

their Saviour, they indicate their expectation that heaven is at length to be their place of rest; but with all this there may be an absorption of the mind in the cares or the pleasures of life—a total want of that earnestness which should characterize those who have intelligently listened to the words of our Saviour, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate."

Where such an appearance is presented, we need not be surprised that there should be an indifference to the maintenance of *Watchmen*. The cry of the Watchmen might break in upon the rest of those who would wish to slumber.— Yet how important is it, when sudden destruction may be ready to fall upon those who are saying peace and safety, that there should be a Watchman to sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, that all the thoughtless in the land may tremble. When, in the midst of worldly engagements, men are so apt to lose sight of spiritual things, how important is it that for every manageable company there should be one who, removed from the bustle and placed upon his watchtower, may take an extended view of the field in which they are so busily engaged, and may discern for the purpose of timely warning, the stealthy approach of the enemy, or the indications of mustering hosts advancing to an open conflict.

To confine our attention for the present to the duty of preaching the word, the considerations already adduced show how important it is for the right discharge of a minister's duty, that he be kept as much as possible out of that bustle in which others are engaged, in whose behalf he is to act as a Watchman. The word which he is to preach is the word of the living God; and, however lightly it may be handled at times even by the most serious, there is a most solemn responsibility connected with it.— To some it is the savour of life unto life, to others it is the Saviour of death unto death; and who is sufficient for these things? The right application of this instrument requires not only profound and prayerful consideration of the particular passages which the minister may bring before his people, so that, in reference to the Scriptures themselves, he may not handle the word of God deceitfully; but an intelligent and accurate view also of their particular circumstances, so that he may be enabled to administer to those who are under his charge their food in due season, speaking, exhorting, and rebuking, it may be, with

all authority. It is not to the mere activity that may be displayed in going from place to place, and in delivering the most carefully prepared discourses, that we look as to the proper discharge of the duty of a watchman. These are so far well, and may be very edifying, in the case of an occasional service from a minister who in the providence of God may have an opportunity of preaching the word to an assembled congregation; but they are not equivalent to the proper services of a watchman. It is his duty to mark the circumstances of his individual charge, to make himself acquainted with the dangers to which they are especially exposed—the errors, whether in doctrine or in practice, against which they need to be particularly warned; in order that he may wisely adapt his ministrations to their wants. After the most careful consideration of circumstances, ministers may often feel that they are like men drawing the bow at a venture. It becomes both them and their people ever to remember, that it is the Holy Spirit who is the skilful and efficient director of his own word to the heart. Notwithstanding all this, it is right in the oversight of the flock to endeavour to obtain such a knowledge of its general state, and of the case of its individual members, that the addresses, without being personal in the offensive sense of the term, may be appropriate, may classify character, and may make each hearer feel that the word of the Lord has a particular bearing upon him. Looking then to the use of means, it is where ministers are maintained distinctively as *Watchmen* that this object can best be accomplished; and we would still press it upon our congregations that it is for their own benefit that they should make the effort, by every sacrifice within their power, to secure that their pastors be among them, not as one of themselves, immersed in worldly business and endeavouring by its toils to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but as *Watchmen* specially appointed to watch for their souls; so that they may not, from want of opportunity of knowing the flock, address to those who need to be roused by a consideration of the terrors of the Lord those words of consolation with which Christ binds up the broken-hearted, and comforts those that mourn; but that they may be in circumstances to act upon the exhortation of Jude, "of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save