry.

And here, is an abundant source of trials and discouragements to the spiritual labourer. Need it be said, that, we are men of like passions with our hearers, that, that nature which is had to all that is good, and vigorous of itself to all that is evil, cleaves to us as well as to them?—that, their enemies are also our enemies—the world now seducing to sin, and now frowning on holiness, and Satan, who, from the intensity of his opposition to the Kingdom of God naturally falls upon its ministers with all his wiles and violence. Hence, as we may tell our hearers, our severest trials and sorrows are generally from ourselves. To keep the armour bright, which is no small part of the discipline of every good soldier is to us absolutely necessary for any effective discharge of our spiritual warfare. If slothfulness creep over us, or the love of the praise of men and of their rewards give an obliquity to our aims, or if any other unhallowed affection be cherished and indulged, then alas, our ministerial work is more surely hindered than if persecution harassed us as we laboured in it. Our own infirmities are thus an occasion of sorrow as we go forth bearing precious seed.

I proceed in the second place to notice some of the difficulties and discouragements which meet us in the discharge of the ministry and which are more or less peculiar to the place and times in which our own lot is cast. These are connected with the physical state of the country, or with its political state, or with the general condition of the church.

First, some of the difficulties and trials which we encounter in the ministry grow out of the physical state of the country. The dispersed state of the population and other circumstances connected with the recentness of the cultivation of the country occasion obvious hardships to ministers in travelling to preach at distant stations, and to visit their hearers. From the same and other causes, most of them obtain a small return in temporal things, for their labours in spiritual things.

There are other hinderances to the successful prosecution of the ministry which grow out of the secluded life which many of our people lead. The retirement of our woods is indeed in many respects conducive to the culture of piety. 'Tis no mean advantage to be so remote from fraud and violence, that the door of the dwelling needs neither bolts nor bars, and to see none of the contaminating spectacles of open vice which are so common in the crowded haunts of men. And it is a still higher advantage to have those views of God which are to be found in his works, and in the silent woods, not sparingly, always pressing themselves on the mind, while the din of the busy world is not heard to distract attention. 'Blest retirement' indeed, where communion with God through his word along with the family succeeds to communion with him in the woods and fields through his works. Yet, alas, it must be confessed that this communion with God is not likely to be maintained where the public ordinances of religion are not possessed at all, or where they are had only at distant intervals of time. These ordinances have been instituted by the