

THE CHARGE

BY THE

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MY BELOVED SON,

In fulfilling the order of this service, it becomes my duty to address myself to you. I am not insensible, that this engagement places us in a new relation to each other; and that I am to address you, not so much as a son, as a "co-worker together with us" in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. But I cannot so familiarize my thoughts with the new position in which I am placed, as to forget the manifold ties which have attached us to each other! That the recollections and affections stirred within us, may not disqualify us for a profitable discharge of duty on so solemn an occasion, let us, parent and child, commit ourselves to the great presence and gracious benediction of our common Father in heaven!

It is customary in this exercise to quote a passage of Holy Scripture as a guide of meditation. That which I have chosen as suitable at this hour for your instruction, and especially, for your encouragement, you will find recorded in the 126th Psalm—

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with

You will, at once, see that the passage is beautifully descriptive; that it refers to an operation which is plain to all and interesting to all; and that is yearly fulfilled before our eyes with scarcely any change since the days of the patriarchs. As the sower goes forth, in the early morning, to labour; he

carries with him the precious grain to deposit in the soil which he has prepared for its reception; he completes his task with toil and much anxiety, not knowing whether it shall prosper. But he discharges his work with diligence and fidelity; the sun shines on it; the dews of heaven nourish it. It is quickened into life, and rises into fruitfulness. In due time he returns bearing his manifold sheaves with him; he rests from his labours; and his is "the joy of harvest."

Could any imagery more forcibly illustrate the work to which you are committed, or the reward you may expect on its faithful performance?

I. First of all, let me ask you to reflect on your work as it is indicated in this passage.

Chiefly, it refers our attention to the *truth*, as the instrument of your operations. The *seed* is "the word of the kingdom;" and it is very significant of its character. That little seed which you hold in the hollow of your hand, whence is it? You did not make it. Little as it is, all the skill and power of man could not make it. Its Maker is God. Look on it again. It has within it, the essence of things far greater than itself.

—it contains
The future harvest in its little veins.

Look on it once more. How perfect it is! You cannot, either by addition or deduction, conceive of an improvement. Such is the truth which is committed to your charge. It is *divine*, not human; you receive it not from man; it is "given you from heaven." *Simple* as it is, it contains essentially those principles which, in their development, will cover the earth with fruitfulness and fill the heavens with praise. It is *perfect*. To add anything to it, or to take anything from it, would be to impair its proportions and its power.

Were I seeking to give expression in a single phrase, to the truth on which we are remarking, I should adopt that fine one

of scripture—"the truth as it is in Jesus." The truth is all essentially in him. To preach him, is to preach the truth; not to preach him is to utter mere vanity. The truth is one in him—complete in him—illustrious in him. His glory in heaven; his life in the flesh; his death on the cross; his triumph over death and hell; compose that great mystery of godliness which unveils all other mystery. The Father is known, the Spirit is given, life and immortality are brought to light, through the Son. All that he has done, points to him as Mediator. His mediation, as touching man, assures us of his state of enmity, guilt and condemnation; and, as touching God, it reveals his inviolable justice refusing to pardon the sinner without adequate provision for the honour of his laws, and his infinite mercy in finding that provision in the Son of his love. The success of this mediation is the restoration of man to the lost favour and image of God; and the manifestation of God to men and angels as he was never seen. It is the triumph of holiness over sin—of mercy over judgment—of life over death—of heaven over hell. It is the revelation of Deity, in the emphatic language of his word, in his "manifold wisdom," in "the exceeding greatness of his power" and "the exceeding riches of his grace."

You will not be surprised, that the truth thus revealed should be designated as *precious*. The seed-corn which we have admired, and which is its type, is precious. It is the life of the world; and the truth also is the life of the world; with this difference however, that the one sustains only a perishable life, while the other is ordained to bestow and sustain a life which is imperishable and eternal. This life is in the Son; it is the fruit of his mediation and his death. Thus secured and communicated, it provides for all the exigencies of our fallen nature. It enlightens the mind, purifies the heart, saves the soul. It annihilates pride and precludes despair. It inspires the deepest awe and the utmost hope. It teaches the strictest

obedience and it awakens the deepest love. It satisfies the claims of conscience because it satisfies the claims of justice. Delivered from guilt and condemnation, the transgressor returns to God. He rests in his love; the peace of God anoints his spirit; he has liberty of access, of confidence, of prayer. Whom the Son makes free, is free indeed!

What the truth has power to do for one, it can effect with equal facility for myriads—for all. It is the only, but it is the sufficient remedy, for human woe. As it blesses the individual, so it is prepared to bless the family, the village, the city, the nation, the world. It can subdue all disorder, cast out all crime, and bestow all good, until this life of ours shall become as heaven on earth. Already, where the truth prevails, there is order, and civilization, and science, peace, freedom and charity; and where it is not, there everlasting night reigns, and there man is found the prey of oppression, superstition, and massacre; even while he lives, enveloped in the shadows of eternal death.

Of this truth, which is the hope of man and the life of the world; which is the mind of Christ and the brightest manifestation of God to his creatures; you are made a *trustee*. It is to compose the substance and glory of your whole ministry. In itself it is incomparably precious; and it must become so to you, in your most deliberate judgment. And this regard to the truth must not be the mere preference of the partizan and the controversialist; it must be that intelligent and fixed attachment which springs from a deep personal participation of its excellence. He that *hath* the Son *hath* life. The truth must be life to *you*—it must save *you*. You must see that it is the glory of God and feel that it is the power of God in *your* salvation. Daily it must shed its light on your mind; its peace on your conscience; and its sanctity on your heart. You will thus come to some just perception of its character and some living sense of its efficacy. You will feel your need of

an infinite love to succour you, of an infinite sacrifice to redeem you, and of an infinite grace to purify you; and your spirit will rest, with ineffable confidence and love, in the presence of the one Father, one Saviour, and one Sanctifier.

With such an appreciation of the truth, it would be superfluous to urge a close adherence to the Holy Scriptures. They would become the needful aliment of a renewed and elevated mind. You could not be satisfied to copy from imperfect and lifeless copies, when the living original was breathing before you in uncreated beauty. "That which is of earth is earthly; but that which is from heaven is above all." You would not be seduced into a comparison of human with divine authority; you would feel that in the presence of revealed truth, human authority there was none! You would not work your way darkly and with difficulty, through human tradition and worldly ethics, to the cross; but, starting at the cross, you would win your way to a sublime morality and to universal truth. Christ and him as crucified would become the burden of your ministry, and the spirit of it would be found in the baptism of regeneration.

The next point to which our attention is drawn, is the *manifestation* of the truth. The precious grain will not vegetate in the store. It must be borne forth; scattered by a skilful hand; and deposited in a congenial soil. So the seed produces nothing alone. It is given for the life of man, and to secure this life it must be participated. Human agency is employed for this purpose; and its just exercise is denominated, with great force, "the manifestation of the truth to man's conscience."

The first concern, in fulfilling this duty, should be to present to the heart and conscience the *whole truth*. The seed is given for its kind and for its uses. The truth also is a *whole* instrument for the salvation of men and it is efficacious only in proportion to an exhibition of it in its perfectness and

integrity. Not to present the whole truth, would leave us open to the charge of unfaithfulness; to present it in detached and broken parts would be to destroy its vitality and power. We are forbidden to indulge our prejudices or partialities. Our business is not to sit in judgment on the truth; but faithfully to publish it, without fear, without favour, and without controversy. Settle it, therefore, in your mind, that nothing but the truth can enlighten the mind, subdue the heart, and restore the sinner from enmity to love; and resolve, at every hazard to present it clearly to the understanding and to work it down into the reluctant conscience.

It will not be supposed, that, in pleading for the exhibition of the whole truth, we are asking for *equal* prominence for every truth. All revealed truth is of equal authority; but all revealed truth is not of equal importance; and the relative importance of truth is marked by the frequency and distinctness with which it is presented. You will study the proportions of truth; and will give to every part its place and its prominence; for the want of which many have construed almost every thing they have believed into a term of salvation. Proportion is to truth what perspective is to picture; in its absence truth would have the effect of falsehood. Especially, you will distinguish between what is primary and secondary; and look to it, I beseech you, that what is cardinal in the gospel, becomes also cardinal in your ministry.

On the subject of proportion however, nothing is more important than that you should adhere jealously and exclusively to scripture. There truth is one; ever beautiful; always the same. But in the systems and practices of men, truth is often made to appear in various, and sometimes distorted aspects. The history of the pulpit has taught you, that even it has its fashions; and that the favourite extreme of one age, is surely followed by an opposite extreme in the next. I am greatly mistaken, if the tendency of our time is not to magnify, that

class of truth which is related to human agency at the expense of that class which is more nearly related to Divine sovereignty. It is the part of wisdom to mark this, and of fidelity to avoid it. Both classes of truth are clearly revealed and equally important. And on the one hand you must not allow any thing to fritter away the complete and deep responsibility of man; nor on the other, must you permit any views of human responsibility to limit or dishonour the Divine sovereignty. You will gain nothing—you will resolve no problem—you will remove no difficulty, by indulging a bias either to the right or the left. It may be of some moment, amidst the controversial subtleties, in this department of truth, to determine with the scriptures in your hand, this simple question, *Whether the salvation of a sinner begins with man or with God?*

One other remark is suggested on this part of the subject, and that regards the *style* of communication. It is to be remembered that our one simple object is, to present the truth to the mind. It will follow, that the more clearly this is done, and the more completely every other circumstance is withheld from sight, so much the more skilful and efficient will be the administration. This, at once, condemns as vicious, and when connected with the exercises of the pulpit, as supremely vicious, those styles which may be denominated the philosophical and the ornate.

The first of these, the philosophical, is evidently unfitted for that service. It is too refined, too abstract, too cold; it has no fellowship with the style of scripture, nor with men's ordinary habits of thought. It would rather obscure than reveal the truth. An individual, certainly of fair average mind, and with good religious information, lately lamented with much regret, that, after attentively waiting on his teacher for five minutes, he found it difficult to apprehend his method and to profit. Is not this intolerable. Perspicuity is the best quality of style. A speaker ought so to utter

himself, not only as that he may be understood, but as that he cannot be misunderstood. Ours too is a popular service, and of infinite moment. Whatever allowance we may grant to abstract speculation and refined disquisition in the closet; we must resolutely forbid them the pulpit. If the few only are taught, what is to become of the million?

The other style which we have to shun is the ornate or florid. If the one evil will prevent the due apprehension of your meaning; the other will, if carried to excess, implicate your *sincerity*. A young advocate, some years since, took his place in our courts of law. He had fine talents, but under the influence of false taste and perhaps of vicious examples, he was led to an unbounded use of the imagination. He clothed the most grave cause with laboured description and splendid ornament. Mark the result. Those who crowded the court for entertainment and had no interest in the decision, were amused and they admired and applauded; but the client could not trust him, the jury did not believe him, and a cloud sat on the forehead of the judge. He remained briefless amidst inferior men.

Much less should we be thought faithful to the truth, if we adopted such a course. Ours is a most serious message. It is life—it is death—to those who hear it. Truly to be affected by it, suggests at once a style which is clear, direct, sententious, pungent and even broken. The mind is not at leisure for circumlocution or for prettinesses or for studied ornaments. Reason glowing with passion, passion enlightened by reason must prompt the style demanded by our ministry. To forget ourselves and to be inspired by our subject is the only sufficient pledge of our sincerity, as it is the prime qualification for the very highest order of eloquence.

These remarks are important, as we are in *daily* temptation to deviate from the right course. In worldly business men are in earnest and they will not tolerate those who trifle; but in

religion men are triflers and we ourselves are often tempted to trifle. They are not willing that our earnestness should reproach their carelessness; but if we will condescend to seek their amusement, rather than their profit; if we will conceal the truth, which they approve not, with meretricious grace; if we will feast the imagination and avoid the conscience; then they will crowd to our assemblies and sustain us with their applause.

It were not difficult to do this, but it would be done at our peril. Rustling crowds might indeed press into our sanctuaries; every face might be radiant with admiration, and every tongue laden with our praise; but we should preach ourselves, not Christ Jesus the Lord. Our hearers would be diverted, not saved; they might honour us, they would despise Christ; they would wonder, admire, applaud and—perish! And where should we be? Where should we be?

Another circumstance in the passage before us, has respect to the *diligence* and *devotedness* with which we should fulfil our work. The husbandman “goeth forth” to his labour. At morning and eve, in summer and winter, through every day and every season it has his attention and care. So are we, in the morning to sow our seed and in the evening to withhold not our hand, not knowing which shall prosper. To all persons, at all times, under all circumstances, we are to make known the truth which bringeth salvation. No one service calls for a diligence and promptitude equal to our own. A moment, and our opportunity may be gone, and the loss may be eternal! It is a most affecting thought to the pastor of a large congregation, at the close of the sabbath exercises, that *as they are* he will never see them again. Before the next sabbath dawns, change, or disease, or death has entered into the world; and those who hung on his lips will hear his voice no more. What a reason to be instant in season and out of season to use *all* diligence to make their calling and election sure—

A great captain charged with the relief of a besieged and famished city was confronted at sea, by a tremendous storm. He was entreated to put back. "No" he said "it is not necessary for me to live, but it is necessary for me to go." It is necessary for the minister to labour; it is not necessary for him to live!

Such diligence carried out and sustained through life becomes *devotedness*. The husbandman regards his employment as his vocation. His talent, his time, his property, his arrangements are all subordinate to it. In the field, the market, and the homestead, he is the same man. If he looks on the fair earth, it still relates to its fruitfulness, and if he lifts his eye to the fairer heavens it is to regard their influence on the future harvest. *Always he is the husbandman.*

It is said of the greatest general of our day or of any day, that he never for an instant forgot his profession. If the finest prospect in nature broke on his view, he would instantly look on it, not as a poet, but as a soldier. Hill and valley would be surveyed in reference to attack and defence; and in imagination the battle would be fought and won. He was *always the general.*

This self-devotion is what our service pre-eminently demands. We must not do many things, but *one* thing; the controlling power of one master principle must give unity to all our purposes and actions. All our engagements, whether they fall under the appellation of freedom, education, benevolence or religion, must be elevated and united in one single end—the salvation of men. Literature, science, nature, recreation, must be regarded in the same connexion; and thus the very rest and refreshment which our frailties require, will, from the spirit in which they are used, become continued service to Christ.

In the language of the apostle then, himself the example, "give yourself *wholly* to this ministry." It deserves all you have. Make *full proof* of this ministry; show what it can do for a lost world, and what you, by the grace of Christ, can do for it. It is astonishing what an *individual* may accomplish if all

his powers, all his attainments, and all life are consecrated to one purpose. Know the bliss of having one great object always before you in life, giving unity to your pursuits and commending itself to your highest reason. Show what man can do, can dare, can suffer, in a cause which can raise us above humanity. Watch for souls as they that must give an account. Be *always the minister*. Look on the world only in reference to its ruin by sin, and its recovery by Christ; and meekly, but firmly, resolve to reduce the domains of death and to advance the empire of light and love, before you die!

The very terms we have found it necessary to employ almost supersede the observation, that this devotedness is not only energetic but expansive in its operations. Present limits do not satisfy it. It is prepared to act *anywhere* as power and opportunity are supplied. The distinction between the minister and missionary is unwholesome. The true minister is the true missionary. You are this day set apart for the service of this people; but not exclusively. Neither you nor they are to merge, in your mutual attachments, your deeper relations to the universal church of the redeemed. You must not be satisfied, as I fear many have been, with a comfortable state of things in the place where you worship; but you must gather strength and faith in the bosom of a loving and devoted people, *to go forth* in spirit and in act as you may, from the chapel to the city, the city to the county, the county to the nation, and the nation to the world. Your charge must not, if they would, exhaust their affections on you, nor their attention on themselves; they owe a deeper, deeper love to Christ, and their lives to the advancement of his kingdom. Oh, go forth, *go forth* from yourselves, blessing and being blest. Determine to do all the good that is doing or can be done, your own, by the sympathy and adequate co-operation.

Other particular remains for consideration; it is the *where* which this work is to be performed. He that goeth

forth, bearing precious seed and *weepeth*. The husbandman sows in tears. He has faith or he would not sow; but, for the present, he has much anxiety and fear. He casts his most precious grain abroad on the earth; he does it at great expense and with much toil; while the result is quite beyond his control. The soil may be ungrateful; the heavens may be unkind; and his labour may be in vain. He sows in tears; we are also called to go forth weeping.

The figurative expression refers us to humiliation of spirit. The first effect of a service so holy and eminent is to humble us to the dust. We can have seen nothing of the divine glory—we can have known nothing of the gospel as a dispensation of life, grace and power—we can have had no fellowship with the Saviour in his majesty, his sufferings and the glory which shall follow—if they have not reduced us to an abiding sense of unpreparedness and insufficiency. To stand in the counsel of God—to catch his mind, and to convey it, untainted by our touch, to others—to become the expositors of that wisdom which is manifold and of that grace which is unsearchable—to assert and uphold the claims of Deity in a rebellious world—to become the examples of the truth we proclaim—to know that our words are a savour of life or death to those who hear them—that the eternal destinies of men hang on the truths we utter, and perhaps on the temper in which we utter them! What things are these! Jeremiah saw something of them and he said “Ah! Lord God, I am a child and cannot speak.” Isaiah saw more of them and he said “Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips!” Paul saw yet more, and he exclaimed, “Who, who is sufficient for these things!”

If such convictions have become familiar to your own mind, as I think they have, let me guard you against a temptation incident to them. Do not conclude, that such a state of feeling is a *disqualification* for your work. No—it may be painful, but it is salutary—it is indispensable. Self-complacency would be

your disqualification. The poor vain creature, who, in the presence of God and eternity, could pass to the pulpit satisfied with himself, and retire from it complimenting himself, and looking around for the compliments of others; if not beyond pity is beyond cure. Yes—you must sow in tears, and be content to do so. In weakness, you shall be made strong; before honour is humility; to be anything, you must become nothing!

The same expression clearly inculcates *tenderness* of spirit. Such a temper would naturally arise from that sense of insufficiency to which we have referred; but it is sustained by the whole *character* of your work. The truth you have to announce is developed in facts, by far the most extraordinary and affecting in the history of mankind. They cannot be truly believed, nor fitly uttered, without deep emotion. Can you assert the fallen, guilty and miserable state of all your race, without compassion. Can you proclaim, as from God himself, his forbearance, goodness, and infinite mercy to a world in which every day his name is blasphemed, without emotion? If your eye moistens before ordinary instances of benevolence and magnanimity, have you no tears for the wonderful enactments of redeeming love? Can you tell, how the Son of God in heaven pitied us in our apostacy—how he came to earth, disguised in our nature, and became, for our sake, poorer than the poorest, lower than the lowest, sadder than the saddest? Can you tell of Gethsemane and of Calvary, of all his meekness, all his suffering, all his innocence and all his love, without tenderness? Can you discourse of these things to sinful men, yourself a sinner, for their salvation; and find that after all you can say or do, many of them regard your message with indifference or aversion, without emotion? Must you conclude that some who hear you will continue in unbelief to the last? Can you think of them as renouncing that bright and glorious heaven to which you invite them and as precipitating

themselves into the nameless horrors of the second death, without sorrow and without shuddering? Ah! if you could, it were better that you sought your daily bread from daily charity through our streets, than give yourself to this ministry!

But you have not so learned Christ. You have taken up this ministry with fear, and trembling, and tears. Still dwell under the unction of truth and the unction of the Holy One. Let the truth *live* in your heart, *live* on your lips; and it shall carry *life* to them that hear you.

That cherished tenderness, which is thus commended to us, will save you alike from *formality* and *severity*. Where formality is not, there will be earnestness; but earnestness, though indispensable, if mixed with selfish passion, will become dogmatical and severe. True earnestness springs from love to God and love to man; it has in it nothing harsh or proud; it is resolute, but it is tender and full of compassion. It works not in contempt of human sympathies, but by means of them. It pleads and weeps, weeps and pleads; and if your last remonstrance should be rejected, after the manner of your Saviour on the cross, you would pray "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Such tenderness, with such earnestness, would supply the finishing quality for the efficient utterance of the truth. You would not have to look around you for the elements of true eloquence, they would be your own; and the word of truth from your lips, like a two-edged sword, would go straight to the heart.

One other remark is still required. The expression in the text indicates the spirit of *dependence* and *prayer*. The labours of the field eminently are made to depend on the blessing of heaven. The husbandman knows full well, that there will be no harvest without the diligent use of means; but he knows equally well that his utmost diligence will be in vain, without those sweet and celestial influences above and around him, over which he has no control.

Just so, results are placed beyond your power. The whole tenor of your service is such, as to deprive you of every other dependence, that you may depend perfectly on God. The connexion between the means you are to employ and the end for which you employ them, is not in their *use*, though you must use them; nor in their fitness, though they are admirably adapted; *it is in the promise of God*. Let no conviction be more present to your mind or more settled there, than this, that there is nothing on earth or in heaven to warrant your utterance of the gospel, with the hope of success, except the promise of God. Stand up before your charge, penetrated with the fact, that, after your best exhibition of the word and will of God for their salvation, they, one and all, will assuredly reject it, if left to themselves. While you are "shut up" to the single promise of God, honour it to the utmost. As without it, you would have no hope; so show, that with it, you have unbounded confidence. Look around you, for the last means, the last plea, the last word, by which you may give completeness and power to your solemn message; and then just lie down at the foot of the throne in your weakness and look up, with infinite desire, to the right hand of the Most High. Perfect diligence and perfect dependence would save the world!

II. Let me yet crave your attention while, with brevity, we remark on the remaining portion of the subject—the *reward* which is consequent on the work performed. All the terms are emphatical; and you have a deep interest in them.

Observe, first, you shall *return*. How many go forth to execute their own schemes or those of others and return no more! The captain goes forth to conquest; but falls while yet the battle rages. The statesman, full of desire to secure freedom and happiness to millions, asks for a year—a month—to complete his object; but no—he dies and his work is undone. The merchant puts forth all his energies in trade, and hopes in

a given period to provide for a dependent family; but long before it arrives his wife is a widow and his children are fatherless. The world is rife with such calamity; and the tomb, instead of its usual emblazonry, might well have crouching at its foot disappointed hope and foiled ambition.

But *you shall return*. You shall be safe and your service shall be complete. You serve One whose purpose must stand; and who will do all his pleasure. End when it may, your life is invulnerable till you have finished the work given you to do. You cannot fall a martyr to vain desires and impracticable schemes. As the servant of Christ you profess to adopt his will as your own; and, if you have a mind in harmony with this high and glorious profession, every wish must be fulfilled and every prayer be answered.

You shall *return*. Your work shall not only be complete, you shall rest from it and be *satisfied*. The husbandman after toiling through various seasons with fluctuating hopes and fears, at last, when the harvest crowns his labours, finds rest and complacency in the past. And you shall not always be the subject of anxious toil, sensible imperfection, and postponed hope. Your course of labour shall find its close, and then the period of rest and revision will come. You shall "rest from your labours and your work shall follow you." You will then have opportunity for review. Previously, while busily engaged, you looked on your work only in parts—the present care and present difficulty had filled your attention—but, now, that you survey it as a whole, and in the lights of receding time and advancing eternity, it wears a new aspect and brings to your heart a new and untold satisfaction. "Yes," you will say, "it is well! I have been employed in a good work, I have served a good Master. My only regret is, that I have been so unprofitable a servant. Yet, it is well, that I have been governed by one great purpose in life. My life might have been consumed in sloth or sacrificed to sin. Had it even been

given to the noblest objects of a temporal state, the fruit would have perished with the using. Had I, in any form, have lived to myself, I had now been a poor lost creature. But I have served God; I have done his work; and while every other fabric is dissolved like the dream of the night, it shall endure to everlasting life. It is well—it is well!”

Another portion of your reward is to be found in *decided usefulness*. “He shall return, *bringing his sheaves with him.*” The husbandman went forth alone, on the dark and lowering day, and scattered the feeble grain; and it was soon lost in the rugged soil; but he returns, in happy company, bringing his numerous sheaves with him. You in this ministry go forth alone, (and yet not alone,) fearful lest such poor instrumentality should fail to bring any good to man; but you shall return *satisfied*, not only with the work done, but with the *fruits* which follow. True it is, that the highest duty of an intelligent creature, is, simply to do the will of God; and should no evident benefit arise, the fact of having done his bidding, should be a sufficient reward. But this is not the *character* of our service. In fulfilling our work beneath right influences, we are promised success; we are to expect success;—yea, we are not to be *satisfied* without success.

Usefulness, let it be remembered, may often be *real*, when it is not palpable. One man sows the field and another reaps it. Is not the first labour, as necessary to the garnered harvest as the last? A sovereign by his known power and promptitude overawes his enemy, and keeps his realm in peace; shall he confer a less benefit on this people, than he who meets his foe in doubtful conflict and secures a victory? Many a faithful minister has been discouraged and broken in spirit, from the want of taking this broader view, of this important question. Be assured entirely, that in this service, if you are faithful to it, in a good spirit, that no word shall fall to the ground, no effort shall be lost. Be not impatient of results. Disturb not the

seed that you may see it grow ; precipitate not the conflict, in eagerness for the triumph. Entertain great hope ; exercise great patience ; and, in due time, you shall reap abundantly.

And the fruit which you are seeking, shall not always be of a preparatory and concealed character. The salvation of men is to be effected in this life : and such a work is not of a nature to be hidden. While you utter the truth with fidelity and wait in penitential prayer for the blessing, many a dark mind shall be illumined, many a vicious heart shall be renewed, many a broken spirit shall be comforted, and many a wandering sinner shall be restored from the error of his ways and saved from death. Benefits multiplied to individuals will change the aspect of families ; and reformed families will give their character to the associated community ; till you will be the minister of life and reconciliation, over a redeemed and holy people.

Could this happen without observation ? Being observed, could anything bring to the heart of a devoted pastor a sweeter or higher satisfaction. The tie which unites one saint with another saint, is superior to all the influence of mere consanguinity ; but the tie which attaches the particular believer to the minister, who first taught him to trust in Christ, and afterwards edified him on his holy faith, is the most refined, generous and lasting which we know.

May I offer an illustration of this, which, some time since, fell under my own notice, I was invited to attend the funeral of a respected brother in the ministry, whose sun had gone down while it was yet day. There was a large gathering of his brethren, besides the immediate relatives. We bore him in silence to the silent grave. All were solemnly affected ; but no one of us deeply ; I saw none in tears. But as we drew near to the grave I observed an individual alone, on its brink, and evidently weeping. As we approached he gave place to us, but through the service he still wept. When we retired, he

resumed his standing, looked down into the tomb, and wept greatly. I became very desirous of knowing, what this could be. It was ascertained, that he was alone, and that he had walked from town, a distance of fifteen miles, and was about to walk back again. "And was the deceased a friend of yours?" it was asked. "I cannot just say that," said the afflicted man, "for I believe I never spoke to him in my life. But I once heard him preach, at such a place, from such a text, and every word went to my heart. I have been another man since. I cannot forget it. I can never forget him." Here was an adequate explanation. They had never spoken together as friends; but he had received life from the lips of the departed minister. This was their only, but sufficient, bond of union. It was this, that made it a gratification to travel so far to express his affection; it was this that made him the chief mourner on the solemn occasion; and it is this that embalms the name of the deceased in his memory, second only to that adorable name in which he trusts for salvation. Oh, what is that applause, which the giddy and worldly multitude may offer to clever acting and splendid declamation, compared with that deep-seated and earnest affection which gathers round a devoted minister from a renewed and holy people!

Not only is your usefulness to be real and visible—it is to be *abundant*. The grain is to expand into the ear; the ear into the sheaf; and the sheaf is to be manifold. It may indeed frequently be found, that existing appearances do not favour such an issue; and to save the mind from depression and discrimination may be necessary.

Consider then, in regarding this interesting subject, that the *regulation* of usefulness, is, often, the means of usefulness. In short, a man's success will not surpass his expectations. The measure of his hope, will regulate the scope of his action and thought. If his expectation is small, his plans will be

small, his desires small. If the minister shall think it impossible to improve the state of things in his charge and neighbourhood, to him it is impossible. But to faith all things are possible. Yours is a great service; it is sustained by exceedingly great promises. Honour the promise by great expectations and enlarged prayers. It shall be unto thee, according to thy faith!

An aged pastor, once stood up in the midst of his brethren, who were met for conference and prayer, and said as the tears coursed down his furrowed cheeks, "brethren, ask much and you shall receive much! I alas, have asked little, all through my ministry, and I have received but little!" and he sat down in his sorrow.

Again, if you would judge aright on this subject, you must not limit your view to small and detached portions of service. Thus contemplated they may present a very barren aspect; when, if regarded in their connexion they may claim a different character. You cannot mark the progress of harvest, by confining your observation to a single day; but if you add day to day and week to week, the advancement is conspicuous, and delightful. A day of severe study may seem to terminate only in weariness to the flesh; a day of prayer may seem to have brought no sensible advantage; but that day of study and that day of prayer may have prepared you in public service to utter the truth with such light and unction, as that it flamed on the conscience and subdued the heart of the impenitent to God.

In reckoning on large success it should also be remembered, that much of our usefulness is *indirect* and *accumulative*. Because indirect, though it occur in our time, it is not for the present known to us; and because accumulative, it cannot be realized in this life. It is one of the happy conditions of your ministry that it will survive you. You will live in your work and the fruit of it will follow you. You are the means of con-

verting a sinner to God. He leaves you and is heard of no more. But the truth remains with him and he seeks to make it known. He is the instrument of converting ten other persons. Have you no share in his usefulness? President Edwards by his attachment to evangelical doctrine and his searching distinctions between a living and nominal profession, gave a character to his people, which remains with their successors to this day. Have his labours no connexion with their abiding steadfastness in the truth and experimental enjoyment of its power? When a little band of nonconformists embarked in a small vessel, and committing themselves to the ocean and to God, traversed the stormy deep, in search of a quiet home and freedom of conscience in the wilderness; how little did they think, that they were about to sow the seeds of liberty and religion over a new world, and to create a redeeming power which should check and eradicate the corruptions of the world they had left?

How cheering is this view of the subject; though we cannot, for the present fully comprehend it. What great and lasting results may wait on short and feeble labours. You may give an impulse which shall vibrate from zone to zone; yea, which shall find its sympathetic and responding chords amongst the harps of heaven. Much of your usefulness you cannot know till the close of life; all of it you cannot know till the revelations of the last great day.

Another ingredient in your reward is *joy—supreme joy*. It must have been apparent, that our ministry while in execution is not void of joy; but, it is rather at its close, that we are to expect and find a “fulness of joy.” When we *return*, and surrender our commission to him who gave it; when our work is done and its fruits perfected; then we are to have joy. The joy is the joy of harvest, various, manifold, complete; and the end of harvest is “the end of the world.”

Shall we venture to anticipate a period so sure to arrive, and on which Holy Scripture so frequently casts our attention, as a motive to fidelity and perseverance? Disengage, then, your mind from present and surrounding circumstances. Think of your work, which now fills you with trembling, as happily accomplished. Think of the great scheme of providence completed; and of the world and time lost in eternity; of yourself and the myriads of the redeemed summoned to the One Eternal Presence.

You find yourself immediately before the Glorified Humanity. Over and above the throne, dwelleth the Light which is inaccessible; and around and about it, are angel and archangel innumerable; while behind you and away are the hosts of the redeemed waiting on the lips of their Judge and Saviour. You are oppressed with awe; chiefly from the living sense which you now have of the glorious Mediator and of the imperfect service which you have rendered to him. Never did your work appear so defective, so worthless; and, a fear is springing up in your breast, lest, though saved, you should be "saved as by fire." Your Saviour looks on you and you are re-assured. He receives you and your work, with benignant complacency, and says—It is well done, good and faithful servant. What grace, what joy is this! Grace in him, to forget all your frailties and to remember only your devotedness to him; what joy to you, to find such unqualified acceptance, at a moment when you felt as nothing in his presence!

Yourself approved, there is clustering around you a noble company of happy beings radiant with love and gratitude. Many of them were your known and tried companions through the wilderness of life; many of them were unknown to you in the flesh; but all of them claim to have found life and edification in your ministry on earth. You present them to your common Lord and Saviour. "Forasmuch" he says "as you

have done it to the least of these, ye have done it to me!"
What condescension! What joy!

Then, there are ten thousand other devoted servants who have laboured in the same cause, with bands of the holy round them, anxiously looking to the same approbation as their highest reward. They are presented; as graciously accepted each and all; and are made priests and kings unto God for ever. You rejoice in their joy.

The trial over, the joy of angels and men is full. The millions of the redeemed look on the throne and on the Saviour in its midst, radiant with ineffable love and thankfulness; the Redeemer looks on them, so blessed, so holy; and His infinite mind enjoys an infinite satisfaction. There is silence; it is the silence of love—of extacy!

A flood of serene, brighter light breaks from the Excellent Glory, over the whole heaven, and rests on the congregated multitude. A voice issues from it, saying—"This is my beloved Son—worship Him!" Every knee is bent—every crown presented—every tongue confesses.

Angelic harps and voices rise on the subdued homage, into exalted praise. "Thou art, O Christ, Thou art worthy, to receive honour, and power, and dominion, and glory for ever"—they exultingly sing. The innumerable redeemed catch the strain and responsive cry—"Thou art worthy, O Christ—thou art worthy, for thou hast loved us, and washed us from our sins, in thy own blood!" It is repeated and prolonged, till the listening spheres rejoice together, over a work greater far than their first creation!

You now see, for the first time, the full value of that work to which you have been devoted. Providence is developed; the mystery of redemption is finished. The Father is glorified in the Son; the Son is glorified in the Father; God is made manifest to his creatures in relationships of excelling glory. The glory which you sought to apply amongst men, and which you saw

only in its weakness struggling with sorrow and corruption, now dwells in the saints; redolent with life, purity and joy. A rebel world is recovered to its forgotten allegiance and its forfeited blessedness; and the enemy of man and of Messiah is cast out and tormented. Order is restored to the universe; justice and mercy reign and are magnified to the uttermost; all worlds are taught the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the excelling goodness of God!

This is the work in which you have laboured. Small as your portion of service may have been, it is still essential to the perfection of the whole. It has survived the ruin of earth, time and nature; and as it now abides is in its own eternity unchanged and unchangeable.

And is it so? And is the only fault of this reference to the future, on the side of deficiency, and not on that of excess? And, after all that tongue can tell and Scripture indicate, has the eye not seen, the ear not heard, the heart not conceived what the Lord hath prepared for them that love and serve him?

Is your joy the joy of the redeemed—the joy of angels—the joy of your Lord—the joy of heaven—the joy of the universe—the joy of eternity—and is it not enough? Will you not, for *the joy that is set before you*, endure the cross and despise the shame? Can there be shame—can there be suffering, in such a cause? Oh, the shame is nothing to the honour—the suffering nothing to the joy! Reckon, that the suffering of this present time—this *transitory period of toil and trial*—is not worthy to be compared, with the glory which shall be revealed. Show that you keep a fixed eye—the regenerated eye of faith—on the unseen and eternal—the weight—the weight of glory!

But the good promised may be of such magnitude as to stagger expectation; and faith and hope may be ready to fail, where they should triumph. On this account, our attention is finally, directed to the *certainty* of this reward. *Doubtless you*

shall return. The success and reward of your labours must be established in your mind, beyond a *doubt*, as a constant motive of action. Other services are attended with incertitude and disappointment; life is proverbial for the wreck of human hope; but this excludes doubt and peradventure.

It is *as certain* as harvest. Husbandry is the most uniform and successful of temporal operations. Its success, however, rests, not so much on the connexion between cause and effect, as on the promise of God. He has said, "seed time and harvest, summer and winter shall not fail." And they have not failed. Had human sustenance failed, life had failed, man had failed. The truth of God is written on the earth and heavens; and every age of mankind has been the record of his faithfulness. The express promise of the same faithful God is your security. Mark the emphatic terms. "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

It is *more certain* than every other pursuit. Our text refers us to that which is most certain, as made so by the promise of God. But that promise secures only general success, and is consistent with particular failure. The most abundant harvest may not exclude individual failure. When the joy is almost universal, there may yet be not a few labourers, whose hope perishes amidst rising floods or ungenial heavens. But here, the promise is as *particular*, as it is comprehensive. It is to you, as though it were uttered for your sake, and for none other. If you labour to fulfil the work of your Saviour, and in the spirit he suggests and nourishes, you cannot do it in vain. One may be called to sow while another is called to reap; to the fruit of labour may be more apparent on earth and to the other less so, but none—not one—who truly does the bidding

of his Lord shall miss the full and blessed reward. They who sow and they who reap shall rejoice together in the great and eternal recompense of reward.

This reward is *most certain*. It is certain in itself; and it borrows certainty from all things besides. The work to which you are pledged is the chief of the ways of God; all things exist for its sake; and are made contributory to its accomplishment. Creation lives for it. Providence operates for it. For this the Saviour bled on earth; for this the Spirit dwells with men; for this the Father keeps parental government of the world. It involves the highest honour of Deity—the highest good of man—of the universe. Oh, it must triumph! it must triumph!—unless Providence could be foiled—unless Christ could have died in vain—unless the Unchangeable could change—unless the Almighty could fail as a man—unless darkness, ruin, and death could gather round the throne of the One Eternal.

As all doubt is excluded from the subject, so let it be ejected from your mind. An assured service demands an assured spirit. Faith is the posture of mind, which best corresponds, with the character of your work and the certainty of your reward. Have faith then richly—abundantly—that faith which is superior to appearances and casts out fear. Let there be no selfishness in your tears; no pride in your joy. Just catch the mind of your Saviour and you shall be wise; just lean on his arm and you shall be strong; just identify yourself with his cause and you shall see the salvation of God!

My beloved Son—I have thus endeavoured, with a full heart, to illustrate the great work to which you are devoted and the gracious reward with which it is inseparably united. What shall I say more? How many recollections are awakened in the heart, alike craving and defying expression! Some of them now appear to hold a happy connexion with the events of this day. It is a subject of grateful remembrance now, that

on your first entrance into this life, you were dedicated to God by your parents, as the most precious gift they had to offer. This dedication afterwards took a more solemn form in baptism; and some expressions and petitions which fell from the venerable man who took the service seemed half prophetic; and like Mary we pondered on them in our hearts not knowing what they should mean. To educate you, we sought to educate ourselves; and, with whatever failings, we chiefly sought, that you might carry out the vow of the parent into an act of early and personal dedication. When, therefore, you bowed in penitence at the foot of the cross and gave yourself up to the Lord and to his church our joy was full. And now that we see you not only the disciple of Christ, but a minister in his sanctuary, our joy is overflowing, and, through human weakness, dashed with agony.

In what privileged, but affecting circumstances are you now placed. Here, are your attached family, realizing in you manifold prayers, and grafting on you their dearest hopes. Here, is, by representation, the church you have left, loving you, cherishing you to the last. Here, is the church to which you are received as their pastor, confirming the fervent affection which they have shown you from the beginning. Here, are the ministers of the churches; who have hastened to welcome you as a brother beloved; and who still sustain you with their presence and their prayers. And here—before all—and in the sight of God—you have made your solemn vows—and already they are written in the book of eternal remembrance! Oh! should you fall, what a world of hope and affection would lie crushed beneath you! What astonishment in heaven! What calamity on earth! But you must not fall or fail! You must be henceforth, as a consecrated being. You must have no eye, but for Christ—no ear, but for Christ—no life, but for Christ! The work you now begin in this world you *must* perfect with joy—triumphant joy! You must

persevere! By your baptism, your education, and all the relative endearments of life, you must persevere! By the solemnities of this day—your vows—our prayers—and this cloud of witnesses, you must persevere! By your allegiance to God, who hath committed to you this ministry, by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost who is in you; by the cross and passion of your Lord, and by his coming to be your Judge—you must persevere! By the vanity of the world; by the terrors of the judgment; and by the fires that are unquenchable, and the life that never dies, you must persevere—“steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The God of thy fathers bless thee, my son! The angel of the covenant bless thee, and keep thee and go before thee! May he make your path plain by the pillar of his providence; may he make your burdens light, by the arm of his might; may he cause you to dwell ever in the light of his presence and in the deep enjoyment of his love; may your service to him become identical with your existence; and may you witness the growth of his kingdom and be satisfied! And, when, at last, you give in your account to him, may we, who are now present to witness the commencement of your course, be present, at its close, to mark its gracious acceptance and to welcome you to everlasting habitations! My son—my son—a thousand blessings rest ever on thee! Amen! Amen!

The morning service was concluded by singing and prayer. The closing prayer was offered by the Rev. Dr. Wayland, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Brown University, United States of America.

In the afternoon the ministers and people met in the Assembly Rooms, to a public dinner; after which, some addresses were delivered to the company, and the deputation from Wycliffe Chapel, London, presented to Mr. Reed, a copy of Bagster's Comprehensive Bible, and a set of Dr. Owen's Works, in 28 vols. 8vo. handsomely bound. One of the deacons from London, Mr. Gamman, accompanied the present with an affectionate and suitable speech to Mr. Reed.

In the evening at half-past six, the Meeting House was again crowded. Rev. J. Green, of Orford Hill Chapel, Norwich, commenced by reading and prayer. The Rev. J. H. Godwin, of Highbury College, then addressed the people in the discourse which will follow next in order; and the services of the day were closed by a very impressive and earnest prayer for the newly united pastor and his charge, by the Rev. Wm. Brock, of St. Mary's Chapel, Norwich.