

The Life of the



Mr. GOODRICH'S
S E R M O N
A T T H E
O R D I N A T I O N
O F
Mr. Roger Newton.



*The Duty of GOSPEL-MINISTERS, to
take Heed to themselves, and their Flock.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
O R D I N A T I O N

O F T H E R E V E R E N D

Mr. ROGER NEWTON,

At GREENFIELD, Nov. 18, 1761.

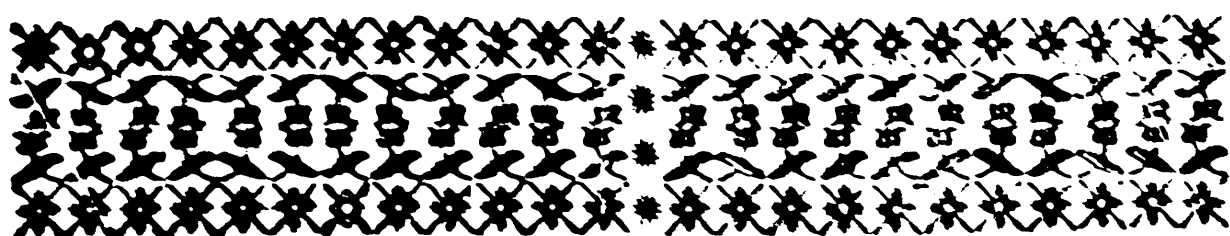
By ELIZUR GOODRICH, A.M.

Pastor of the Church of Christ in DURHAM.

COL. IV. 17. *Say to Archippus, Take Heed to the Ministry,
which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

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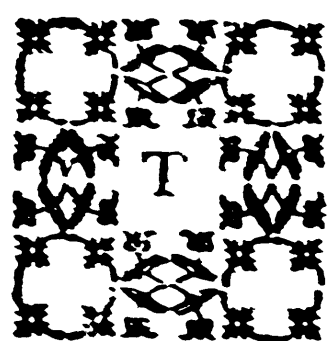
A N

ORDINATION SERMON.



A C T S XX. 28.

Take Heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.



THE Office and Work of the Gospel-Ministry, is by the Appointment and Institution of JESUS CHRIST, the great King and Head of the Church. And as this Office was instituted by the LORD JESUS at first ; so it is his Pleasure that there be a standing Gospel-Ministry, with which he hath promised his Presence, to the End of the World. Hence the same Qualifications required of, and Duties enjoined upon the first Ministers of the Gospel as Overseers in the Church, are necessary to those who are now introduced into this sacred Employment : in the full and faithful Discharge of which, it is

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is of equal Importance to us, who are honoured with this holy Office, as it was to the Elders of *Epheſus*, diligently to mark, and carefully comply with the Exhortation of *St. Paul*, in the Words which have been now read. *Take Heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.*

THE whole of the Apostle's Discourse with the *Epheſian* Elders, who in the Text are called *Bishops*, is peculiarly instructive and engaging; but the Limits of a Discourse on this Occasion, confine me to the Consideration of that Part, which hath been read; wherein *St. Paul* represents to the Ministers of the Gospel their Duty, both with Respect to themselves, and to the People of their Charge.

THE Exhortation is contained in those Words, *Take Heed*; which implies that unwearied Care and Diligence, unshaken Faithfulness and persevering Constancy, which are necessary to the Christian Minister, both in Regard to himself, and the Souls committed to his Care; especially in *feeding* the Church of God, teaching and guiding all the *Flock* in the Way of Salvation.

To enforce a Compliance with this Exhortation upon the Ministers of the Gospel, thus to *take Heed*, the Apostle useth such Arguments as these—Their Engagement and Relation; being by Office *Overseers* of the *Flock*—The Excellency and Authority of that divine PERSON, who calls, and appoints them to this Business; which is the HOLY GHOST, who made them *Overseers*:—The Dignity and Worth of the Object committed to their Charge: It is the most honourable and excellent Society in the World—the *Flock* of CHRIST, the *Church* of God:—and lastly the tender Love and Concern, which the Lord Jesus, that good Shepherd,

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Shepherd, hath manifested unto his chosen People, in the Price he paid for their Ransom : this was his own *Blood*—a Ransom infinitely meritorious and sufficient, as he was, not only Man, but also truly God. These Arguments, which the Apostle so closely joins together, should have a powerful Influence on all, who undertake the sacred Office of the Gospel-Ministry, *to take Heed* to themselves, and to all the *Flock*, in the whole of their pastoral Work. Not to touch upon those Controversies which are connected with some of the Terms used in this Exhortation ; nor stand to collect the several Doctrines contained in the Text, I shall endeavour to shew,

I. *WHAT it is for the Ministers of the Gospel to take Heed to themselves.*

II. *How, as Pastors and Overseers of the Churches, they are to take Heed to all the Flock, and feed the Church of God.* And,

III. *I shall endeavour to enforce the Exhortation by the Motives and Arguments suggested to our Minds in the Words of the Text.*

I am to shew,

I. *How the Ministers of the Gospel are to take Heed to themselves.*

THE Charge given to Ministers is solemn and weighty ; their Work and Business is great and difficult ; the End of their Ministrations is noble and glorious : and nothing less than their own everlasting Interests, as well as of Multitudes, may depend on the Manner, in which they discharge the Work they are engaged in. A serious Sense of these Things, will excite them in the first Place to take Heed to themselves, that they

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be found approved of God, and faithful to their own Souls, and the Souls of others. Particularly,

1. *A Minister of the Gospel, who watches for the Souls of others, must take Heed to himself, that there be the Reality, Life and Power of Religion in his own Soul; lest when he hath preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away.*

INDEED the *Being* of a Minister, and the *Validity* of his Gospel Administrations, do not depend on his internal gracious Character; otherwise we never could know whom to esteem as Ministers of the Gospel, without that Gift of discerning of Spirits, which was peculiar to some in the primitive Age of Christianity, and which hath long since ceased, with the other miraculous Powers. Nor doth the Efficacy of God's Word preached, arise from the secret Intentions of those who dispense it. We may not so limit the HOLY ONE of Israel, as to imagine it impossible, for him to improve the Ministrations of unsanctified Men for the Conversion of others, or the Edification of his own People: or that he never doth make them a Means of dispensing that saving Good to others, of which they may be destitute themselves. On the other Hand, how often have the most faithful Occasion to adopt the Prophet's Complaint, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain*; so that it is their only Support, and Comfort, which is added:—*Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the Eyes of the LORD, and my GOD shall be my Strength*, Isaiah 49. 4, 5. This then is a Matter we must leave with the divine Sovereignty.

HOWEVER this be the Case, yet nevertheless it is, even in Regard to an hopeful Prospect of Success, of high Importance that a Minister of the Gospel be truly a gracious Person. God is pleased to use Means,
and

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and Instruments in fulfilling the Purposes of his Grace to the Souls of Men: now can it be expected that they are as likely to obtain Success, whose hearts are not engaged in the Work, as those, who from a true Love to the Lord Jesus, approve themselves faithful to him that sent them, and to the Souls of their People? Can such as are destitute of the Love of CHRIST, and are only serving themselves, expect so much of his Presence to assist and direct them, to bless and succeed their Labours, as those who truly aim at the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their fellow Men?

BUT should God in the Exercise of his sovereign Grace, bless the Ministry of unsanctified Persons for the Salvation of others; yet how dreadful to be cast away themselves? The Reality, Life and Power of Religion in their own Hearts, are absolutely necessary to their being approved of God, so as to receive the Rewards of faithful Servants. For what other Principle, besides of true Love to God, and the Souls of Men, can preserve from the Danger of Unfaithfulness, and carry through all the Self-Denial, painful Labour, and watchful Diligence that are necessary to the Discharge of the various Duties of the Gospel-Ministry? As then it is of such infinite Importance to their Acceptance with God, and the approving themselves faithful to him, who trieth the Heart, that Ministers be holy and gracious Persons, 'tis in the first Place necessary, that they take Heed, lest they be void of that saving Grace of God, which they offer to others, and utter Strangers to the effectual Workings, and powerful Influences of that glorious Gospel they preach. Oh! How infinitely doth it concern their own Souls, that they be Men of Godliness!—How highly necessary to the faithful and painful Discharge of their Duty to the Souls of others, that they be converted to God, by the Power of divine Grace,

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and become experimentally, as well as doctrinally, acquainted with the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST : Then there will be a more hopeful Prospect of their being improved by God, as successful Instruments of convincing, and converting Sinners, from the Power of Sin and Satan, unto the living and true God ; and of building them up in Comfort, and Holiness, through Faith, unto everlasting Salvation.

2. *A Minister of CHRIST must take Heed to his Conversation, that it be according to the Gospel, and an Example to the Flock.*

A Minister of the Gospel is certainly under the highest Obligation, not only to believe, but to practise what he preacheth to others. He must take Heed that he contradict not in his Behaviour, those holy Rules of the Gospel ; the Observation of which, he inculcates on his Hearers, as ornamental to a Christian Profession, and the Way to everlasting Blessedness. Otherwise he becomes justly exposed to that severe Reproof of the Apostle, Rom. 2. 21—23. *Then therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? thou that preachest a Man should not Steal, dost thou Steal ? thou that sayest a Man should not commit Adultery, dost thou commit Adultery ? thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacrilege ? thou that makest thy Boast of the Law, through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou GOD ?* Holiness of Life is a necessary Fruit of Holiness of Heart. 'Tis then of the last Importance, in Order that we may approve ourselves as faithful Ministers of the New-Testament. God never saved a Man because he was a Preacher ; nor because he was an able Preacher, and furnished with many Accomplishments and Endowments, so as to shine bright in the Eyes of others ; nor yet, which is more, because he was a successful Preacher, and a Means of the Conversion of others. He must also be a justified
and

and sanctified Person, and from a Principle of Faith and Love in his Heart, be holy in his Life, and faithful in his Work.

BESIDES, 'Tis of Importance that a Minister take Heed to his Life and Conversation, because he is set as an Example to his People. The Eyes of all will be more upon him, than upon others. And how can he expect that they should think him serious, in warning them against those Vices, he himself lives in; or in perswading them to those Duties and Virtues, he constantly neglects. There is then a peculiar and indispensable Obligation on a Minister of CHRIST, that he take Heed to his Conversation, lest he contradict his own Doctrine. On the contrary, he ought to be an Example of all that is holy, virtuous and praise-worthy. A Man that is not of a blameless and good Behaviour, but on the contrary of a loose and scandalous Conduct, is not fit for a Minister of the Sanctuary. This we learn from the Apostle Paul, who thus describes what ought to be the Character of a Christian Bishop. 1 Tim. 3. 1--3, 7. *This is a true Saying, If a Man desire the Office of a Bishop, he desireth a good Work. A Bishop then must be blameless, the Husband of one Wife, vigilant, sober, of good Behaviour, given to Hospitality, apt to teach; not given to Wine, no Striker, not greedy of filthy Lucre, but patient, not a Braguer, not covetous.—Moreover he must have a good Report of them which are without, lest he fall into Reproach, and the Snare of the Devil.* And as St. Paul thus particularly lays down the Character and Qualification of those, that may be introduced into the Gospel Ministry, so he gives Timothy this solemn Charge, in Respect to his own Behaviour, *Be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* 1 Tim. IV.

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I shall add once more,

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3. *A Minister of the Gospel must take Heed to his Qualifications for the Employment he undertakes, that he be not unfit for it.*

BEFORE he engages in this arduous, and difficult Work, he should seriously consider that CHRIST hath determined the Qualifications, and Furniture, which such ought to have, who are Teachers in his House. This should put the Candidate for the Gospel-Ministry upon a thorough Search and Examination, whether he is so furnished and qualified: lest he presumptuously enter into the Work, without being fitted for it, and so run before he is sent.

Now the Qualifications, which are necessary to the faithful Gospel-Minister, besides real Goodness, strict Virtue, and an exemplary Life, are in general good natural Abilities cultivated by Study, and improved with useful Learning:—An uncommon Degree of Wisdom, and sound Knowledge in the Doctrines of Religion.—A free Utterance, and an Aptness to teach and communicate Knowledge to others:—Much Acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, so as to be able rightly to divide the Word of Truth, and to give to every one his Portion in due Season.—And a Spirit of Courage and Resolution, Prudence and Discretion. All these Qualifications should be united, in Order to render a Man an able and faithful Minister of the New-Testament; and each of them might be further enlarged and intitled upon; but what I shall say, shall be concerning that Prudence and Discretion, which are so serviceable, in the Discharge of every Part of our Work. This is that *Wisdom of the prudent*, which is *to understand his Way*, Prov. XIV. 8. The Wisdom of the Serpent must be joined with the Innocence of the Dove. For the greatest natural Parts cultivated in the best Manner by Study, and improved with the Knowledge of Language, Nature and Religion, joined even to

a sanctified Heart, do not fully qualify for the Ministry, without Prudence how to exercise and use those other excellent Accomplishments, and to conduct aright, with Decency and Dignity in the House of CHRIST. A Minister of the Gospel ought to be acquainted with the various Affections, and Passions of human Nature; to study Men as well as Things, in Order to conduct towards all, suitably to their different Tempers and Circumstances. This will enable him to administer Counsels and Warnings, Reproofs and Encouragements, in a Manner most proper, to promote the spiritual Good of all, with whom he converses. This will give him the Art of maintaining his own Character in Uprightness, and yet of rendering himself amiable and beloved. And thus as far as in him lies, with a good Conscience, he endeavours to please others for their Good, while his highest End is to be approved of the Lord.

Now, as there are so many Things necessary to qualify a Minister for his Work, they ought to take Heed to themselves, that they be not unfit for it. Methinks it must be a Time of the most solemn Concern, and serious Consideration, when one is about to devote himself to this divine and sacred Employment. The Weight, Importance, and Difficulty of the Work will cause a Mind sensible thereof, and of it's own Weakness, to cry out, *who is sufficient for these Things?* and to look to him, with whom is everlasting Strength, to make all Grace abound every Way sufficient for the important Undertaking. And as those, who are entering upon this Work, should, above all Things, be desirous to be approved of God, and look to him for the Preparation of the Sanctuary; so throughout the whole of their Ministry, they must take Heed, that they be not unfit for the special Services they are called to; but give themselves to *Prayer, Study, Reading, and Meditation, that their Preaching may appear unto all Men.*

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I shall pass to consider,

II. How Ministers of the Gospel, as Pastors and Overseers of the Churches, are to take Heed to all the Flock, and feed the Church of God.

By *Flock* in the *Text*, is not meant the *universal Church*, which is but one Flock in Relation to CHRIST the chief Shepherd ; but intends that particular *Church*, or *Churches*, over which these Elders were *Overseers*, or *Bishops*, appointed to teach and guide them, according to the Mind of CHRIST, in the Way to Salvation. The whole Body of Christians is one universal Church, on Earth ; all acknowledging Subjection to CHRIST, the Head and Lawgiver of his People : This large Body is made up of many Members, and distinct particular Churches, each furnished with their own proper Officers, having Power to enjoy all CHRIST's Ordinances. Now, though a Minister of the Gospel be an *Officer* in the universal Church, and *as such*, may act wherever he is regularly called ; yet, as a *fixed Pastor*, he is, in a special Manner, an *Overseer* of that particular Church, which is committed to his Charge. In this Case the Exercise of his Gifts and Guidance is so especially limited to his own People, that he may allow no more of his Help to others, than his own People can spare ; or what the common and mutual Concern which all Ministers and Churches ought to have for one another, demands of him. So that, as the Relation between a Pastor and his Flock, lays the Foundation for their respective Duties, he must be true to his Trust, and they faithful to him, and obey the Directions, which he gives them from the Word of God.

THE Care and Diligence which a Minister must use, is expressed by *taking Heed* ; and the main Work or Business to be done, by *feeding*, or acting as a *Pastor*

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to the Church, containing *all the Flock*, over which he is made an *Overseer*. Here let us consider,

1. *A Minister feeding the Church of CHRIST implies, that he be faithful in preaching the Word of GOD.*

'Tis his Duty, as a faithful Shepherd of the Flock committed to his Care, to feed CHRIST's Sheep, and to feed CHRIST's Lambs: one main Branch of which consists in teaching and instructing them aright concerning the good Ways of the LORD. Now, in all our Preaching, we should ever keep this in View, that the great End and Design of the Gospel, in Subserviency to the Glory of GOD, is the Recovery of fallen Man from the Ruins of his Apostacy from, and Rebellion against GOD; and the bringing perishing Souls to embrace and submit to JESUS CHRIST, as the glorious Author of Salvation to all who believe. In preaching this Gospel, every Minister should observe that Charge contained in 2 Tim. II. 15. *Study to shew thyself approved unto GOD, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* The Word of Truth is the Rule by, and according to which, we must preach; and in our Discourses endeavour to use a Style most suitable to the important Truths we deliver, and not so much consult what fine Things we can say, as how we may most effectually impress the Minds and Consciences of our Hearers with a serious, influential, and abiding Sense of moral, divine and eternal Things. We should always remember our Character, as Ambassadors of CHRIST Jesus: and as all the Lines of Revelation meet, and center in him; so whatever Subjects we treat, it should be with a View, either of bringing perishing Sinners to turn unto GOD by him, or of engaging true Christians to walk worthy of their high Calling, and heavenly Expectations.

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THE Subject-Matter of Preaching, is the *whole Counsel of GOD* : This is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. We are not indeed to set the Principles of Natural Religion in Opposition to that which is revealed, but ought rather to insist on the Dictates of Reason and Nature as fundamental of, and subservient to the Gospel of CHRIST. However, the principal Design of Preaching, is to publish *the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good Things.* Rom. X. 15. The most important Subjects of Gospel Preaching, are such as have the most apt, and effectual Tendency toward the saving Conversion of Sinners ; and the Building them up in true Holiness and Comfort, through Faith unto eternal Salvation. Hence a Minister of the Gospel must inculcate on his Hearers, the Being, Nature, and glorious Perfections of the GREAT GOD, and his supreme and universal Government and Dominion :—The essential and eternal Difference of Right and Wrong, Virtue and Vice ; and the unchangeable Obligation on all moral Beings to be conformed to the divine Law :—The original Glory, Purity and Happiness of Mankind :—The dreadful Estate of Sin and Misery he is brought into by the Fall :—The Importance, Necessity and Truth of the divine Revelation made to us in the holy Scriptures ; and the great Doctrines of revealed Religion therein contained ; such as—the Doctrine of the sacred TRINITY, and the several Parts assign'd to each DIVINE PERSON in the Redemption of Sinners.—How Salvation was purchased by CHRIST, and is applied by the SPIRIT—God's Sovereignty in having Mercy on whom he will have Mercy ; and yet the Necessity and Encouragement there is to all to strive for an Interest in the great Salvation :—The free Justification of a Believer by the Righteousness of CHRIST imputed to him :—The absolute Necessity of spiritual Regeneration, unfeigned Faith in the REDEEMER, evangelical Repentance, Love to God, and
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our Neighbour, an holy Heart and heavenly Life, and Perseverance and Progreſs in every Chriſtian Grace and Virtue, to the End, through the efficacious Influence of that all-powerful AGENT, who *fiſt begins this good Work* in the Soul, and *will perform it until the Day of JESUS CHRIST.* Phil. 1. 6. And finally, the Doctrines of Death and Judgment, the Reſurrection of the Body at the laſt Day, and an eternal State of Rewards and Punishments, aſſigned to every one according to his Works, whereof we have the higheſt Assurance, the Word of God can give, ſhould be repreſented in all their Glory and Terror; to arouſe and alarm Sinners, and engage true Chriſtians to keep in Mind the Day of the Lord, and to conſider what Manner of Perſons they ought to be in all holy Converſation.

IN declaring the Doctrines of Religion, a Miniſter, while he neglects not Things of leſs Weight, muſt inſiſt chiefly on the greateſt, moſt certain and neceſſary Things: Theſe are to be opened with Clearneſs and Evidence, and then applied with Cloſeneſs and Energy. Whatever we preach, it ſhould be with a Deſign to be underſtood, and therefore made plain and eaſy to the Capacities of thoſe who hear us: or elſe how can the Underſtanding be enlightened; the Conſcience awak- ened; the Heart changed; or the Life reformed. 'Tis too much a Sign of Inſincerity, to hide one's Mind under Pretence of revealing it; and purpoſely to uſe ambiguous Expreſſions, when we ſhould be plainly de- claring to our People, the Counſel of God, for the Salvation of their Souls. But though we ſhould de- clare the Counſel of God, *fully* in the whole Extent of it, and *plainly*, ſo as to be thoroughly underſtood; yet we ought to uſe Prudence and Diſcretion, and even ſuch Condeſcention to the Weakneſs of Mankind as, may be beſt calculated to recover them from their Pre- judices, and guide them into the Way of Salvation.

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IN addressing their Hearers, Ministers should carefully adapt their Discourses to their several Conditions and Circumstances, and to take Heed to give every one his Portion in due Season. By the *Terrors of the LORD*, they must persuade Men ; alarm the bold and presumptuous Sinner, and awaken the secure and unsound Professor. Those who are enquiring the Way to *Zion*, with their Faces thitherward, must be directed, and suitably encouraged. And all God's Children, assisted according to their peculiar Wants, and quickened to preserve, and improve their Graces, and to hold out to the End.

UPON the whole, what need have Ministers of the Gospel to take Heed, that they be found faithful in Preaching the Gospel, fully, plainly, and affectionately ; teaching their Flock whatsoever CHRIST hath commanded them ; so as, to be able to address their People in the Words of St. Paul, preceeding the **Text**, even under the solemn Prospect of seeing their Faces no more. *Wherefore I take you to record this Day that I am pure from the Blood of all Men ; For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole Counsel of GOD ?*

II. *A Minister of the Gospel must take Heed in guiding the Flock committed to his Charge, according to the Mind of Christ ; and in administering the Seals of the Covenant.*

A Shepherd guides, and conducts his Flock ; so should a Minister, the People of his Charge. His Business is to *feed the Church* : the original Word is *Poimainein*, which implies, that he discharge the whole Duty of a *Shepherd* : which, besides *feeding* the Flock, shews it also to be his Duty, carefully to *guide*, and *oversee* it. Hence that Exhortation, Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give*

give an Account : that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief ; for that is unprofitable for you. The Care of a Church is weighty ; and often requires the Exercise of Courage and Resolution. Every Part of the Ministers Work, requires Skill, and Prudence : but more especially, how to behave in the House of CHRIST ; to manage, oversee, and guide the Affairs of his Church. What holy Skill is necessary, in preaching the Gospel ; to make plain the Truth, and convince the Hearers ; to let irresistible Light into their Consciences, and fix it there, 'till the Gospel be worked into their Affections and Lives ; 'till their Eyes be opened, and turned from Darkness to Light, and their Hearts from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are sanctified, by Faith that is in CHRIST. Acts xxvi. 18. But though there be such Skill and Care necessary to Preaching ; yet there may be those, who shall be esteemed good Preachers, and yet be greatly defective in guiding and conducting their Flock. Oh ! what holy Prudence, what Meekness, what Humility, what Condescension and Patience ; yet what Zeal, what Courage, what Steadiness. Resolution and Constancy. are requisite, to take the Oversight of a Church ; and so to conduct all Matters, as shall be for the Honour of God, the Advancement of Religion, the Peace and Edification of all the Flock, and the winning those that are without, to come in, and submit to the Orders of CHRIST'S House, and to walk in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless ? 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* But though Ministers must be gentle, meek and patient, yet resolute and undaunted in their Work. 2 Tim. i. 7, 8. *God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear ; but of Power, and of Love, and of a sound Mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord.*—

MINISTERS of the Gospel must likewise go before their People in the Worship of God, to be their Mouths to God in Prayer, and to bless them in the Name of the Lord. They must study how to pray, as well as how to Preach; and take Heed to know their People's Wants and Circumstances, not only that they may adapt their public Discourses thereto, but also lay them before God, in public and private Prayer.

ONCE more; Ministers of CHRIST must take Heed to maintain, and keep up the Discipline of his House, and see that it is exercised in a due Manner; and likewise faithfully to administer the Seals of the Covenant to all such as are qualified to receive them. Oh! what Care and Caution should we use, in all our public Administrations? and especially of those Ordinances wherein there is made a Difference between the clean and unclean, the holy and unholy, that they be so administered as to shew every one his strict Covenant Engagements to be the LORD's; the peculiar Privileges of God's covenant People; and the manifold and infinite Blessings assured, to all his faithful Servants.

3. *A Minister of the Gospel must take Heed to all the Flock, over which he is made an Overseer.*

His first Care must be about the whole; but he is not to rest in public Duties, as if they were all the Duties of his Office. For all the Flock, all the individual Souls committed to his Charge, must be watched over. *This* shews either, that a Church ought not to be larger than what one Pastor can oversee and take Care of; or else that the Number of Pastors should be proportioned to the Largeness of the Flock: For a Minister's Work is not confined to any particular Number of his People, but extends to the whole; and therefore he ought to take Pains, to be acquainted with
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the State of the whole Flock with which he is entrusted. He should endeavour to know their Persons, their Tempers, and their Conversations. This will put him under greater Advantages of doing Good, in his private Councils, and public Preaching. He must instruct the Ignorant, give Advice and Direction to such as come with Cases of Conscience ; or in Concern about their eternal State. and seriously asking, *what must we do to be saved ?* He must encourage Family Religion, Order and Government, and take all prudent Care, that there be not a careless, prayerless Family among his People. His Eye must especially be upon the Youth, and his Endeavours incessant, that they may *be a Seed to serve the LORD, and accounted to him for a Generation*. He must prudently and vigilantly oppose Seducers, and cause the Disorderly to be ashamed ; but give due Encouragement to such as shine in their Christian Behaviour, and excite others to imitate them. He must comfort the Afflicted, visit the Widow, and Fatherless, and be ever ready to attend on the Sick, and endeavour to be a Means of fitting them for a fruitful Life, or a happy Death.

To close this Particular, I shall only observe, that the Ways and Means whercin a Minister of the Gospel must take Heed to *all the Flock*, besides his public Labours, are so many, that his Life must be a Life of Diligence and painful Service,—such as he never will discharge in a faithful Manner, without taking great Heed and Care. I shall add,

4. *A Minister of the Gospel must take Heed to the Manner and Views with which he discharges the various Duties of his Office.*

His Work must be managed purely for God, and not for private Ends. Unless we aim to approve ourselves to God, we do not serve him, but ourselves.

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We need therefore take Heed, that the Honour of God and the Redeemer, lie near our Hearts, in all our Ministrations unto our People. Joh. XXI. 15. *Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ? He saith unto him, yea Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my Sheep.*

FURTHER, a Minister must take Heed, that he manifest the tenderest Love, and most compassionate Regard, to the Souls of his People. The Relation between a Minister and his People, is an endearing Relation ; when they see that he lays out himself for their spiritual Good, and manifests an affectionate Concern and Love for their Souls, in the Manner in which he always addresses them, they will be more likely to hearken to his Warnings and Councils, Reproofs and Directions. On the contrary, if it appears that he seeks not them, but theirs, and so is influenced chiefly with a View to his Livelihood, their Affection will soon be alienated from him ; which will hinder their profiting by his Labour. We must then be sincerely affectionate and serious, in all our public and private Exhortations. We should so speak, as realizing the Presence of God, and the Reality and Importance of eternal Things ; and so minister, that all may see that we value no outward Things, in Comparison of the Salvation of Souls.

AND finally, a Minister of the Gospel must take Heed, that he carry on his whole Work, with an humble Sense of his own Weakness, and a believing Confidence on the LORD JESUS CHRIST. When we consider the Greatness, Importance, and Difficulty of this Work, we may justly say, *Who is sufficient for these Things ?* A Minister must then take Heed that, not in his own Strength, but in the Strength of divine Grace, he enter upon, and go through the Work ; and then he may safely commit himself and his Work to the
Lord,

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Lord, in a well-grounded Hope of reaping the Reward of a faithful Servant.

But 'tis Time to proceed to the last Thing proposed.

III. I am to enforce the *Exhortation, upon Ministers of the Gospel, to take Heed to themselves, and to all the Flock, by a brief View of the Motives and Arguments suggested, in the Words of the Text.* And may all of us, whom God hath honoured with this Office, be persuaded so to take Heed, that we may save our own Souls, and the Souls of them that attend on our Ministry.

IS the Minister of CHRIST by Office, an Overseer of the Flock, and to watch for Souls? The Nature of this Office, requires us to *take Heed.* We have undertaken the Conduct, under CHRIST, of a Band of his Soldiers, against Powers and Principalities, and we must watch ourselves, and keep them watching. It is a Work we have voluntarily engaged in; no Man forced us hereto, so even common Honesty binds us to be faithful to the Trust we have received. Shall we enjoy all the Honour and Priviledges of this Office, and not be faithful in it? Is it not of infinite Importance to our Acceptance, that we take heed: We are Stewards, and it is required of a Steward, that a Man be found faithful. As Overseers of the Flock, do we watch for Souls? We must then take Heed, or be guilty of the Blood of Souls. Let us then attend to those important Lines, that awful Admonition to unfaithful Teachers Ezek. III. 17. 18. *See of Man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel: therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them Warning from me. When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked Way, to save his Life: the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thy Hand.*

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ARE Ministers set apart to this Work, by a divine Initiation, and made Overseers of the Flock, by the Holy Ghost? What an Obligation then is laid upon us, by our Call? If our Commission be sent from Heaven, it is not to be disobeyed. The HOLY GHOST makes Persons Overseers, by qualifying them for the Office: by directing the Ordainers to discern the Qualifications: and by influencing the Minds of a People and themselves, for affixing them, to the Care of a particular Church. All this was often done, in the primitive Age of Christianity, by an extraordinary Inspiration; whereas it is now done, by the Ordinary Assistance of the Spirit. But as it is the same Spirit, that hath determined in the Word, that there shall be such an Office; what the Qualifications are, which are necessary to it; how Persons are to be introduced into it; what Powers and Authority are annexed to the Office; and gives his common and ordinary Assistance, in the whole Transaction, we are now to esteem Ministers of the Gospel made Overseers by the Holy Ghost, as well as in the primitive Age, though not in the same extraordinary Manner. A Consideration hereof should quicken us to Faithfulness. For how can we fly from the Presence of the divine Spirit? Will not our broken Vows, if we take no Heed to ourselves, nor to our Flocks, be at last most severely punished? *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were struck with immediate Death, by the Apostolic Rod, for Lying to the HOLY GHOST: And shall we escape, if we mock, and think to deceive that Immense and Omniscient SPIRIT, by receiving the solemn Charge of Watching for Souls, without taking heed to fulfil the Ministry committed to us?

IS it the Church of GOD, which Ministers are appointed to feed? that glorious, and honourable Society, for which GOD hath displayed such Wonders in the successive Ages of the World? And doth GOD dignify his Ministers with such Honour, as to appoint them

to be Leaders and Guides unto his own chosen People? Shall we then, who are called to this sacred Employment, be unfaithful? and neither watch ourselves, nor cause our People to watch? Shall we despise the Trust committed to us, and while we are asleep, suffer grievous Wolves to enter, who will not spare, but devour the Flock? or shall we in a Time of Danger, like Hirelings, desert our Station, and suffer the Sheep to be scattered? And not rather take heed, and watch with a godly Jealousy, over all the Souls committed to our Care; that if possible, we might win them to Christ, and persuade them to walk *wor:by of God, who hath called them unto his Kingdom and Glory.* 1 Thes. II. 12.

WAS this Church, which is committed to the Ministers of the Gospel, purchased with CHRIST's own Blood? What an infinite Treasure then is committed to us? and shall we take no Heed to keep and preserve it? CHRIST, the great and good Shepherd laid down his Life for the Sheep: and shall we dare to despise, and neglect them; and like Hirelings care not for the Flock? The meanest of our Flock was purchased by the Blood of CHRIST: and shall we not take heed to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made us Overseers; and to all the Individuals of which it consists, lest through our Unwatchfulness, we suffer those to perish, for whom CHRIST, died? His Blood is infinitely meritorious and sufficient; and in Virtue of Gospel Grace, we may offer eternal Life to all who will accept it, upon Gospel Terms: Let us therefore *preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of Good Things, publishing Peace, and Salvation, to perishing Sinners by JESUS CHRIST.*

UPON the whole; What solemn Bonds and Obligations are upon us to be faithful to him that hath sent us, and to the Souls of Men? The Nature of our Work, as Overseers of the Flock of CHRIST—The
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awful Charge given us in our Appointment to it—The Worth of immortal Souls, and the Church of God ;—The Blood of CHRIST, by which the Church is purchased, and redeemed ;—And the strict Account we must all give up to the chief SHEPHERD, at his appearing to Judgment, should powerfully engage us, *to take Heed to ourselves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made us Overseers, to feed the Church of GOD, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.*

HAVING so interwoven the practical Reflections that arise from the Text. in the Body of the Discourse, I shall conclude with a brief Address, *First*, to the Person who is now to be made an Overseer of this Flock ; and then, *secondly*, to the Church and People of God in this Place.

DEAR SIR, As your repeated and earnest Request hath called me, however unfit, to speak on this great and solemn Occasion, I trust you will gladly receive a friendly and Brotherly Exhortation. It is with weighty Concern that I now address you : however it is a joyful, as well as solemn Occasion ; especially, as we hope that a compassionate Regard to perishing Souls, and an earnest Desire of being used as a Means of their eternal Salvation, to the Praise of God's glorious Grace, by JESUS CHRIST, hath engaged you to chuse this holy Calling, and inclined your Heart to accept the Invitation and Choice of this People. In this View and Hope, we rejoice in God, and give Thanks to his holy Name, that you have been trained up for, and spirited unto the Work, you are now to undertake. While you have viewed the solemn Transactions of this Day at a Distance, I trust, it hath caused you seriously to weigh the great and important Employment :—the many Qualifications necessary to fit for it ; and the watchful Care, and faithful Diligence, that

that must run through the whole Discharge of it. And now, all Things being prepared, the Church waiting with longing Eyes, to receive you as their Pastor, and the Ministers of the Gospel, ready to seporate you to that Work, the solemn Charge you have in view. must make it the Language of your Heart, *who is Sufficient for these Things?* Yet, *dear Sir*, be not afraid, neither discouraged; the Work is indeed weighty, and requires more than an Angel's Strength to fulfil, yet He in whose Service thou art solemnly to engage, is infinitely able to make all Grace abound toward you. Wherefore, from an humble Sense of your own Insufficiency, look up to Him, with whom is everlasting Strength; and resting on his all-sufficient Grace, endeavour to be prepared to receive the weighty Trust of the Gospel Ministry, and the solemn Charge of the Souls of this People. And then *take Heed to thy self, and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost makes you an Overseer to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.*

OH! Sir, take Heed to thyself; to the Life & Power of Grace in your own Heart: let it shine forth in an holy, exemplary Conversation, evidencing it to be your highest Concern to approve yourself to the Lord Jesus; and to be more, and more furnished and qualified for the Work of the Sanctuary. Take heed unto all the Flock, to feed the Church of God; study the unsearchable Riches of CHRIST's Gospel: *these* declare, and preach unto your People, plainly, fully, and affectionately; that none perish for lack of Knowledge and Instruction: and so thou shalt be *pure from the Blood of all Men.* Study how to guide this Church, with all holy Prudence and Care, for it's Peace and Edification in Love. Faithfully exercise the Discipline, and Administer the Ordinances of CHRIST's House. Study to be acquainted with all the Flock; let none be above your Watch, nor any beneath your Notice and Con-

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being : but remember that you watch for the Souls of all this People, as one that must give an Account. At this, will not your Heart tremble, and begin almost to start back from the great Undertaking? Look then to God, and know your Dependence on him, and look to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath engaged his Presence with his faithful Ministers. to the End of the World to direct, comfort, strengthen and succed you. Let this be your Support.

I shall only add ; frequently view, on the one Hand, the Awfulness of being found unfaithful, and of having the Blood of Souls to answer for : on the other, the Joy of being at last, in the Presence of Angels and Men, approved by CHRIST, as his faithful Servant. And may you be so animated hereby, as to take heed to yourself, and to all the Flock, that when CHRIST the chief Shepherd shall appear, you may receive a Crown of unfading Glory.

I SHALL now Address myself to the Church and People of GOD in this Place.

Beloved Brethren, We rejoice with you in the Goodness of the LORD, that he is a Repairer of your Breaches, and a Restorer of Paths for you to walk in. It is a Token of Good, that your Hearts have been inclined with such Unanimity to choose this Servant of GOD, for your Pastor ; and that his Heart hath been inclined to accept of the weighty Charge of your Souls. And now, the Ministers of the Gospel called on this solemn Occasion, being about to seperate him to the Office of a Minister of CHRIST, and a pastoral Relation unto you ; Oh receive him as a precious Gift of our ascended LORD. Let your Hearts
exult

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exult with Joy, when you view the solemn Transactions of this Day. *Isaiah 52. 7. How beautiful upon the Mountains are the Feet of him that bringeth good Tidings, that publisheth Peace, that bringeth good Tidings of Good, that publisheth Salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth.*

BUT altho' it be a Time of religious Joy and Thankfulness, yet not carnal Mirth : but on the contrary you should make it a Matter of serious Concern, and diligent Enquiry, why you have sent for this Servant of CHRIST, that so you might be rightly prepared to receive him as your *Pastor* and *Overseer*. — *Take heed*, that you do not despise him, but esteem him for his Work Sake ; and strengthen, and encourage him, in the Discharge of it. — While he is spending his Time and strength for your Souls, chearfully, as far as in you lies, afford him the Comforts and Conveniences of Life. — Expect not Perfection from him : He is encompassed with the common Passions, and Infirmities of humane Nature : *These* let Charity cover, while you are careful to mark, and imitate him in whatsoever Things he is an Imitator of CHRIST JESUS.

BRETHREN, I beseech you, pray for him : strengthen his Hands : encourage his Heart by your fervent Intercessions for him, at the Throne of Grace. — Diligently attend upon his Ministry, and take heed that you receive not the Grace of God in vain ; and give him Cause to complain, *I have laboured in vain, and spent my Strength for nought, and in vain*. — Study Peace and Harmony among your selves, and the God of Peace be with you.

AND now to conclude ; May the great KING and HEAD of the Church, abundantly bless the Labours of
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his Servant, in this Part of his Harvest : May you and he long rejoice together ; and, at last, may he have *many Souls, as the Seals of his Ministry, his Joy, and Crown of Rejoicing in the Presence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, at his Coming.* And now the GOD of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through JESUS CHRIST ; To whom be Glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

F I N I S.