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SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL
THE GOSPEL MINISTER

The Duty Of A Pastor To His People

2 TIMOTHY 4:16

by John Gill

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*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psalm 60:4*

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SERMON 71

THE DUTY OF A PASTOR TO HIS PEOPLE

*Preached At The Ordination Of The Reverend
George Braithwaite, M.A. March 28, 1734.*

~~SERMON~~ 2 TIMOTHY 4:16

*Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine;
for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself,
and them that hear thee.*

The part of the work of this day assigned to me, is to give a word of exhortation to you, my Brother, who have been at this time solemnly ordained a pastor or overseer of this church. Your long standing, and usefulness in the ministry, might justly excuse every thing of this kind, did not custom, and the nature of this day's service, seem to require it. You will therefore suffer a word of exhortation, though it comes from a junior minister, since you know in what situation we are; our senior ministers are gone off the stage of this world, who used to fill up this place, and whose years best became it: *Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? Give me leave to address you in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles to Timothy, Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and than that hear thee; since this epistle was written, not for his sake only, but for the use and service also of other ministers of the gospel in succeeding ages;* that they might know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. *In it the apostle gives a large account of the proper qualifications of the officers of churches, bishops, and deacons; and in this chapter descends to some particular advice and directions to Timothy,* and which are designed for the benefit and advantage of other preachers of the word, and pastors of churches. I shall not take any notice of them here, seeing I shall have occasion to make use of them in some parts of the following discourse; and *I shall therefore immediately attend to the words of my text, in which may be observed,*

I. A charge or exhortation given to *Timothy*.

II. Some reasons to support it, and engage his regard unto it.

I. Here is a charge or exhortation given, which consists of three parts:

First, To take heed to himself.

Secondly, To take heed to his doctrine.

Thirdly, To continue therein.

First, *The apostle exhorts Timothy to, Take heed to himself.* This is not to be understood of him merely as a man, that he should take care of his bodily health, his outward concerns of life, or make provision for his family, if he had any; not but that these things are to be equally regarded by a minister of the gospel, as by any other person. Though he ought to be diligent in his studies, laborious in his work, and preach, the gospel *in season and out of season*; yet he ought to be careful of the health of his body, and not destroy his natural constitution. The words of the wise man are applicable to our present purpose,

be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise, why shouldest thou destroy thyself? (^{<20716>}Ecclesiastes 7:16)

The apostle *Paul*, in this epistle, advises *Timothy* to take care of himself in this sense, seeing he had much work upon his hands, and but of a weakly constitution; he exhorts him, that he would

drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities; (^{<54823>}1 Timothy 5:23)

and it is alike true of a minister as of any other man, what is elsewhere said,

If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

(^{<54888>}1 Timothy 5:8)

But this is not what the apostle has here in view, when he says *take heed to thyself*.

Nor is this exhortation, given to *Timothy* under the character of a believer, or private christian. There are some things which are common to ministers, and. private Christians; their cases, in some respects, are alike, and

cautions to them are equally necessary: they have the same corruptions, are subject to the same temptations, and liable to the same daily failings and infirmities; and therefore such, whether ministers or people, who think they stand, should *take heed lest they fall*. Unbelief, and distrust of divine providence, presence, power, and assistance, have a place in the hearts of ministers as well as others, and sometimes rise to a considerable pitch, and do very much prevail; when such advice as this must be needful, *take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. There are many instances which might be produced, in which this exhortation would appear to be suitable to *Timothy*, and so to any other gospel minister, considered as a believer and a christian.

But I apprehend, that the apostle regards him in his ministerial capacity, as a preacher of the word; and is desirous, that he would take heed to himself, as a minister, and *to the ministry which he had received in the Lord, that he fulfill it*. It becomes a minister of the gospel to take heed to his gifts bestowed upon him, by which he is qualified for his work, that he does not lose, but use and improve them; to his time, that he spends it aright, and does not squander it away; of the errors and heresies which are in the world, that he is not infected by them; to his spirit, temper, and passions, that he is not governed by them; to his life and conversation, that it be exemplary, becoming his office, and makes for the glory of God; and to the flock committed to his care, which is the other part of himself.

1. A minister ought to take heed to his gifts bellowed upon him, whereby he is qualified for the work of the ministry. Jesus Christ, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, such as were proper to furnish, and fit them for ministerial service; and he has given them to men,

he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists,
and some pastors, and teachers: (Ephesians 4:11)

that is, he gave gifts, to qualify them for these several offices; and he still continues to give gifts to some, by which they become capable of discharging the work and office of pastors of churches; and where these are given, they ought to be taken care of.

Now, a minister of the gospel should take heed to his gifts, that he does not lose them.

The gifts, and calling of God are without repentance.
(Romans 11:29)

Gifts of special and saving grace are irreversible; God never repents of them, or revokes them, or calls them in; where they are once bestowed, they are never taken away; but gifts fitting men for public work and usefulness, as they may be where true grace is not, so they may be removed, when saving grace never will. This we may learn from the parable of the talents, where our Lord says,

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (~~4153~~ Matthew 25:29, 30)

Wo therefore to the Idol Shepherd, (~~8117~~ Zechariah 11:17)

the shepherd of no account, who is good for nothing; for *an idol is nothing in the world*; who *leaveth the flock*, makes no use of his gifts, deserts his station, forsakes the flock; *the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened*. All his light and knowledge, his abilities and usefulness, shall be taken from him. Hence the apostle exhorts *Timothy*, *to keep by the holy Ghost the good thing which was committed to him*; by which he means, not grace, but either the gospel, or the gift of preaching it; grace cannot, gifts may be lost.

Moreover, a gospel minister should take heed to his gifts, that he uses them

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, says the apostle to Timothy; which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (~~5014~~ 1 Timothy 4:14)

A minister may be tempted to neglect, lay aside, and disuse his gifts, for want of success in his work, or because of the flight and contempt which may be cast upon him, or by reason of the rage, fury, and persecutions of men; something of this nature was discouraging to *Timothy* in the exercise of his gifts, which occasioned the apostle to

put him in remembrance, that, says he, thou stir up the gift of God: which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God. (~~5106~~ 2 Timothy 1:6-8)

As if he should say, “Let not that gift which God has bestowed upon thee lie dormant, and be neglected by thee, through a timorous and cowardly spirit; but boldly and bravely preach the gospel of the grace of God, though thou art sure to endure much affliction and persecution.” Wo to that man, who, from any consideration whatever, wraps up his talent in a napkin, and hides it in the earth; such an one Christ, at the great day of account, will call *wicked and slothful* ; and give orders to

cast such an unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (~~<4026>~~ Matthew 25:26, 30).

Besides, a minister ought not only to take heed that he uses his gifts, but also that he improves them; and indeed, they are generally improved by using. Gifts, like pieces of armor, through disuse, grow rusty, ^{f1} but the more they are worn the brighter they are. There are several things, which have a tendency to improve, and, with the blessing, of God, do improve spiritual gifts, such as prayer, meditation, and reading. These the apostle directed *Timothy* to, for the improvement of his mind:

Till I come says he, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; (~~<5015>~~ 1 Timothy 4:15)

meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, (Υς τούτοις ιοδευι) or, be thou in them; be constantly intent upon them, *that thy profiting may appear to all, (Ες πασιν)* or in all things, that is, in all parts of useful knowledge. It is the duty of ministers to *stir up the gift of God which is in them.* (~~<5016>~~ 2 Timothy 1:6) Gifts are sometimes like coals of fire, covered and buried in ashes, to which there is an allusion in this passage, ^{f2} which must be stirred up, or blown off, that they may revive and be re-inflamed, and so communicate more light and heat. It is true, ministers cannot procure gifts for themselves, nor increase them of themselves; but God is pleased to give to his servants greater abilities, more light and knowledge, in the diligent use of means, *for unto every one that hath, that is, that has gifts, and makes use of all proper methods to improve them, shall be given, and he shall have abundance.*

2. A minister ought to take heed to his time, that he spends it aright, and does not squander it away. Time is precious, and ought to be redeemed, and diligently improved, by all sorts of men; but by none more than the ministers of the gospel, who should spend it in frequent prayer, constant meditation, and in daily reading the scriptures, and the writings of good

men; which are transmitted to posterity for the benefit and advantage of the churches of Christ. They should give themselves up wholly to these things, and daily, and diligently study *to shew* themselves

approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (~~8125~~ 2 Timothy 2:25)

They ought not to spend their time in an unprofitable manner, or in needless and unnecessary visits. It is a mistake which prevails among church-members, that they must be visited, and that very often: if ministers are not continually calling on them they think themselves neglected, and are much displeased; not considering, that Ouch a frequency of visits, as is desired by them, must be the bane and ruin of what might otherwise be a very valuable ministry; and at the same time furnishes an idle and lazy preacher with a good excuse to neglect his studies, and that with a great deal of peace and quietness of conscience, whilst he fancies he is about his ministerial work. I would not be understood, as though I thought that visits were needless things, and that they are no part of a minister's work: I am sensible, that he ought to *be diligent to know the state of his flock*; and that it is his business to visit the members of the church, at proper times, and on proper occasions; what I complain of, is the too great frequency of visits as is desired, and when they are unnecessary.

3. A minister ought to take heed to himself, that he is not infected with the errors and heresies which are in the world. There always have been, and still are, heretics among men, and there must be; *that they which are approved*, are faithful and approved ministers of Christ, might be *made manifest*, to the churches, and the world, by their zeal for truth, and against error. And whereas ministers, as well as others, are liable to have their *minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*, and to be *led away with the error of the wicked*, and *for all from their own steadfastness*; it becomes them therefore, to take heed to themselves. This was the reason of the apostle's advice to the elders of the church at *Ephesus*, at his taking his leave of them; when he said to them, *take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock*: — *for*, says he, *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*. Take heed, beware therefore, of these perverse men and things, left you also be drawn after them, and be carried away by them. Our Lord Jesus Christ thought it necessary to exhort his own disciples, to

beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees; and to take heed, that they were not deceived by false Christs, and false prophets. Ministers, of all men, ought to be most careful to shun error, and avoid false doctrines; since their seduction may be the means of a greater spread of them, and of the ruin of multitudes of souls.

4. A minister ought to take heed to his spirit, his temper, and his passions, that he is not governed by them. The preachers of the gospel are men of like passions with others: Some of Christ's disciples were very hot, fiery, and passionate; they were for calling for *fire from heaven* to consume such who had displeased them; hence our Lord said unto them,

Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲥ Luke 9:55)

One that has the government of his passions, and can rule his own spirit and temper, is very fit to rule in the church of God.

He that is flow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh, a city. (ⲁⲓⲙⲉⲛ Proverbs 16:32)

But if a man is influenced and governed by his passions, he will be led by them to take indirect and imprudent steps; and to manage affairs with partiality, to the prejudice of the church, and members of it.

5. A minister ought to take heed to his life and conversation, that it be exemplary to those who are under his care. Private Christians may, and ought to be examples one to another; they should be *careful to maintain*, (ⲡⲣⲟⲓϥⲁⲟⲩⲑⲁⲓ ⲥⲁⲣⲣⲥ Titus 3:8) or go before each other in *good works*; but more especially, ministers ought to be *examples to the flock*. This is the advice the apostle gave *Timothy* ;

be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (ⲥⲟⲓⲙⲓⲛ 1 Timothy 4:12).

They ought to be careful how they behave themselves in their families, in the church, and in the world; that they give *no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed*, and so become useless and unprofitable. This was what the apostle *Paul* was careful of, with respect to himself, and his ministry;

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection. (ⲁⲓⲛⲉⲧⲥ 1 Corinthians 9:27)

I do not indulge, but deny myself all carnal lusts and pleasures, *left that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*; that is, not one rejected of God, or a reprobate; for he knew whom he had believed, and was *persuaded, that nothing could separate him from the love of God*; he had no fearful apprehensions of this kind; though he was jealous and cautious, left: he should be guilty of misconduct in his outward conversation among men; and so become **αδοκιμος** rejected, and disapproved of by men, and be useless in his ministry. Every Christian ought to *adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*, but most especially the preachers of it their *lights* should so shine *before men, that they seeing their good works, may glorify their father which is in heaven*. The name of God, the ways of Christ, and the truths of the gospel, are blasphemed, and spoken evil of, through the scandalous lives of professors, and especially ministers. Nothing is more abominable ^{f3} than that one, whose business it is to instruct and reprove others, is himself notoriously culpable; to such a person and case, the words of the apostle are very applicable,

Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?
 Thou that preacheest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest, a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit, adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you. (~~8121~~ Romans 2:21-24).

6. A minister ought to take heed to the flock, committed to his care; which is but the other part of himself. There is a mutual relation, a close union, between a pastor and, a church; they are in some, sense one, and, their interests are one; so that. a pallor, by *taking heed to himself* takes heed to his flock, and by *taking heed to his flock* takes heed to himself, Hence these two are joined together in the apostle's advice to the elders of the church at *Ephesus*,

Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church.
 (~~4118~~ Acts 20:28).

Pastors of churches should be careful that they feed the saints with knowledge and understanding; that they feed. the flock, and not themselves; that they perform the whole office of faithful shepherds to them; that they strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up the broken,

bring again that which was driven away, and seek up that which was lost; all which they should take diligent heed unto, since they must be accountable to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, for all those who are under their care. But so much for the *first* branch of the exhortation; I proceed to consider,

Secondly, *The second part of the charge, which is to, Take heed to his doctrine, that is, to the doctrine to which he has attained, which he has a knowledge of, and ought to preach to others; otherwise the doctrine is not his own but another's; as Christ says of himself as man,*

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. (☞⁴³⁷⁶ John 7:16)

Christ received his doctrine from his Father, and his ministers receive it from him, and deliver it to the people. The doctrine which a gospel minister preaches, is in the same sense his, in which the apostle *Paul* calls the gospel, *my gospel*, or *our gospel*; not that it was a system of doctrines drawn up, and composed by him; but what was given him by the revelation of Christ, was committed to his trust, what he ought to preach, and in which he was made useful to the souls of many.

Now a minister ought to take heed to his doctrine, that it be according to the scriptures,

all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, (☞⁴³⁸⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16)

True doctrine springs from it, is agreeable to it, and may be confirmed and established by it; therefore

if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God (☞⁴³⁹¹ 1 Peter 4:11)

He should be careful, that his doctrine has a place in the word of God, that it takes its rise from it, is consonant to it, and capable of being proved by it:

To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (☞⁴³⁸⁰ Isaiah 8:20)

Whatever doctrines do not spring from these fountains of light and truth, or are disagreeable to them, must be accounted *divers and strange doctrines*.

Care should also be taken by a minister of the gospel, that his doctrine be the doctrine of Christ; that is, such as Christ himself preached, which he has delivered out by revelation to others, and of which he is the sum and substance.

We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. (~~<402>~~ 1 Corinthians 1:23)

This doctrine is most likely to be useful for the conversion of sinners, and comfort of saints; and a man that does not bring this with him is to be discouraged and rejected

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed. (~~<600>~~ 2 John 9,10).

Moreover, a minister should take heed that his doctrine be the same with that of the apostles. It was the glory of the primitive christians, that *they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine*; and it must be the excellency of a man's ministry, that it is agreeable to *that faith which was once delivered to the saints*. Jesus Christ received his doctrine from his Father, which he delivered to his apostles:

I have given unto them says he, the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them; (~~<878>~~ John 17:8)

who also were guided by the spirit of truth into all truth, as it is in Jesus; and under the inspiration of the same spirit have left the whole of it in writing to the churches of Christ; which should be the standard of a gospel-ministry throughout all generations.

Besides, it becomes a preacher of the Word to be careful that the doctrine he teaches be *according to godliness*; that it is not contrary to the moral perfections of God, or has a tendency to promote a loose and licentious life; but that it is agreeable to, and may be a means of increasing, both internal and external holiness. Sin, as it is a transgression of the law, so it is *contrary to sound doctrine*; which sound doctrine is

according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.
(~~<500>~~ 1 Timothy 1:10, 11)

The gospel no more countenances sin, than the law does; the *grace of God*, the doctrine of the grace of God, *that bringeth salvation*, the news of it to sinners, *hath appeared to all men, Gentiles as well as Jews; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Whatever doctrines are subversive of true piety, or strike at the life and power of godliness, are to be rejected:

if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strifes, railings, evil furnishings, etc. (~~500B~~ 1 Timothy 6:3-5).

Again, it is highly necessary, that a pastor of a church should be careful that his doctrine be such as makes for the edification of the people; it ought to be solid and substantial, suited to their capacities, and what is food convenient for them; he should nor, therefore, *give heed to fables, and endless genealogies*; he ought, in his ministry, to *shun prophane and vain babblings, and oppositions of silence, fairly so called*. He should *not strive about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers*; and should carefully and diligently

avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strifes. (~~500B~~ 1 Timothy 1:4; ~~506B~~ 6:20; ~~512B~~ 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23).

In a word, he should take heed, that his doctrine be found and incorrupt, pure. and unmixed, and that it be all of a piece, and consistent with itself. He ought to speak *the things which become sound, doctrine*; that is, such things as are agreeable to it, and consistent with it, and which are wholesome and healthful to the souls of men. In his doctrine he ought to shew *uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity*, and use

sound speech, which cannot be condemned; (~~506B~~ Titus 2:1, 7, 8)

he should not teach *for doctrines the commandments of men*, or join, or mix divine truths with human inventions. The chaff and the wheat should be kept separate; nor should he blend law and gospel, grace and works together; and so be like them that *corrupt the word of God*, καπηλευοντες τον λογον του Θεου, “adulterate it, by mixing it with their own fancies;” as unfair dealers in liquors mix water with them, which

is the sense of the word here used; *but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God,* ^{f4} should a gospel-minister *speak in Christ*. He ought to take heed that what he preaches is consistent with itself; that it has no *yea and nay*, no contradiction in it, and does not destroy itself; and so bring a reproach upon him, and he become useless to his hearers;

for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle? (~~4648~~ 1 Corinthians 14:8)

consistence, harmony, and connection of things with each other, are the beauty and glory of a man's ministry; which must needs recommend it, and make it most useful, profitable and pleasant.

It is also very adviseable that he take heed that he express his doctrine in the best manner, and to the best advantage. He ought to be careful about the manner as well as the matter of his ministry; that he speak plainly, intelligibly, and boldly, the gospel, as it ought to be spoken: Elocution, which is a gift of utterance, a freedom of expression, with propriety of language, is one of the gifts fitting for public usefulness in the work of the ministry; and which may be improved by the use of proper means. The example of the royal preacher is worthy of our imitation,

because the preacher was wise he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs: the preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth: (~~2179~~ Ecclesiastes 12:9, 10)

he not only fought for proper and agreeable truths, but was careful to express them in the most acceptable manner.

To conclude this head; when a minister has used his care and diligence about his doctrine, that it be according to the scriptures, agreeable to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles; that it be according to godliness, and makes for the use of edifying; that it be found and incorrupt, pure and unmixed, and consistent with itself; and that it be expressed in the best manner, and to the best advantage, he ought to take heed to defend it whenever opposed; for ministers are not only set to preach the gospel, but for the defense of it; they should by *sound doctrine both exhort and convince gainsayers*; (~~3008~~ Titus 1:8) for which purpose; they should use the two-edged sword, *the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; and is*

both an offensive and defensive weapon, by which, at once, error is refuted, and truth established, I go on to consider,

Thirdly, *The third part of this exhortation, which is to, Continue in them.* Some read the words, *Continue with them*, (Επιμενε αυτοις) that is, with the people at *Ephesus*, where *Timothy* was, and where the apostle would have him remain; as appears from what he says to him at the beginning of this epistle,

I besought thee to abide here at Ephesus. (ⲁⲃⲏⲁ3:14)

But I choose rather to consider them as they are in our translation rendered, *continue in them*; that is, in the doctrines which thou dost well to take heed unto. Much such advice does the apostle give to *Timothy*, in his second epistle to him, *continue thou*, says he, *in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them*. It is very unbecoming ministers of the word, to be *like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*; daily shifting sides, and changing sentiments.

He that would be a preacher of the gospel to others, ought so to study the scriptures, and learn the doctrines of grace, as to be assured of them, to beat a point, at a certainty concerning them; that he may be able to speak them boldly, as they ought to be spoken; and when he has so done, he ought to adhere to them, abide by them, and continue in them; even though a majority may be against them, for we are not to *follow a multitude to do evil*. (ⲁⲓⲁⲃExodus 23:2) Truth is not to be judged of by the number of its admirers; if this was a sure and safe rule to go by, the church of Rome would have the best pretensions to the truth of doctrine, discipline, and worship; for *all the world wondered after the beast*. (ⲁⲓⲁⲃRevelation 13:3) It should be no discouragement to a gospel-minister to observe, that there are but few that receive the doctrines of grace. Yea, he should abide by them, though they are opposed by men of learning and reputation. Truth does not always lie among men of that character; God is pleased to hide the mysteries of the gospel from *the wise and prudent*, and reveal them unto *babes*; and by *the foolishness of preaching* confound the wise, and save them that believe. It was an objection to our Lord's ministry, that not

any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him; but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. (ⲁⲓⲁⲃJohn 7:48, 49).

Ministers of the gospel should abide by, and continue in the doctrines of it, though it is only received by the poor and ignorant, and opposed by the rich and wise: Nay, they ought to do so, though there are some things in them which cannot be comprehended by corrupt and carnal reason; this should be no objection to a reception of them, or continuance in them. There are some things in the gospel which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, that is, a natural man, to conceive of; wherefore it is no wonder,

that the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (~~4012~~1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Nor should the charges and imputations of novelty and licentiousness frighten and deter the ministers of Christ from abiding by the doctrines of grace, since there were the very reproaches and calumnies that the doctrines of Christ and his apostles were loaded with, *What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?* Say some concerning Christ's ministry; (~~4012~~Mark 1:27, ~~4179~~Acts 17:19) and so the Athenians to *Paul*, *May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?* They looked upon the more substantial truths of the gospel as novelties, upstart notions, such as were never heard of before; nay, they were accounted by some as having a tendency to open a door to all manner of wickedness and looseness of life; which occasioned the apostle to say,

And not rather; as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm, that we say, Let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just. (~~4188~~Romans 3:8).

In a word, it becomes Christ's ministers to, abide by, and continue in the doctrines of grace, though they risk their good name, credit, and reputation, are in danger of losing their outward maintenance, or worldly substance, yea, life itself;

for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. (~~4185~~Mark 8:35)

I now hasten briefly to consider,

II. The reasons given by the apostle to support the whole of this charge or exhortation; and to engage Timothy's, and so every other gospel-minister's, regard unto it.

First, *His first reason is, For in doing this thou shalt save thyself.* Jesus Christ is the only efficient and procuring cause of salvation:

There is no salvation in any other; say there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

(~~4412~~ Acts 4:12)

Ministers cannot save themselves by any works of righteousness done. by them; no, not by their ministerial, services; it is in vain to expect salvation, by any, or from any other than Christ Jesus: But ministers, by taking heed to themselves, may, through a divine blessing, and the influences of the Spirit of God, *save themselves from an untoward generation,* and be preferred from the *pollutions of the world;* may *keep their garments,* their outward conversation garments, so that they do not *walk naked,* and others *see their shame.* By taking heed to their doctrine they may save themselves from being infected with false doctrines, errors and heresies: those *roots of bitterness,* which springing up in churches, *trouble same,* and *defile others,* And by continuing in their doctrines, may save themselves from *the blood of all men,* with whom they are concerned. The work of a minister is an awful, solemn, and weighty one; if he does not warn and instruct both the righteous and the wicked, their blood will be required at his hand; but if he perform his office faithfully, he *delivers his soul,* that is, he saves himself from such a charge against him; as did the apostle *Paul,* who could say,

I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (~~4416~~ Acts 20:26, 27)

Thus, by a minister's taking heed to himself and to his doctrine, and continuing therein, he saves himself from all just blame in his character and office; and may be truly accounted a

good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, whereunto he hath attained. (~~4416~~ 1 Timothy 3:6)

Secondly, *His other reason is, thou shalt also save them that hear thee; that is, by being an example to them both in word and conversation, thou shalt be the means of preserving them both from erroneous principles and*

immoral practices; or, thou shalt be instrumental in their eternal salvation. Ministers are instruments by whom souls believe, and so are saved; the word preached by them being, by the grace of the spirit, an *engrafted word, is able to save them*; and the gospel being attended *with the demonstration of the spirit; is the power of God unto salvation*. What can, or does, more strongly engage ministers to take heed to themselves, to their doctrine, and abide therein, than this? That they may be useful in the conversion, and so in the salvation of precious and immortal souls, which are of more worth than a world:

He that converteth a firmer from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. (James 5:20)

A hopeful view of this supports ministers in their work, and carries them cheerfully through many difficulties that attend it; for such souls whom they have been useful to, will be their *joy, and crown of rejoicing*, in the great day of the Lord. These reasons, I trust, will engage you, my Brother, who have been this day set apart to the pastoral office in this church, in take heed to yourself, your gifts, time, temper, life and conversation, and to the flock now committed to your care: And I conclude, that these will also engage you to take heed to your doctrine; that it be according to the scriptures, the doctrine of Christ, his apostles, and true godliness; and such as will be profitable to them that hear it; that it be found and incorrupt, pure and unmixed, and consistent with itself; that it be delivered out in the best manner you are able, and defended, to the utmost of your ability, by which you will abide, and in which you will continue: In doing this you will be most likely to be instrumental in the conversion of sinners, and edification of saints. God give success to all your ministrations.

FINIS

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} Adde, quod ingenium longa rubigine laesum Torpet, — Ovid.

^{ft2} Verbum **αναζωπυρρειν** etiam modeste cum officii admonet. Significat autem ignem cineribus tectum excitare, sopitam savillam in flammam proferre. Asetius in ~~2~~ Timothy 1:6. In the same sense as here is the word used in Marc. Antonin. dc seipfo. 1. 7. f. 2. Vid. Gataker. Annotat, in ibid.

^{ft3} Quae culpare soles, ea tu ne feceris ipse; Turpe est doctori, cum culpa redarguit ipsum. CATO.

^{ft4} ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 2:17. **καπηλεουντες** Metaphora sumpta est ab hospitibus & caupouantibus, quibus in more est, vinum aqua corrumpere. Sic Graeci interpretantur, **καπηλευειν**, **κακευειν τον οικον**, hoc est vinum corrumpere, & **πηλον**, dicunt olim significavisse **οινον** vinum. Aretius in loc.