

Ordination Sermon

by Charles Finney

A minister should take heed to themselves, their doctrine, and their dependence on Christ in order to be effective in the gospel ministry.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Ephesians 4:11-12, Colossians 1:28, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 13:17, James 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2-3

Topics: "True Religion", "Ministerial Responsibility"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the critical responsibilities of ministers in his 'Ordination Sermon,' urging them to take heed to themselves and the doctrine they preach. He outlines the importance of self-examination, ensuring that their motives align with God's glory, and maintaining a deep understanding of true religion. Finney warns against the dangers of selfishness, ambition, and neglecting personal piety, while also stressing the necessity of a thorough grasp of the gospel to effectively lead their congregations. He concludes with the promise that by adhering to these principles, ministers can save both themselves and their hearers, reinforcing the weight of their calling.

Transcript

'Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.' 1 Tim. 4:16.

In remarking upon these words I shall,

I. POINT OUT SOME OF THE RESPECTS IN WHICH A MINISTER SHOULD TAKE HEED TO HIMSELF.

II. SOME OF THE RESPECTS IN WHICH HE SHOULD TAKE HEED TO THE DOCTRINE HE PREACHES.

III. SHOW WHAT IS INTENDED BY CONTINUING IN THEM.

IV. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LAST CLAUSE OF THE VERSE, IN SO DOING HE SHALL SAVE BOTH HIMSELF AND THEM THAT HEAR.

I. Some respects in which a minister should take heed to himself.

1. He should not take heed to his own self-interest, as the great end of pursuit. If a minister gives himself up to look after his own interest instead of the interest of God, he will be worse than useless as a minister.

2. He should not take such heed to his reputation as to have his eye continually upon that, constantly raising the inquiry how such and such a thing will affect his reputation. With such a state of mind as this, the minister is a perfect slave to public sentiment rather than the freeman of Jesus Christ. There is scarcely a more hateful character under the sun, than a minister who is constantly taking heed to his own reputation, preparing his sermons, preaching them, and regulating all his movements with an eye to securing a reputation among men. This is a most detestable state of mind, and renders a man worse than useless.

[3.] 5. Nor should a minister take heed to his own ease. If ministers are afraid of wearing themselves out, afraid to lay out their strength for God--if they are indolent, effeminate, and self indulgent, they are never like[ly] to be of any use to men, nor any honor to God.

4. Ministers should not take such heed to themselves as to indulge any form of selfishness. Selfishness is the direct opposite of holiness, and cannot co-exist in the same heart with holiness. If, therefore, a minister should not be totally depraved, he should not indulge any form of selfishness: but,

5. Ministers should take heed to the motives by which they are actuated in entering upon the great work of the ministry. Be careful, brethren, that you make no mistake on this point. See that your eye is single to the glory of God--that disinterested benevolence be the actuating principle of your life. Unless your eye is single, and your intention supremely and disinterestedly benevolent, you are ungodly men, and have no business in the ministry. Take heed then that you are truly converted men--not merely convicted sinners, but regenerate men, men whose hearts are right with God, and whose great motive in entering the ministry is to glorify God in the salvation of men. Remember if you are not converted men when you enter the ministry, you are almost certain to go to hell yourselves, and, so far as you have influence, to take your hearers with you. And remember too that it is altogether too common, for it to be taken for granted on all hands that ministers are really converted men, I must say, and dare not say less, that every year's experience and observation forces upon me more and more the conviction that it is becoming alarmingly common in these days of pressing so many young men into the ministry, for multitudes to enter upon that sacred office who are not truly regenerate men. We have had, in this place, instances, not a few, of your men coming to this Institution to prepare for the ministry, who have turned out to have no religion at all--have been here convicted and for the first time converted--young men who had been supposed in Churches from which they came, and by which they were recommended, not only to be truly converted men, but your men of more than common piety, and promising candidates for the Christian ministry. And but for those powerful revivals in this Institution which broke up their delusions, numbers of them would no doubt have been this day, in all their sins, engaged in the sacred office of the ministry. Take heed then to yourselves, brethren, that you know what it is to be born of God, and that you know what it is to have an eye single to his glory in entering upon this sacred work.

6. Take heed that you are called of God in this work. And let me beseech you not to treat the subject of a special call to the ministry lightly, and as an antiquated notion no longer to be heeded. You are not to take it for granted that Christ has called you to the work of the ministry because He has called you into his kingdom. But let your mind be well satisfied that it is the will of God, that you should be separated to the work of the gospel ministry. You should be as well satisfied of this as you are that you are converted.

If you ask how you are to obtain this evidence, I answer from the indwelling [S]pirit of God. If you ask again whether you are to give yourself up to be directed by impulses, I answer, No. You are in nothing to be directed by impulses, but by the sober dictates of your judgments in respect to the path of duty. If God really calls you to the ministry, you will hear his voice; for if He does not call loud enough so that you can hear Him, you have no right to go. If He designs you for a minister of the gospel, He will give you such views of Himself, of the worth of souls, of the great importance of your engaging in this work; in short He will give such an inclination to your mind as to fasten the conviction upon you that it is his voice, and that He calls you to preach the gospel. Men may call you to the ministry, but consent thou not except God call thee. Too many young men already have been called of men, and what are they doing in the Church but increasing its sectarianism, and grasping after power. We want God-made ministers. Take heed then to yourselves, I beseech you, brethren. See to it that God puts you into the ministry.

7. Take heed that you are especially anointed by God to this great work, and do not confound a call to the ministry with an anointing to the work. Christ's disciples were called to the work long before they were specially anointed and endued with power from on high for its effectual prosecution. Remember conviction is one thing. Regeneration is still another. A call to the ministry is distinct from both. And a special anointing to the work of which I am speaking, is another, and a gift distinct, and by itself. The peace of the gospel, the rest of faith, and communion with God, are entirely distinct from that power from on high with which a minister needs to be clothed to be efficient in his work. A man may be truly pious, ardently so, and know what it is to live and walk with God, without that spirit of power which a minister needs to make his words cut like a two edged sword. Indeed the grand distinction between efficient and inefficient ministers consists more in this than in any thing and every thing else. A man may be learned and pious, and yet inefficient as a minister. He may be unlearned, in the common acceptation of the term, yet with a special anointing for the work, he may be a most efficient minister. I beseech you, then, let this be well settled in your mind, that unless you take heed to be anointed with a special anointing of the Holy Spirit to this work, you will do but little good, and that if we hear from you at all, it will be barely that you are doing pretty well, but that there is nothing special under your ministry. Brethren, you ought to have such an anointing that whenever you open your mouth to preach, the people will feel that you are sent of God. You ought to know that there is such a thing as that. If you are anointed to the work, your hearers will feel that you speak with authority and with power. And by power I do not mean vociferation and noise, but that your words will be sharp, like a two edged sword.

8. Take heed that you* give yourselves wholly to the work. Remember if you are called to the ministry, that this is a labor by itself. And that you are not to be diverted from this work without being plainly directed by God. And here let me warn you against being lightly drawn aside to engage in agencies for benevolent societies and objects. I say lightly, because I suppose it is sometimes true that Christian ministers may be devoted to the performance of some particular branch of Christian reform.

But I have long been persuaded that it is a very serious thing for a minister to leave the direct work of preaching the whole gospel, for the purpose of engaging in an agency that will confine him almost exclusively to some one department of religious truth. One of the evils of such a course is to beget in his mind a monstrous development of that particular truth. He soon loses the symmetry and proportion of a Christian man, becomes too much a man of one idea, loses sight, in a great measure, of other branches of reform, and is in danger of becoming censorious, towards all others in whose minds there is not the same monstrous development of that particular truth.

This is a dangerous state of mind, exceedingly injurious to his own piety and usefulness, and dangerous to the Church of God. Such men are found not unfrequently to be loudly denunciatory in respect to all Christians and ministers who are not swallowed up, as they are, in that particular branch of reform. They go up and down through the Churches lecturing, making their particular topic a test question, and measuring every thing and every body by the importance they attach to the particular branch of reform in which they are engaged.

To them it appears that no body else is doing any good--that nothing else is at the present time of much importance, and that little or nothing can be done for the salvation of the world, until that particular branch of reform is perfected. These brethren seem not at all aware of the state of mind in which they are. They seem not to consider that they have so long dwelt upon the bearings and influence of one branch of reform, that it has in their mind grown out of all proportion as compared with other branches of Christian reform.

I beseech you, brethren, take heed lest you come to be among the number of those of whom I am speaking. Do not understand me as speaking against agencies or agents, for no doubt these agencies need to be prosecuted. But I would earnestly warn you against being drawn away from the whole work of the ministry to engage in them, without a manifest call from God. And if you should be called to engage in them, I beseech and warn you to be on your guard against the tendencies of which I have been speaking.

Without being at all aware of it, many of the lecturers of different societies have diffused a very unhappy spirit through the Churches, and wherever they go, they seem to plant a root of bitterness, and to get up a kind of faction, and to embitter the minds of certain classes of professors of religion against the Church in general, and the ministry, and in short against all who have not a single eye to that particular department of reform.

9. Take heed to yourselves that you are studious men. Do not suppose that you can run about without study or reflection during the week--that you can engage in light reading and frivolous conversation, and, for any length of time, interest your people on the Sabbath. You must be deeply studious men. You must think much, think correctly, see that you are master of every subject, before you present it to your people. By this I do not intend that you should neglect pastoral visitation, and other parochial duties than preaching, but I do mean that your people will never be truly benefited by your taking so much time for visitation or other duties as to neglect thorough study. A good minister must be a student.

10. Take heed that you do not encumber yourselves with unnecessary cares. Take upon your hands no business or labor that shall interfere with your high calling. Many ministers, no doubt, with the sincerest intention to do good suffer many responsibilities to be thrown upon them which greatly hinder them in the main work to which they are called. They will undertake to board and prepare your men for college, or engage in society matters, and allow the lay brethren to throw upon them many things of a secular nature, to which the laymen should themselves attend, which greatly hinder them in the work of the ministry. Indeed some ministers seem to take upon them the work not only of the ministry, but also of the elders, in looking after the delinquents in the Church--of the deacons in looking after the poor--of the sexton in seeing that the bell is rung and the house in order for worship. In short, some ministers seem to be minister, and session, and deacon, and chorister, and sexton, and trustees, and almost every thing else that has any care and responsibility attached to it. In this way they wear themselves out with doing a little of every thing and yet nothing to any advantage.

11. Take heed that you do not encumber yourselves with an unsuitable companion for a wife. See that you do not unite yourself with a worldly woman, one who is fond of dress, or property, or worldly society. If you do, she will greatly injure your influence, if not entirely ruin it.

12. Take heed that you do not get an ambitious wife. If you do, she will never prevail for you in prayer. She will be constantly instituting comparisons between you and other ministers--will be envious and jealous lest other ministers should be more highly esteemed than you are--and will be a trouble to you, a disgrace to herself, and to the Church of God. If you have an occasion to employ an evangelist to labor with you, she will be right in the way. She will be on tiptoe, lest you should be thrown into the shade, and the evangelist should be exalted above you in the estimation of the people. If his labors should be blessed among your people, she will be thrown into an agony, lest it should be thought that her husband is not the great instrument of performing the work.

13. Take heed that you do not get a self-indulging wife, one who is afraid of self-denial, afraid of being poor, afraid to work herself or have you work hard for the good of souls. Some minister's wives are always afraid of trouble, of labor, of poverty, of care--so much afraid their husbands will over work themselves as to be always right in their way. Take heed to yourselves that you become not united to such a woman as this.

14. Take heed that you do not get an indiscreet wife. By indiscretion I mean imprudence. Many women as well as many men, seem to lack common sense as to what and when they should speak. Indiscretion in a minister's wife is often a source of much trouble in a congregation. Should the providence of God lead you to marry, choose a wife who is naturally discreet and heedful of the use of her tongue.

15. Take heed that you do not get an incompetent wife--one whose education is in any respect so defective as to be an unsuitable companion for you. By education here, I mean not only school learning, but let her be also what a wife and a housekeeper needs to be.

16. And above all take heed that you do not get a woman of superficial piety. The wife of a faithful minister will naturally have great trials. In a world like this, a faithful minister must meet with great opposition. And from the Church, in its present state, he may expect opposition, as well as from the world. His wife must share it with him. Take heed then, brethren, that you obtain a wife for whom grace has done so much that she can stand the shock of opposition without being intimidated on the one hand and made angry on the other.

17. Take heed that you have a thorough experience of the power of the gospel in your own souls. Do not preach Christ by hearsay. Your preaching will take very much of the character of your Christian experience. If you have but very superficial experience of the grace of the gospel, you will, almost of course, preach a very superficial gospel. If you know but little of the power of Christ working in you, you will convey to your hearers but a faint impression of what the gospel really is. I have long been convinced that the grand defect of the Christian ministry in the present day, is the want of a thorough Christian experience. They judge of the power of the gospel by their own Christian experience. Their opinions and preaching manifest the most deplorable deficiency in this respect. Much that has been written and said by them of late against the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, shows that they have very little experience of the power of Christ working in them to deliver them from sin. I say it with the utmost kindness, yet for the cause of truth, and the benefit of the Church, it ought and must be said, that, the great difficulty in the way of ministers understanding, and believing the doctrine of entire sanctification lies

in a defective Christian experience. When they come to be filled with the Spirit, they will soon get over their philosophical difficulties and embrace and declare the truth upon this subject as it is. But with so superficial a Christian experience, as many of them manifestly have, they will neither understand nor believe it, and should they embrace it as a matter of theory, it might only bring them into deeper condemnation, without benefiting the Church or themselves. Ministers that preach Christ from hearsay, as a mere matter of learning, without a thorough experience of the power of the cross to deliver from sin, often remind me of the seven sons of Sceva the priest, who undertook to exorcise evil spirits 'in the name of Christ whom Paul preacheth.' 'And the evil spirit cried out, Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are ye?' 'And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.' So ministers are easily overcome by Satan, who know little of Christ except by hearsay. Therefore take heed to yourselves, brethren, that you have a thorough and personal acquaintance with Christ and the power of his gospel.

18. Take heed that you realize your dependence upon Christ. Remember that He has expressly told you, that except you abide in Him, you can do nothing, but that if you abide in Him you shall bring forth much fruit. Do not depend upon your education, upon your eloquence, or the strength of your intellect. Remember that the eloquence of an angel would not effect the conversion of a sinner nor the sanctification of a saint. And did you possess the intellectual endowments of an angel, without Christ you could do nothing. Take heed that your dependence upon Christ be not a mere matter of theory, without being realized and felt by you. Let it be with you a settled matter of fact, as much as it is that you cannot rise and fly to the clouds, that without the power of Christ dwelling in you and working through you, you will never convert a sinner nor effect the sanctification of a saint. Let this be so thoroughly settled in your mind, that you no more expect to live without Christ constantly dwelling in you, than you expect to live without your daily food--that you make no more calculation upon neglecting Christ or upon doing any thing without Him, than you would calculate upon living without your daily food.

19. Take heed to yourselves that you do not neglect much secret prayer. Unless you are in the habit of coming to your people from the mount of communion, you will do them little or no good. Pray much or you will cease to pray at all. Pray honestly. Pray earnestly. Pray perseveringly. Pray in faith. Pray effectually. Pray in the Spirit. Pray without ceasing, or you will cease to pray at all.

20. Take diligent heed that you grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Remember, that in every stage of your ministry you are in danger of doing this. If you grieve away the Holy Spirit, you are a withered branch, a cast away minister--laid aside as useless, and only live to swell the number of unprofitable ministers who are seeking in vain for a field of labor, and inquiring in vain for a vacant Church, and who are so manifestly without the Spirit of God, that were all the Churches in the land vacant they would still be out of employment. Were this the place, I might enumerate the many ways in which, as ministers, you are in danger of grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and coming into such an attitude that, as a minister, God must disown you. I can only mention in general this--take heed that you do not array yourselves against any branch of Christian reform. If you do the Spirit of God will leave you. It matters little with what pretense you do this, if so be that light is within your reach. If you array yourselves against the efforts of those who are endeavoring to reform the Church and the world, or stand aloof and refuse to come up to their help, you may expect the Spirit of Christ to leave you. So well is this settled in my own mind, from my observation of facts, that when I see a minister get on to the wrong side, and array himself against any branch of Christian reform, I expect of course that his ministry will be barren, and his soul in darkness whether he knows it or not, until he repents and lays his hand to the work of universal reform.

21. Take heed that you rule your own spirit. 'He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.' If a minister cannot govern his temper he is like[ly] to do very little good in the world. And it is the curse of many ministers that they give way to passion and often manifest ill temper. Take heed that in this respect you are not in fault.

22. Take heed to yourselves that you govern your tongue. Few things in the world do so much mischief as an unbridled tongue in the mouth of a minister.

23. Take heed to yourselves that you preach out of the pulpit as well as in it--that your whole demeanor out of the pulpit shows that you mean what you say when you are in the pulpit. If this be not so, though you may be called a grand preacher, you will, nevertheless, be a bad minister. It has been said of some ministers that when they were in the pulpit it seemed as if they never ought to go out, and when they were out it seemed as if they never ought to go into the pulpit.

24. Take heed that you be in all things an example to the flock. Do not content yourselves with preaching well, but do well whatever you do. Always be punctual to the hour and moment of your appointments. Never be late at meeting. Never be behind hand with any of your engagements. If you have a house, a garden, a barn, a fence, or whatever you have, see that it is in order just as it ought to be.

25. Take heed to yourselves that you seek not ecclesiastical power. Be not among those who are endeavoring to concentrate ecclesiastical power, and who through the influence of Presbyteries, Synods, Associations, Consociations, Conferences, and Councils, are endeavoring to "lord it over God's heritage." Such ministers are a curse to the Church. Where do you know one of them who possesses the Holy Ghost? Not one of this class seems to be promoting the peace and purity of the Church, or the salvation of the impenitent. Now mark me, brethren, avoid this or you will grieve away the Holy Spirit. It is no doubt one of the reasons why ministers of the present day are so barren. There are so many efforts among them to grasp at ecclesiastical power. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you keep clear of this shameful business.

26. Take heed to yourselves that you avoid schisms. You know, brethren, that the Church is bleeding at every pore under the influence of sectarianism, and what is most shocking and revolting is, that ministers are shamelessly apologizing for sectarianism, and even glory in promoting it. Presbyterians exhorting their people to be consistent Presbyterians, and Baptist ministers exhorting their brethren to be consistent Baptists, and Methodist ministers exhorting theirs to be consistent Methodists. Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Papists, engaged in the same work, while comparatively little is said to induce them to be consistent Christians.

27. Take heed that you be not vain. Vanity is a besetting sin of many persons. And scarcely any thing is more disgusting or wicked than vanity in a minister. And it is wonderful to witness the extent to which even ministers sometimes indulge vanity. Their affected pronunciation--their mincing--their gestures--their attitudes--and the whole costume of their services and pulpit address, as well as their manners and habits out of the pulpit, testify to their insufferable vanity. Their egotism and constant efforts in seeking adulation and flattery, in angling for compliments upon their services and talents, all conspire to render them odious and ridiculous in the estimation of thinking men, and of God.

28. Take heed to yourselves that you be not flattered. It is the sin and curse of many churches and congregations, that they spoil their ministers by flattering them. They compliment them about their splendid sermons, their profound learning, their great eloquence, and even sometimes go so far as to

compliment them on account of the elegance of their personal appearance. Ministers are often very little aware how much they are influenced by such things. I have sometimes thought it was the policy of the devil, and have not been without my fears, that it was the policy of certain leading members of churches and congregations, to tie the hands of ministers by flattering them. Every one knows how difficult it is to willingly disoblige or thoroughly to reprove or rebuke one who has been so much our friend as to often express his approbation of what we have said or done. We come insensibly to feel that the approbation of such a one is of great importance to us, and to have an eye in what we say and do to the manner in which it will affect him. Now, brethren, if you suffer yourselves to be flattered by your hearers, you will find yourselves unwilling to deal faithfully with them. They will soon come to be your dictators, and to lay down rules by which you shall preach, instead of your laying down rules by which they shall live. They will become your masters instead of your spiritual pupils. Do not forget that you are much more in danger of being overcome by flattery, than you are of being put down by direct opposition. Flattering ministers is especially the sin of city churches.

29. Take heed to yourselves that you do not become enslaved by the influence of your ministerial brethren. I have, for years, beheld, with great pain, the growing influence of ministers over each other, and have often thought that I knew of no set of men so servile in this respect as ministers. They form themselves into ecclesiastical bodies, and then either flatter or brow-beat each other until one or two leading minds, in an ecclesiastical body, will lord it over all the rest, and thus there is a Pope in nearly every ecclesiastical body in the land--one, who, by flattery or abuse, or great talents, will come to have an almost unlimited influence over his ministerial brethren. Where there happen to be two or more such minds in an ecclesiastical body, it will almost infallibly work division, and the body will either be torn asunder, or live in a state of almost perpetual jangling.

Ministers will often flatter each other in such a manner as to become exceedingly afraid of displeasing each other. It is becoming common for the ministers in a city, town, or region of country, so to unite themselves together, as that one dares not adopt any measure, preach any doctrine, or pursue any course, without the consent of his brethren. And sometimes they really seem to be slaves to each other, and not to have the moral courage, to act independently upon any question of moment. Let me beseech you by the mercies of God that you avoid all such things as these.

30. Take heed to yourselves that you become not censorious. Censoriousness, when viewed as a state of mind, is a disposition to censure and impute blame to persons. It often manifests itself in an unwillingness to receive any such explanation of an action or course of conduct, as will show that there was no wicked intention in it. I have observed that many persons who complain much of the censoriousness of others, are themselves exceedingly censorious--will take up an evil report of a brother, and publish it, and afterwards refuse to receive and publish an explanation, being manifestly intent upon fastening blame upon one, whose conduct they have misrepresented. A censorious spirit often manifests itself also in a disposition unnecessarily to publish a brother's faults; also, in a harsh and intolerant manner of speaking of others. I beseech you to take heed to yourselves in this respect, lest you grieve the Spirit of God, and render yourselves useless as ministers.

31. Take heed to yourselves that you preserve a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. If in any thing you violate your conscience, you, in that proportion, lose your confidence in God, and in yourself, cover your own face with confusion, and tie your own hands, so as to prevent your fearlessly attacking sin in high and low places.

32. Take heed that you cultivate a tender conscience. Your preaching will be of a very superficial character so far as reaching the hearts of men is concerned, unless you cultivate a tender conscience. If your own conscience is asleep, you will be very ignorant of your own spiritual state and of the spiritual state of those around you. You will be blind to the existence of many forms of sin, both in yourself, and in those to whom you preach. But if you cultivate and secure a tender conscience, it will render you sharp sighted in respect to sin both in yourself and others, and tend to give that searching character to your preaching, which is imperiously demanded by the state of the Church and of the world.

33. Take heed that you fear not man, whose breath is in his nostrils, who, when he has killed the body, has no more that he can do. But fear God, who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him. Many ministers are afraid of men, and dare not embrace nor preach the whole truth, without seeming to be at all aware of their being in this state of mind. They seem to think themselves fearless in the discharge of their duty, when, at the same time, it would throw them into a desperate agony, to know that in rebuking sin, they had offended certain men in their congregation. Insomuch that they would set about immediately qualifying, explaining away, and apologizing for what they had done until they had neutralized the truth, rather than offend man.

34. Take heed to yourselves that you be not rash. Some ministers are exceedingly rash and hasty in forming and expressing their views and opinions on almost every subject--are precipitate and unguarded in their measures--are stiff and stubborn in the positions they take, and can never be long employed as ministers in any one place. They will almost always leave their people in a divided state. This may be true of a minister who thoroughly does his duty, and nothing more. But it may be, and often is owing to downright rashness and indiscretion in the minister. Not long since, a young minister observed to an elderly one, that "he was determined to drive the devil out of the Church to which he was preaching." The aged man replied, "See that you do not attempt to cast out the devil through Beelzebub the prince of devils, and act yourself like the devil in banishing him from your place." Ministers should always take heed that in opposing [S]atan, they do not come to possess his spirit.

35. Take heed that you hold not the truth in unrighteousness. Remember that you do this whenever you preach what you do not practice. Remember that the 'wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' They hold the truth in unrighteousness, who know what it is, hold and admit, yet do not obey it. And no man is more guilty in doing this, and more sure to have the wrath of God revealed against him from heaven, than the minister, who preaches the gospel and does not obey it.

36. Take heed to yourselves that you hold your entire being in a state of entire and universal consecration to God. Remember that you are called to the work of the ministry. You are about to be set apart by the laying on of hands, and now request us to ordain you to this work in the name of Jesus Christ. And now take heed to yourselves that when we consecrate you to this work, that you consent with all your heart, and here consecrate your whole being to the work. And take heed that you do not at any time desecrate from this service, a precious moment of your existence. Remember that you are God's ministers, set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. And what is more than all, by the Holy Ghost, to the work of the 'ministry of reconciliation.'

II. In what respects you are to take heed to the doctrine.

1. Be sure you have a thoroughly developed idea of what constitutes true religion. Nothing is more common than for ministers and people to make a mistake here. It is truly astonishing to see how almost universal the opinion seems to be, that religion consists in emotion and mere feeling, instead of consisting in disinterested good willing. Where ministers preach, and pray, and talk, as if they supposed religion to consist in mere feeling, they preach any thing but the gospel, and give any thing but a correct representation of what constitutes true religion. The thing I wish to impress upon you here, my brethren, is that you have in your own mind, a correct, and thoroughly developed idea of what true religion is, as distinguished from every thing else--that it consists in the supreme ultimate intention of the mind, and not at all in feelings or outward actions, only as these result necessarily from right intention or good willing.

2. Take heed that you thoroughly develop this idea in your hearers. Observe narrowly their daily walk, to see whether they are benevolent. Mark their prayers and conversation, that you may understand whether they distinguish between a religion of feeling and of outward action, and a religion of supremely disinterested benevolent intention. See whether their religion is a religion of sound principle, or consists only in the occasional effervescence of excited feeling. I am more and more astonished every year, to find how few professors understand what true religion is.

3. See that you do not LOSE the idea of true religion, nor suffer those to whom you preach to lose it. Remember that selfishness is so rife in this world, and there are so many forms of selfishness that look very much like benevolence, that persons are in the utmost danger of letting slip the true idea of religion.

4. Take heed that you understand the whole gospel. Do not confound it with the law, nor suppose that it does not embrace the law. I beseech you to understand thoroughly the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, and keep these distinct in your own minds. Understand what is intended by a religion of works, and what is intended by grace. Never confound these in your preaching or conversation. Never leave this distinction out of view; for if you do, you will promote legality on the one hand, or antinomianism on the other.

5. Take heed that you preach the whole doctrine of the gospel. Many ministers seem able to preach sinners under conviction, but can go no farther. They can make sinners see their sins, but cannot tell them how to get rid of them. Others still can tell sinners how they may be forgiven, but cannot tell Christians how they may be sanctified. And here let me say, brethren, that with very few exceptions, the standard of religious experience in your congregations, will not be above your own standard. Here and there the Spirit of God may lead a praying soul into regions so far above you, as to be a source of annoyance to you. You will look upon them to be verging strongly to ultraism, and to be a little inclined to derangement. But as a general thing, the members of your churches will not rise above your standard. If you are yourselves spiritual children, dwarfs, or skeletons, so they will be. You must be qualified to preach to them the higher doctrines of grace, and to preach them from your own experience, or you can do them comparatively little good.

6. Take heed that you live out the doctrine of Christ. Remember that the doctrine of the gospel is not taught merely in the pulpit. It is often most emphatically and impressively taught out of the pulpit by the temper, spirit, and life of a disciple.

7. Take heed to the doctrine that you avoid looseness in your statements. Many persons seem to consider but very little the importance of a sound and strictly correct phraseology in stating the truths of the gospel. Loose, unguarded statements, and expressions in prayer, preaching, and conversation, will soon be

instrumental in begetting in the minds of your hearers a loose indefinite and unintelligent manner of thinking, and consequently a lax manner of living. You cannot be too much on your guard in this respect. On all doctrinal questions, be sure to be strictly accurate in the use of such language, as will convey exactly the right idea of the doctrine, and then sound your hearers in every way within your power, to see whether they get the true meaning of your language. Criticise their prayers and phraseology, if you perceive it to be loose and indefinite, until you correct it. Remember that your great business is to develop correct ideas of religion in the minds of your hearers. This also is the work of the Holy Ghost, and you can be no farther a co-worker with Him, than you use 'sound speech,' and are correct in your statements of the doctrine of the gospel. It is amazing that many divines, who call themselves New School, after all, consent to use, and suffer their people to use Old School phraseology. They often preach, and talk, and pray, as if they supposed human nature to be in itself sinful, and regeneration to be a physical change, and wrought by a physical influence. They hold the doctrine of ability, and yet preach, talk, and pray, as if they believed in inability. Indeed, many of them seem to study to use Old School phraseology, lest they should shock the prejudices of the people, when in truth they do not mean by this phraseology what they are understood to mean, and what the language naturally imports. It is wonderful that many ministers are even contending for the use of Old School phraseology, while they reject Old School opinions. They seem to expect to correct the opinions of men, while they studiously use a phraseology, the meaning of which has become stereotyped in the minds of the people. They will find it forever impracticable to correct the opinions of the people only as they correct their phraseology. They must use different words or they will not convey different ideas.

[8.] 7. See that you understand the true spirit and meaning of the law of God. The real intent and meaning of the law is that every interest is to be regarded and treated by every moral being according to its relative value, so far as that value can be understood by the mind. Now, brethren, remember that this is the rule and the only rule of action for moral beings. It is the sum of the law of God. It is of universal application. The rule is plain, and your business is to make an application of it, and to show how it is to be applied to every concern of life. Remember, brethren, there is a vast want of practical preaching. You may preach faith and repentance, and repentance and faith, sanctification, consecration, or whatever you choose to call it, but unless you descend in the detail, into the practical application of the law of love to all the concerns of life, you will leave your people after all to blunder on under the influence of many gross and injurious mistakes.

[9.] 8. Take heed, that you do not leave out of view either the rule or law of love in all its detailed applications to the concerns of life on the one hand, nor on the other, the efficient influence by which obedience to this rule is to be secured. If you present Christ, and leave the law out of view, you will promote antinomianism. If you present the law and leave Christ out of view, you will promote legality. These two great truths must always be presented in such a manner, as to keep thorough possession of the mind. The law is the rule of life, but it is weak and inefficient in itself in promoting obedience. The mind is able to apprehend and perceive the meaning, propriety, and importance of the law; but its motives are inadequate to secure in man, since the fall, the love which is required. The love of Christ, his Atonement, the divine influence of the Spirit, secured to man through the Atonement, are the great and efficient truths, that are able to secure obedience. Christ as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of the soul, must constantly be held up, as the indispensable means of securing conformity to the law of love.

[10.] 9. See that you preach a full gospel. Do not satisfy yourselves, my brethren, with the mere conversion of sinners. Aim at the entire and universal sanctification of saints. Preach a gospel suited to

this end. Show what is 'the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the love of God,' and that He 'is able and willing to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.' Preach not justification merely, but sanctification, in all its length and breadth.

You ought to understand, brethren, that the doctrine of justification by faith, as it is now generally held by the orthodox churches, is a modern invention, and was unknown to the ancient church. It is this, that men are justified by faith in Christ, while they are not sanctified. In other words, that faith is so substituted for holiness, that they are accounted as righteous, while in fact they are not so, but are living in the daily and hourly practice of sin.

The doctrine of the primitive Church was, that men are made righteous by faith. In other words, that they are sanctified, or made holy, by faith, and that they were justified only so far as they were made just by the grace of God through faith. Now this must be the truth. And take heed to the doctrine, brethren, that you do not convey the idea, that men are justified while living in sin.

III. What is intended by continuing in them.

The Apostle says, 'Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.'

By continuing in them is meant, the continuing to take heed to yourself and your doctrine. Do not take it for granted, that if for some time, or for any length of time, God shall be with and bless you, that He will therefore always do so, whether you continue to take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, or not. Remember that if at any time, or under any pretense, you neglect to take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, to continue in them, He will cast you off. 'Therefore be not high-minded, but fear.'

IV. Show what is intended by the phrase, 'In so doing, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.'

1. This may be understood either as a declaration or a promise. It may be regarded either as a declaration, that those who take heed to themselves and their doctrine, shall save both themselves and their hearers, or as a promise that upon this condition, such shall be the result.

2. The language is general and not universal. We are not to understand the Apostle as affirming strictly a universal truth, that all who hear such a minister shall be saved. Judas listened to Christ, who certainly took heed to Himself and to his doctrine, and yet he was not saved. But H[h]e lays it down as a general truth, that upon this condition ministers shall not only be saved themselves, but shall be instrumental in saving their hearers. There may be exceptions among their hearers, as there was one exception among the immediate disciples of Christ. But these shall only be exceptions to a general rule.

3. This passage of scripture is the faithful minister's strong hold. It is his consolation amid his trials, his strength and his support. Let him but persevere in the fulfillment of the condition, and the result is as certain as the truth of God. Here let me say, there is often a great mistake among ministers, on account of our limited views of things. Sometimes, in inculcating the truths of the gospel, it seems to us for a time, that the people are waxing worse and worse. We become greatly discouraged and are ready to abandon the field, as if the people were given up of God, when a more extended and correct view of the subject would show, that at the moment when things looked most dark and discouraging, the way is rapidly preparing for a general and glorious change among the people. Be not stumbled by appearances. Keep

hold of this and kindred promises, and if the people wax rebellious and resist the truth, hold on in mighty prayer and effort, and press them still the more, and you will see the salvation of God. I have often seen great changes take place in a most wonderful manner in the midst of the most discouraging appearances, and doubt not that ministers often quit the field in despair, just at the time when mighty faith and prayer would have secured the blessing.

REMARKS.

1. Remember that you are to exercise faith in this and kindred promises--to expect the salvation of your hearers as much as your own salvation--to plead the promise of God in respect to them, as well as in respect to yourselves.
2. Always remember the condition upon which this and other promises are given. You are to believe the promise, as a universal condition, and fulfill whatever other conditions may be expressed or implied. In this case you are not only to believe the promise, but remember that you are to take heed to yourself, and to your doctrine.
3. If you neglect either condition, you will fail. If you take heed to yourself, and do not take heed to your doctrine; or if you take heed to the doctrine, and do not take heed to yourself, or should you do both these, and still disbelieve the promise, in either case, the end will fail, and the blame will be your own.
4. How much it is to the interest of any people that a minister should comply with these conditions, and how unjust the minister is to the people, as well as rebellious against God, and injurious to his own soul, if he neglect to take heed to himself and to the doctrine.
5. What an infinite blessing a true and faithful minister is to a people. From what has been said, it is plain, that as a general truth, the minister has it within his power, not only to secure his own salvation, but also the salvation of those that hear him. What a blessing, then, to any people to have a faithful minister.
6. We see what to think of those ministers who are not instrumental in saving their people. I heard of one minister, whose preaching was so manifestly and uniformly unsuccessful in winning souls to Christ, that it is said he came to the conclusion that he was commissioned to prepare souls for hell, and not for heaven. To meet his case, this text should read, 'Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them, for in so doing, thou shalt damn both thyself and those that hear thee.'

It is not intended by what I have said, to make the impression that the most faithful ministers can save their hearers without their consent, or that God will or can convert them if they refuse to be converted. But God knows what can be accomplished by the use of moral means. And when He has promised to secure an end upon a certain condition, we may rest assured, that upon the fulfillment of that condition, He knows Himself to be able to accomplish it. Let it be then, your abiding consolation, that if you take heed to yourselves, and to your doctrine, and continue in them, you shall save both yourselves and them that hear you.

* Original had "you you" in error.

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