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A Discourse Delivered in the Baptist Meeting-House in Parkman, September 12, 1832

Thomas B. Ripley

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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE

IN PARKMAN,

SEPTEMBER 12, 1832.

BEFORE THE

PENOBSCOT ASSOCIATION.

By T. B. RIPLEY,
Pastor of the Baptist Church in Bangor.

Bangor, (Me.)
BURTON & CARTER, PRINTERS.
1832.

MINUTES
OF THE
ASSOCIATION

Extract from the Minutes of the Penobscot Association, held in Parkman, Sept. 12 & 13, 1832.

“Voted to request a copy for the press, of the introductory Discourse—and that it be printed, if obtained, at the expense of the Association.”

DISCOURSE.



ACTS 20: 26, 27.

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 unto you all the counsel of God.

MY BRETHREN,

I feel that a very great and peculiar responsibility is now resting upon me. Such a meeting as the present affords to a preacher special opportunity to do good, which if he does not improve according to his ability, he will not be held guiltless by Him to whom he must give account.

Here are the pastors of the churches and other ministers of Christ ; here are the churches represented by their delegates ; here are the members of this church, who have been praying, earnestly we trust, that a great blessing may accompany this meeting ; here are christians of other denominations, who have met with us, desirous of being benefited ; here are some, perhaps many, impenitent sinners, hastening with us to eternity, who may be inclined to listen to the services of this anniversary with more attention than men are wont to bestow on the stated ministrations to which they have long been accustomed, and may hear, not in vain.

If God shall be pleased to grant us his blessing, on the present occasion, and during the session of the Association, great good will be accomplished. May we not hope, that the ministers of Christ will be anointed afresh with the Holy Spirit, and that with new vigor and energy, and with increasing effect, they will henceforth prosecute their work ; that the deacons and other brethren of the churches will consecrate themselves and all they possess anew to their Redeemer ; that this church, with their beloved pastor, will arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being risen upon them ; and that men who never have wept

over their sins, will this day repent and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out ?

Brethren, let prayer ascend from the very depths of our hearts, that these results, so infinitely important and desirable, may follow this introductory service and the succeeding services of this our annual festival.

I have, for months, been looking forward to this day, and on a certain occasion, when circumstances brought death, judgment and eternity near to my mind, I had some perception of the magnitude and responsibility of the work of the ministry, and of my own immense deficiencies, especially my astonishing stupidity in regard to matters of such infinite moment. And I felt desirous, should God be pleased to spare my life, to address you, my dear brethren in the ministry, on the subject suggested in the text.

O that the views and feelings of that solemn night might be now recalled, and revived afresh !

The text is contained in the memorable address of Paul to the Elders of the church in Ephesus.

“ Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews : *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there : save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face 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 unto you all the counsel of God. 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. For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so la-

boring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

What a pattern, my brethren, of ministerial excellence does the Apostle here exhibit, while merely referring, with great simplicity, and without the least particle of vainglory, to the course he had pursued during his residence at Ephesus—a course well known to those whom he addressed.

In this recital of his labors and sufferings, in the determination he expresses to hold on his way, come what might, in the deep solicitude he manifests for the welfare of this church, and in the solemn charge he gives to the Elders, we see what every minister should aim to be. May we feel that this weighty charge is given to us, may a holy ambition fill our hearts to follow after this bright example.

Blessed is that minister who, at the close of his labors, has the testimony of an enlightened conscience, that he is pure from the blood of all men.

What is the meaning of the text? *I take you to record, I solemnly testify, that I am pure from the blood of all men.* To be guilty of the blood of a man is to be criminally accessory to his death.

Therefore to be pure from the blood of a man is to be pure from the guilt of his death, to be free from blame in regard to his death. Thus when Pilate said to the Jews respecting Jesus, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person," he meant, I am innocent of his death; the guilt of his death rests not on me, but on you.

But most evidently, in our text the Apostle refers to a death far more dreadful than that of the body. It is the second death, the destruction of the soul, to which he refers.

The unfaithful preacher is accessory to the ruin of the souls of his hearers, he is guilty of the blood of their souls.

But Paul had discharged his duty, and could say "I am pure from the blood of all men"—in other words, "Should any of those among you, to whom I have preached the gospel, die the second death, I am

innocent of their death." On another occasion, he employed similar language, and evidently with a similar meaning. Having testified to the Jews of Corinth that Jesus was the Messiah, they opposed themselves and blasphemed—he then shook his raiment, and said unto them. "Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." As if he had said, "I have testified to you that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, the only name by which you can be saved. Rejecting him, you will perish, but I shall be innocent of your destruction."

It is probable that the Apostle, on both these occasions, had in his thoughts the solemn charge which Jehovah gave to the prophet Ezekiel.

"Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

"I am pure from the blood of all men, FOR I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

You see then, brethren, what course we must pursue, if we would not be criminally accessory to the ruin of our hearers—we must declare unto them all the counsel of God.

Much is included in this.

I. We must ascertain what is the counsel of God; what truths he has revealed to us to believe, and what duties he has enjoined on us to do. As the Deity has made known his will to us in the Bible, the preacher, making that his only and infallible standard of belief

and practice, must search its sacred pages with diligence, candor, humility and prayer. It will be of great advantage to him to compare one part of the Bible with another—to trace the connexion between the Old Testament and the New, between the types and shadows in the former and their accomplishment in the latter, between the prophecies set forth in the one, and their fulfilment recorded in the other—and especially to mark how the predictions which announce the coming of the Redeemer grow more and more distinct and luminous, the nearer they approach to the period of his manifestation in the flesh. The midnight darkness which succeeded the fall of man was relieved by one ray of light, and gradually did that light increase, until the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings.

The minister of the Gospel must diligently and perseveringly study the Bible, and meditate in it day and night, not only to strengthen and confirm his faith in the more obvious and prominent truths it teaches, but also that he may feel more and more of their importance and excellency.—Such study will present these truths in new and most interesting lights, will furnish striking illustrations by which they may be explained, and powerful arguments by which they may be supported, and affecting considerations by which they may be enforced, and energetic modes of expression which may be employed in declaring them to the people: the result moreover of such study will be the discovery of many rich and soul-stirring thoughts or combinations of thought, fitted to excite the attention of men, and to produce, through the Divine blessing, the most salutary effects. “Every scribe, who is instructed into the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

But while the preacher endeavors to become familiar with the whole field of Revelation, and to gather rich fruits from every part for the benefit of his hearers, the two topics on which he will principally insist, are Repentance towards God and Faith towards our

Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the course pursued by the Apostle.

Clear and distinct views of the nature of repentance are of the first importance. He who calls upon men to repent and turn to God must have correct views of that Holy Being, against whom every sin is committed—of that law, of which every sin is a violation—and of the depravity of the human heart, that bitter fountain whence flow all those streams of wickedness which defile the world. He must clearly perceive—that repentance includes something more than mere conviction of sin, however strong that conviction may be—that there is a wide and essential difference between sorrow in view of the punishment of sin, and sorrow for sin itself,—that true repentance implies love to God, the Being sinned against, and love to his law, of which sin is the transgression—that it is the turning of the heart from sin to God—that it leads invariably to confession of sin, and prayer, to self-loathing and deep humiliation—to the forsaking of every evil way, and to restitution for the injuries we may have done to the reputation or property of others.

The considerations which urge men to exercise this repentance, he must also clearly understand. God commands them to repent—and it is reasonable that they should repent—and unreasonable in the highest degree that they should go on still in their trespasses ; it is impossible for the human soul to be happy, while under the dominion of sin ; repentance is essentially requisite, from the very nature of things, to a participation in the blessings of the Gospel,—while continued impenitence is fitting the soul to be fuel for the unquenchable fire.

It is of equal importance for him to have a right knowledge of that other great point, Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, which implies a knowledge of his true character, of his incarnation, life and death, of the atonement he has made for sin, by offering up himself to death—and a conviction of our state as sinners, condemned by the righteous law we have broken—and a renunciation of all confidence in our own

works for acceptance with an holy God, together with an entire reliance on the death of Christ for salvation, and a cordial reception of Him as our Prophet, Priest and King. There is, furthermore, involved in this faith, a supreme love to the Saviour, and a sincere purpose to live to Him, and to do all his commandments,—and it might easily be shewn that this faith is inseparably connected with repentance, and indeed that the one involves the other.

The preacher, who is instructed by the word and Spirit of God, knows that, while faith and repentance are duties incumbent on men, and to be enforced by every proper motive, they are also fruits of the Spirit, graces wrought in the heart by His special influence ; and that therefore that influence is to be sought in fervent prayer. The great truth, that a divine influence is requisite to originate in the heart repentance and faith, is entirely consistent with another great truth, that it is the duty of all who hear the Gospel to believe it, and to repent of their sins. Both truths are taught in the Bible with equal plainness, and therefore must be consistent one with the other. This would be certain, even if we could not trace the consistency. But indeed; where is there so much as an apparent inconsistency even to our narrow minds ?—Because men are averse to obeying these two great commands of their Maker, Repent and Believe the Gospel, are they therefore absolved from their obligation to obey Him ? If unwillingness to obey releases us from our obligation, then the standard of duty is, not what God commands, but, what we are inclined to do ; consequently, every man, in doing as he pleases, does right ; consequently, there is no sin in the world, and the law and the gospel are both annihilated.

But, my hearers, a principle fraught with such horrid consequences cannot be correct. Unwillingness however great, to do our duty, does not in the least degree impair our obligations. Even if that unwillingness be so great, that a divine influence alone can

remove it, still this does not at all diminish our obligation.

God commands men to repent and believe the Gospel—they are under obligations, which cannot be annulled, to obey ; these commands we must urge, the reasons which enforce them we must exhibit, the consequences of complying or not complying we must fully declare. Thus doing as divine Authority requires, we may hope that, by his blessing accompanying our word, men will see their obligation, will feel their criminality, their entire dependence on God, their pressing need of his mercy ; and will be prepared to receive the salvation of the Gospel as a gift bestowed gratuitously on beings who deserve to perish.

2. The counsel of God, we must DECLARE unto our hearers. Our duty is to bear our testimony to the great truths of the Gospel.

This testimony we must declare *intelligibly*. Our language should be such as the great body of our hearers can understand. It may be such, and yet not be offensive to the most learned and exact hearer.

What is the great object of preaching ? It is to convey the truths of the Gospel to the minds of men, for the purpose of enlightening their understandings, awakening their consciences, and producing right affections in their hearts, and thus promoting their salvation :—but if the preacher employ language which the audience cannot understand, this great object is defeated. And it is grievous that precious time should be wasted—and such opportunities of doing good lost—and the souls of men trifled with.—And let not that man think that he shall be held guiltless of the blood of his hearers.

We must declare the testimony of God with due *seriousness*. In such a world as this, seriousness is not unbecoming any place, where a rational being should be willing to be found : but in the house of worship, its absence occasions a shocking incongruity, and especially if the defect be in him, who stands forth the messenger of God.

“ He that negociates between God and man,
As God’s ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech.”

What man would jest or make mirth over the grave of a brother, or on his own dying bed ? Who will be otherwise than serious, when the last trumpet hath sounded, and the dead are standing before the tribunal, and the books are displayed, and the gates of heaven and of hell stand open to receive the blessed and the cursed ? But we believe, my brethren, that these things will be ; and our faith in respect to them ought to be so strong and lively as to bring them near to our hearts, and cause them to influence our public ministrations with all the power of a present reality.

If the infinitely momentous realities of religion do not affect with deep seriousness him whose office it is to proclaim them, and even while proclaiming them, what good impression can he expect to make on his hearers by any thing he may say !

We must declare our testimony *affectionately*. To us is committed the ministry of reconciliation. We who are sinners, come to our fellow sinners to announce to them the glad tidings of the pardon, which we have received and which is held out to them. We preach that Gospel in which the infinite love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is exhibited—a love which passeth knowledge. Bearing such a message, with what affection should it be delivered ! All bitterness and harshness, every thing in short that is incompatible with the most tender affection to the souls of the people, should be laid aside ; and especially should this be done, when we state to them the dreadful consequences resulting from neglecting so great salvation.

“ In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings

of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips ; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. Of whom I have told you before, said St. Paul, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. What force does that affecting declaration derive from these tears ! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker. Whoever has attended to the effect of addresses from the pulpit, must have perceived how much of their impression depends upon this quality, which gives to sentiments comparatively trite, a power over the mind beyond what the most striking and original conceptions possess without it.”*

We must speak with *earnestness*. The things we utter are in themselves great, and to ourselves and our hearers deeply interesting. We deliver a message which, if obeyed insures the salvation, if rejected, the condemnation of our hearers. The preacher addresses those who with him are hastening to the judgment seat of Christ—where he and they must give account. Each sermon he preaches may be the last some of his auditors may hear, the last he himself may preach.—To be indifferent and lifeless in such circumstances is amazingly inconsistent, and evinces a most deplorable deficiency of faith and love.

We must preach *directly to our hearers*. Not satisfied with general statements of the truths of religion, we must make a particular application of them. We shall of course avoid singling out any of our hearers, and rendering them the object of a personal attack ; but nevertheless, we shall be direct and close in our addresses, that those before us may perceive,

* Robert Hall.

all of them, that they are the persons to whom we speak.

Those who attend on our ministry are of different classes:—some are impenitent, some are believers, some are anxious in a greater or less degree in respect to the concerns of their souls:—of the impenitent, some are altogether thoughtless and treat religion as if it were a mere nullity; while others cherish feelings of hostility towards it: there are great diversities also among believers, as to knowledge and piety, and outward circumstances.

Of our hearers some are young, some aged, some in affliction, some in a state of prosperity—some are in danger of sustaining great spiritual injury from one temptation, and some from another, widely different.

All these varieties of character and condition call for a corresponding variety in the instructions of the pulpit—and truth, which is essentially the same, is inexhaustibly copious, and capable of being applied, indeed it is suited, to all the changes which occur in society, and to all the diversities which exist among men.

But thus to apply the truth to the individuals of his congregation, to their various characters, trials, dangers and wants, and to avail himself of the interesting events which, from time to time, are occurring among his people or the world at large, for illustrating and enforcing the great principles of religion, requires on the part of the minister most wakeful attention and no little mental labor.

In no other part of his work will he feel a deeper solicitude than in explaining the nature and genuine effects of vital piety. He will carefully distinguish it from every specious appearance, clearly exhibit its purifying influence on the understanding, the conscience, the affections of the heart, the will, the character, the conduct of men—and fully shew that it is an abiding principle, leading to actual perseverance in holy affections and Christian practice, till the end of life: and should any of his hearers die self-deceived, that preacher has delivered his soul.

3. We must declare the counsel of God, not only *publicly* but from *house to house*. Thus did Paul at Ephesus.

We have a most inadequate view of our duty as preachers of the word, if we suppose it confined to our public ministrations. We must enter the dwellings of our hearers ; we must gain access to them face to face, and present to them, with all the familiarity and freedom of personal intercourse, the same truths we proclaim from the pulpit.

In his daily visits among his people, the faithful pastor pursues his great work : sensible that he is watching for souls as one that must give account, and bent on promoting their salvation, he avails himself of the peculiar advantages which personal converse affords, for speaking with directness and particularity, for fuller illustration of truth, and greater minuteness of detail in respect to it, and for personal inquiry.— Here, he will be able to ascertain the state of the individuals among whom he exercises his ministry—and will be guided to subjects of discourse, both in public and in private, appropriate to their state. Here, he will have excellent opportunity to say many things, which though of great utility, it is difficult properly to express in the pulpit.

In this department of our work, brethren, we must be instant in season, and out of season—and prompt to obey every call which may summon us to the chamber of disease and the house of mourning. And especially necessary is it to cherish that solemn, tender and affectionate spirit, that lively sensibility to the evil of sin, and to possess that clearness of apprehension in regard to the way of salvation, without which we are lamentably unprepared to converse with those who are asking, “What shall we do to be saved ?”

The servants of Him, who came to seek the lost, we must search out the poor and forsaken, esteeming their souls of inestimable value, and the salvation of *one* merely, a greater achievement than the conquest of a world ; and surely we cannot overlook the children of the families we visit, when we think of the

kind and condescending deportment of Jesus towards the young. Nor can we forget the Sabbath School—rather, we shall manifest a deep and lively interest in its welfare: often visiting it, and ready, if Providence calls, and other engagements leave time and strength, to take an active part in its operations.

4. Our habitual deportment must correspond with our ministrations: and this implies something farther than a life strictly moral; a course of conduct unstained by vice, or immorality of any kind, individuals have manifested, who yet reject Divine Revelation. More than this is justly expected of every christian, and especially of him who sustains the sacred office.

His deportment should be in agreement with the truths he proclaims. It should strike conviction on the minds of men, that he believes those truths, feels their power, and lives under their influence. What are these truths? There is a God, holy, just and good, faithful to his word, infinite in all perfection:—man has fallen from his original righteousness; having violated the law of his Maker, he is under its curse: Christ has died to redeem men from this curse: all who believe in Him shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; but they who believe not will perish: this life is the only state of probation allotted to man: “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;” the happiness of the righteous will be eternal, and the punishment of the wicked eternal.

Now, my brethren, what should be the deportment of a man who believes these doctrines, whose daily duty it is to declare them?

What seriousness of demeanor, what untiring diligence in his sphere of duty, what superiority to sordid, selfish, groveling motives ought to be expected in him? Can he indulge in levity and foolish talking and jesting; can he take a deep interest in political contests, and be known as a zealous partisan; can he entangle himself with the affairs of this life, and pursue with

eagerness its riches or honors or pleasures ; can he waste his precious hours in indolence, or in visits of ceremony ?

5. That we may be pure from the blood of all men, fervent supplications must accompany our preaching. Like the Apostles, we must give ourselves to *prayer* as well as to the ministry of the word.

The spirit of prayer is of vast importance, of indispensable necessity, to the Christian minister. Possessing this, he will be successful in his diligent efforts to ascertain what the Holy Spirit teaches in the sacred writings. This will give to his views of divine truth a vividness, distinctness and freshness, which will be of special use to him in explaining and enforcing them in the public assembly or in private conversation.

By prayer, he obtains from above that Divine Influence which enables him to preach the Gospel as it ought to be preached. Communion with God in prayer has a most powerful tendency to render his whole deportment such as becomes an ambassador of Christ, such as gives great weight to his testimony.— In answer to his petitions, the Holy Spirit will from time to time direct his mind to such subjects as shall be adapted to the state of the people he addresses ;— and, Divine energy accompanying the word, men will be converted from the error of their ways, and the Church of Christ built up in their most holy faith : for you are aware, brethren, that the influence of the Holy Spirit is indispensably requisite to render our labors successful. “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”

These then are the things we must do, if we would not be guilty of the blood of souls. We must consecrate ourselves wholly to our great work, and, as far as we can, consistently with the duty we owe to our families, separate ourselves from secular cares and pursuits, and do every thing in our power, according to the measure of our strength of body, and capacity of mind, to promote the salvation of the people com-

mitted to our charge, and of all others, as opportunity may occur.

APPLICATION.

1. To the Pastors and Preachers present, this subject addresses itself.

In how great a work, Fathers and Brethren, are we occupied! Its magnitude cannot be expressed, for it has reference to the souls of men; and its object is to save those souls from eternal death, and guide them to endless bliss.

What an immense responsibility rests upon us.— We watch for souls *as those that must give account*. To the Chief Shepherd who appointed us we must give account, as to the manner in which we have discharged our ministry; as to what we have done to save those who hear us, and what we have left undone.

This responsibility, if we are the ministers of Christ, if the Holy Ghost has made us overseers of the flock, we cannot throw off; nor lay down our work without incurring great guilt, and exposing ourselves to his awful rebukes and chastenings. No, brethren, we have opened our mouth unto the Lord, and we cannot go back. Forward then let us go, relying on His promise who hath said, "Lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, may we fulfil this ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus, even as the Apostle labored, "striving according to His working which wrought in him mightily."

My dear Brethren, in looking back on the past, can we each say—I am pure from the blood of all men? Have we studied the Bible as diligently as we ought? Have we preached always with the seriousness, earnestness and warm affection, which the truths we utter, and the condition of our fellow men, demand? Have we preached from house to house as well as publicly? Has our habitual and whole deportment corresponded with the truths we preach? Have we continued instant in prayer, and taken diligent heed to ourselves, and

done all we could to advance the spiritual interests of our hearers ?

For one, I cannot answer these questions in the affirmative. When I call to remembrance my past ministry, I find frequent occasion to exclaim, "Woe is me!" and were it not that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and is able to take away even this blood-guiltiness, what could preserve me from despair ?

Is it thus, brethren, with you ? I am forcibly reminded of the words of the zealous and useful Leigh Richmond, spoken when on the borders of the eternal world, to a brother minister—"Brother, we are only half awake—we are none of us more than half awake."

Let us now begin to do the work which Christ has given us.

Here on this solemn festival, before the Churches, before our fellow men, let us confess our deficiencies, implore the pardoning mercy of our God and Saviour, and consecrate ourselves anew to our work.

O God, who hast called us by thy grace, and given unto us this great privilege, to make known to men the unsearchable riches of Christ, we acknowledge before thee that we have not done our duty. In the study of thy word, in our public preaching, and private conversation, we have been greatly deficient :—too often have we neglected prayer, and failed in that entire devotedness to thy service, which is our privilege as well as duty. We know, O Lord, that our deportment has not uniformly been coincident with the truths we preach. We fear that we are not pure from the blood of all men. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O thou God of our salvation, for the sake of Him who died for us.

Help us solemnly to consecrate ourselves anew to the service of the Redeemer. To thee who hast put us into the ministry, we devote our souls and bodies, our talents, our acquirements, our time—all we are and have. We are thine. Henceforth may we live more entirely to thee. Give us the Spirit of the ministry—make us faithful even unto death—render our

labors eminently successful in promoting thy kingdom, and the salvation of the souls of men—and when our work is done on earth, receive us to thyself in glory.—Amen.

2. This subject addresses itself to the brethren who are not preachers. Do we not greatly need your sympathy, co-operation and prayers? With so vast a responsibility pressing upon us, occupied in a work which requires so much vigilance, prudence, zeal, tenderness, energy, fervent piety, and unremitting efforts both of body and mind, we beseech you to help us.—Do what you can to relieve us from the burden of worldly cares, and to enable us to give ourselves wholly to the ministry. Co-operate with us in all our efforts to promote the spirituality of the Church, and her fruitfulness in good works. Cheer us in our toils, by exhibiting in your lives the fruits of the Spirit, by evincing a deep interest in the prosperity of the Church, by a constant attendance on all her meetings, whether on the Sabbath or on other days, by well directed exertions in behalf of the souls of your fellow men around you, by a lively and persevering interest in Sabbath Schools, and in every benevolent object which calls for your exertions, your alms, and your prayers. So live that we may appeal to you as proofs of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion. And especially, do we beseech you, brethren, that ye strive together with us in your prayers to God for us. This we ask with the most importunate intreaty.

3. My impenitent hearers, this subject addresses you. You are exposed to death, the second death, the everlasting death of the soul. If we declare to you the whole counsel of God, if we give you warning from Him, and you refuse or neglect to hear our message, your blood will be upon your own head. O how certain it is, that you, that all impenitent men, are in danger of everlasting death. For, if it be not so, if at death, all go to heaven, as some affirm, our text would be void of meaning. But there is a future punishment, for God hath said it, and if you suffer it, my hearers, it will come upon you, not because you

were not warned of your danger, or because the blessings of the Gospel were not sincerely offered to you, or because you had not space for repentance, but because you would not take warning, you would not come to Christ that you might have life ; you chose not to walk in the narrow way that leadeth to life, you persisted in choosing the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. Therefore you yourselves brought down ruin upon your own souls.

But think, dear hearers, how dreadful it will be to perish from under the sound of the Gospel ; to have salvation bro't. so near to you, and yet reject it ; to make shipwreck in full view of the harbor of endless rest. And think, under what an aggravated condemnation you will perish. It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for those who never heard the Gospel than for you who reject it. O then hearken to the voice of the Lord.—“ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked : but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.”

“ Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”