

SERMON 24

DILIGENCE IN STUDY RECOMMENDED TO MINISTERS. IN A SERMON,
PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REVEREND MR. RICHARD
RIST, IN *HARLOW, ESSEX. DECEMBER 15,*
1756.

Published at the Request of the Church. 1 TIMOTHY 4:15, 16

“Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine, continue in them, in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” IT being allotted to me, to address you my honored and beloved Brother, on this very solemn Occasion of your Investiture with the Office of a Pastor, or Overseer, to this Church of Christ. I shall do it, in an Attempt to explain the, Words, which I have now read.

The Apostle, before the Text, gives to *Timothy* various important Exhortations, and Directions, relating unto his ministerial Function: Which I shall not take into particular Consideration; but *I will immediately apply myself, to the Explication of the several Branches of the Text, in that Order, wherein they stand.*

I. The Apostle exhorts Timothy to serious and close Meditation, Meditate on these things. Diligent study is the indispensable Duty of a Minister of the Gospel. That, my Brother give me Leave, to recommend, and stir you up unto, as what is absolutely necessary, for the proper Discharge of those Services, which belong to your Station in the Church. Without a due Attention to it, your Discourses will be *crude and indigested*, and, therefore, not well suited to the great End, of improving the Saints, in Christian Knowledge and Experience. The Subjects of your assiduous Meditations must especially be, the holy Scriptures, and the glorious Truths, which they contain. The Word of God ought to be carefully and diligently read, and meditated upon by all; but Ministers, in an *especial* Manner, are obliged unto a diligent Perusal of it. *Give Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine.* Read the Writings of good Men, wherewith, in the kind Providence of God, the Church is blessed, which under a divine Influence will be helpful and instructive to you; but above all, *search the Scriptures, which are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that you may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished to all good Works.*

You must carefully consider the several Parts of sacred Writ, and *compare spiritual Things with spiritual*, whereby, through the gracious Assistance of the holy Spirit, you will gain a clear and comprehensive View of the Harmony of the Whole, and a full convincing Evidence of its divine Authority.

Be diligent in enquiring into the proper Meaning of every Text, which you shall at any Time undertake to explain and treat upon. Content not yourself, as some Preachers do, with expressing what is true, though it be not the *genuine* Sense of the Words, which are the Subject of their Discourses. Labor to find out the *real* Import of that Portion of the good Word of God, which you make Choice of, for the Subject of your Sermons. And, also see to it, that you produce proper and pertinent Testimonies, for the Confirmation and Illustration of those Truths, which you apprehend are contained in your Text. Some Preachers seem to be at very little Pains, in either Respect, now mentioned, and, therefore, their Performances, are far from being judicious. And it is very requisite, that you should meditate much on the Doctrines which are contained in the holy Scriptures. If you do not, you cannot reasonably hope to discern their admirable Variety, adorable Depth, strict Connection, mutual Dependence, and beautiful Harmony, nor, in what Respects, some evangelical Truths, agree with others, and wherein they differ. This is your proper Business, as a Minister, and it is that painful Labor, which claims your constant Attendance. For,

II. *You are required, to give yourself to them. Or, as the Words may be read: Be thou in them* (εν τούτοις ἴσθι). Your Heart ought to be fixed on them, and your Thoughts exercised about them, *most intently*, and *generally* also. Not *occasionally* and *cursorily*; but *constantly*, and *closely*. This is the noblest Employ, wherein our intellectual Powers can possibly be engaged. And it justly demands the Whole of your Time. Do not think it is sufficient, if you now and then devote a few Hours unto this sacred and important Labor, in order to prepare for your Services, in the Pulpit. But fill up your Time with Contemplations on the glorious Truths of the Gospel, even when you are not soon to be engaged in the Work of Preaching. Ministers are not, without Necessity, to be *entangled with secular Affairs*, to their Interruption in an Attendance unto what is of far greater Moment. And, therefore, it is the Ordination of Christ, that those, *who preach the Gospel, should live the Gospel*. The End of this Appointment is not, that they may be slothful, and waste their precious Moments in doing Nothing, or worse than Nothing. It is that they may be devoted entirely, unto that honorable Service, to which he has called them, with a gracious View, to the Instruction and Edification of the Church.

My honored Brother do not loiter away the Beginning of the Week in trifling Recreations, or in needless and unprofitable Visits, and think it is enough, at the latter End of it, to prepare for your public Services. Begin to study on the *Monday*, and continue to do so throughout the Week. Some Persons in this sacred Function, of an extraordinary Genius, and who have had a Taste for polite Learning, it is to be feared have been under a Temptation, to neglect their more necessary and important Studies, unto their own Prejudice, and the Disadvantage of the Church, by the alluring Pleasures which their ingenious Minds have found in Studies of another

Nature. Not that I think it is unlawful or unprofitable, for a Minister, somewhat to gratify his Inclination in that Way. But as Ministers are not to be entangled in the Affairs of the World, unto their Hinderance in a necessary Study of divine Things: So they ought not to spend too much of their Time in the Study of the liberal Arts. For, they are called chiefly to attend to what is far more noble, sublime, and important. Except, nay Brother, you thus devote yourself, unto there divine Studies, you cannot justly expect to improve in an Acquaintance with evangelical Truths, which ought to be your Desire and Aim. As it follows,

III. *That thy Profiting may appear to all. Endeavour to give convincing Evidence to all Sorts of Persons, of your Growth and Proficiency in divine Knowledge.* To the Friends, and also unto the Adversaries of Truth. In the Church of God there are different Classes of Christians, viz. *Fathers, young Men, and Children*. Such who are *Fathers*, are said to *have known him, that is, from the Beginning*. Their Judgment and Experience are much advanced, and, therefore, unless you treat of *the deep Things of God*, and in a judicious Manner, your Profiting will not appear to them. Discourses which are crude, and indigested, though the Matter of them may be true, can never gain their Approbation. Others of less Understanding, in spiritual Things, may approve thereof, but they cannot. For, they expect spiritual Demonstration of spiritual Things. Bare Assertions of evangelical Doctrines, without a clear stating of them, and offering pertinent Testimonies for their Proof and Illustration, will not be pleasing to them. *Injudicious* Preaching cannot be acceptable to *judicious* Hearers. It is true, that the Number of such Hearers is very small; but that is not a just Reason, why we should content ourselves with treating of the sublime Truths of the Gospel, in a *superficial*, and un-workman-like Manner. Let it be your Desire, and laudable Ambition, to give Satisfaction in the Course of your Ministry, unto the most improved, in Christian Knowledge and Experience, by the Depth, Solidity, Pertinence, and Clearness of your Composures, on those important and glorious Truths, which you are commissioned to preach. Good Judgment, much Care and Diligence, you will find necessary unto this End, and, therefore, be not remiss and negligent; but be painful and laborious in Study.

Again, your Proficiency should appear to *young Men*. That is to Christians, who *are strong, and have overcome the wicked one*. You must in order to this, consider well, the Nature, and Variety of Satan's Temptations, upon different Occasions, and under different Circumstances. What numerous Wiles and Stratagems he makes use of to stir up Lust, to entice to Evil, and to interrupt the Exercise of Grace, unto the great Perplexity, and Grief of the Soul. And you must shew how the gracious Principle opposes and resists this Adversary, by the Guidance and Influence of the Holy Spirit. What are the Reliefs he administers, in Seasons of Temptation, to the Joy of the Soul, and the Increase of the spiritual Part. You will find, that this Branch of your Work, requires a careful Review of those Temptations, which you, yourself, have been

attended withal, and the Workings of your Mind, under them: As well as a just Observation of the Experience of other Christians. Farther, you must also aim that your Profiting may appear to *Children*. Christ hath *Babes* in His Family and *Lambs* in His Fold. It is your Duty to feed and nourish them, as well as more knowing and experienced Christians. Then you will *give a Portion of Meat to everyone in due Season*. A Minister should descend to the Experience of the *weakest* Saint in flaming his Discourses, that he may comfort, and bring him forward, in heavenly knowledge. This requires much *Tenderness, Care and spiritual Skill*. Without a proper Consideration, of, what are the genuine Acting's of Grace, under Convictions of Sin, and the Temptations, which usually attend the Soul, upon a Sense of Guilt, being impressed on the Mind, together, with those Fears, which are often, thereby produced, you will not be well qualified to assist and comfort the weak Saints, in their distressing Perplexities, concerning their Pardon and Salvation, about which, this Class of Christians, are often Times, very solicitous. Be careful, in treating on Faith, that you do not stumble these *Weaklings*, in Christ's Family, by the Manner of your expressing yourself. Consider that Faith in all, is not *strong*, that in some it is *weak*. Its Nature, and the Kind of its Acting's, are the same in all, and it respects always the same Objects, and is productive of the same Fruits; but it does not act with equal Vigor in all, nor in the same Person at different Times.

Once more, let your Proficiency be manifest unto the Adversaries of Truth. Ministers *are set for the Defense of the Gospel*. And, therefore, they should endeavor to obviate those Objections, which are raised against it, by erroneous Persons, and to confirm its glorious Truths, with clear and solid Arguments, drawn from the Word of God that the *Mouths of Gainsayers may be stopped*. Some are Enemies to Revelation itself, and employ all their Wit to banter and run it down. There *Infidels* we must labor to silence, by shewing, that, what they object to the Holy Scriptures, *is fallacious, groundless, or absurd*, and, therefore, by no Means conclusive. And, we should labor to prove, that our Belief of Divine Revelation, is built upon *rational* and just Evidence, which is not attended with any Difficulty; For, that Evidence is as clear, as the Sun, in itself, though not discerned, perhaps, by some, through a Want of due Attention to it, or by the powerful Influence, *of unreasonable and strong Prejudices*, which they have contracted. Thus, my Brother, your Aim and your Endeavour ought to be, to give Proof to all Sorts of Persons, that you are a *good* Proficient in Divine Knowledge.

May the Lord assist you, conscientiously to use those Means, which he hath appointed to that End; and may his Blessing be upon you therein! And this your Proficiency should be *in all Things* (ἐν παντι), in every Branch of your Work, as a Minister. And, therefore, it is necessary, that you should thoroughly study every Doctrine, *legal* and *evangelical* All Cautions, Exhortations, Precepts, Reproofs, and comforting Promises, that you may be *apt to teach*, and that you may be *a Son of*

Thunder, to the stupid and careless, *and a Son of Consolation*, unto the Mourners in *Zion*.

IV. Take Heed to thyself. This Branch of Advice respects you as a Man, a Christian, and a Minister. You should take Heed to yourself, as a Man. Though Ministers are called to Self-denial, that they may serve the Church of Christ, and preach His Gospel, it is lawful for them, prudently to consult their own Welfare, and the Good of their Families, that they may be supplied, with the Necessaries of Life. And this is a Duty incumbent on them, in common with other Men. Take a prudent Care of your Health, to preserve it, that you may continue capable of attending to those laborious Services, which belong to your Station, in the Church. It is of greater Importance to take Heed to yourself, as a Christian Be careful of your *spiritual Welfare*. While you aim at the Edification of others, neglect not your own, if you do, it will be attended with sorrowful Effects. For, *Leanness* of Soul will be the Consequence of such Neglect. Consider this *awful* Truth, that you may profit others, and not yourself, by your ministerial Services. Spiritual Advantage can no otherwise accrue to our Souls, by the Doctrines we preach, than in *mixing Faith* with them. And, therefore, it is very necessary, that we should design acting our Graces, in the Exercise of our Gifts Without that, though our Abilities may be improved, our renewed Part, will decline in its Vigor — Grace will not *thrive* in our Hearts, unless it is *frequently* acted on those precious Truths, which we are commissioned to preach. Remember, my Brother, that in this Sense, you must be mindful of your *own Vineyard*. *You can't be too much so*. It is a melancholy Thing to feed others, and *starve* our own Souls, through Negligence in this Matter, which, perhaps, may have been too much the Care, at least, *with some of us*. May the good Lord convince us of, and humble us for our Sin, and Folly herein! It is not enough, to please, and even to do Good to others, by our ministerial Labors, if we ourselves receive no spiritual Benefit by them. We ought to observe with what Frame of Mind, we study and preach. Whether we think and speak of the great Things of God, with that holy Reverence, which they justly demand. They are adorable in their Nature, and, therefore, we ought to contemplate on, and express them with great Seriousness and Awe. Evangelical Mysteries should be studied, and treated of in the most reverential Manner, because of the Divine Glory which there is in them, above all other Subjects whatsoever. A due Consideration thereof, will tend to ingenerate and promote in you, a becoming Frame of Soul, when you are conversant about them, in your Study, and in the Pulpit.

Again, take Heed to yourself, as a Minister. Neglect not; but *stir up the Gift*, that is in you. Be diligent in the Use of all those Means, which God hath appointed, for the Cultivation, and Improvement of it. If you are not, how can you hope for its Increase, or even for the Continuance of it, with you, in any tolerable Degree? If we are

negligent and slothful, we can't reasonably, have any Expectation of increasing our Furniture, for the Service and Benefit of the Church.

And be cautious how you conduct yourself, in Conversation, and in those Visits, which you pay your Friends. Christians are of very different Tempers, and sometimes it falls out that they have different Interests, and are at Variance. And, therefore, great Prudence, is necessary in converting with them, in such a Circumstance. Without it, you may do much Injury. Let *the Wisdom of the Serpent, and the Innocence of the Dove*, be united, in whatever you express, on such Occasions. Sometimes, Silence may be best. Very often, a *silent* Tongue, is an Evidence of a wise Head. I lay it again, very often, a *silent* Tongue is an Evidence of a *wise* Head, in a Minister, whose Office leads him to converse with Christians, among whom, through one Cause or another, Differences arise in this State of Imperfection. If you cannot heal Breaches, be sure not to *widen* them, through a Want of Caution, in what you at any Time, say, to either of the Parties, at Difference.

V. *You must, my Brother, take heed to thy Doctrine. Consider well and examine, what you deliver in the Name of God, to his People.*

See to it that those Principles, which you advance and inculcate, agree with the Holy Scriptures. Permit me to mention five *infallible* Rules, whereby all Doctrines, may be tried, and their Truth, or Falsehood, determined, viz. *Doctrines which are calculated, to promote the Glory of Divine Grace: Which exclude Boasting in the Creature: Which are a Foundation of Strong Consolation, in the Saints: Which are according to Godliness: And which are consistent.* I call them *infallible* Rules, because they are *most plainly scriptural*.

1. The first Rule, whereby, I would advise you to try Doctrines, is this: If they are *calculated to promote the Glory of Divine Grace*. By Grace, I do not mean the Benevolence and Bounty of God, as the Creator, and Upholder of all Things, which are of universal Extent. *God is good to all, and His tender Mercies are over all His Works*. Wherein, He acts according to that infinite Goodness, which is natural to Him. Some seem to have no other Conception of Divine Favor, which is the Cause of Salvation, than that it is, this universal Good Will of God, as Creator, whereof all Creatures, are the Objects in their Creation-State, which is as great a Mistake, as can be, on this momentous Subject. Divine Love, which is the Origin of our Salvation, is the sovereign Pleasure and Good Will of God. There is a *Fitness* in the Exercise of Goodness towards all Creatures, as they were formed by their Almighty Creator; but God does not provide for the Recovery of guilty Creatures, because it is *fit*, in *itself*, that He should so do: Or, because it is agreeable to Goodness, as it is *natural* to Him. If this was the Fact, then God would not be at Liberty to save, or not save Sinners; but making Provision for their salvation, would be *necessary* to Deity. For, all Acts of Goodness, as it is *natural* to God, are *necessary*, and *not free* Acts of His Will, though His Will acts *freely*, in determining to put forth such Acts of Goodness.

Divine Grace to which our Salvation is owing, is absolutely free Favor, which acts without any Inducement, or Motive, in its Objects. If we consider the Temper and Conduct of the Subjects of Salvation, *naturally*, we must be convinced of the Truth of this, I think. *Are they not under the Dominion of Sin? Is not that the governing Principle in them? Are not their carnal Minds Enmity against God? Are not their Minds alienated from the Life of God?*

And as to their Conduct: *Have they not their Conversation, according to the Lusts of the Flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind? Are they not foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice, and Envy, hateful, and hating one another?* What can there be, in such, to invite the merciful and kind Regard of God to them? Men in order to disprove, the *absolute* Freedom of Divine Favor, in the Affair of our Salvation, are obliged, to rise up in *fat* Contradiction, to this *displeasing* Representation, of the Disposition of our Minds, and of our Conduct, in our natural State. And to maintain, that in Fact, we are not so corrupt, in our Hearts, nor so criminal in our Behavior, as the Scripture represents us. *By Grace we are saved* (Ephesians 2:8.). *The Kindness and Love of God our Saviour towards Man appeared, not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done; but of His Mercy hath He saved us* (Titus 3:5.). *It is of Faith, that it might be by Grace* (Romans 4:16.). Our Salvation is *entirely*, and *absolutely* of the Grace of God, without any Works of ours. The Admission of them, as concurring Causes, with the Grace of God, destroys its true Nature. For, *if it be of Works, then it is no more Grace* (Romans 11:6.). The Design of God, in our Recovery, is to magnify the Riches of His Grace: My Brother, try all Doctrines by this Rule, it is an infallible one. And, therefore, you may be assured, that whatever Principle, is not calculated to promote the Glory of Divine Grace, it cannot be true, by whom so ever it is embraced or advanced. Let it, therefore, never have Place in your Preaching.

2. The second Rule for your Trial of Doctrines, is this: They must be such, as exclude Boasting. *Where is Boasting then? It is excluded. By what Law, of Works? Nay, but by the Law of Faith* (Romans 3:27.). *Not of Works left any Man should boast* (Ephesians 2:9.). Boasting is *absolute*, or *comparative*. *Absolute* Boasting, is this: A Man's affirming, or insisting on it, that he has in the Course of his Life, performed the Whole of his Duty, and in such a Manner, as the Law requires, and, that, therefore, he has a Right to Life, according to that Law, which is the Rule of Action to him. This *Kind* of Boasting cannot have Place, in any, who acknowledge, that they are Sinners, and stand in Need of Salvation. And, therefore, it is not that which the Apostle contends, is not to be admitted, in the Affair of Salvation. *Comparative* Boasting *only* can be intended, which is this: An Opinion, that by a proper and wise Improvement of those Means, which are afforded us, to that End, we have secured to ourselves Life and Happiness, which some others, have foolishly neglected to do, and, therefore, perish. In the apprehension of many, the Fact *stands*

thus, with Men, in the Business of Salvation. God is pleased in infinite Benevolence and Goodness, to make Proposals of Pardon and Peace to them, and affords them, such Helps and Advantages, as are sufficient, if they are not wanting to themselves, to enable them to obtain these Blessings. Some act the *wise*, and others the *foolish* Part, in the Enjoyment of those Helps and Advantages, and, therefore, the Event is different, according to their different Behavior, in the same advantageous Circumstances. For Instance, *Peter* and *Judas*, through Divine Clemency and Mercy, are favored with Overtures of Pardon and Salvation, and both have Assistances of the same Kind, to facilitate obtaining those Blessings, yea, which are sufficient to that End, if wisely improved by both. *Peter* he is so prudent, as to consult his own Welfare, and makes the best Use of those Helps, and Advantages, and, thereby, obtains the great Blessings, which God, in his infinite Mercy offers, and promises to bestow, upon such a wise and prudent Behavior. On the Contrary, *Judas* he is foolishly regardless of his eternal Peace, and neglects to improve those Aids and Assistances, which God mercifully grants him, whereby, he also might obtain Life and Happiness, and, therefore, he misses of the Blessings, which are offered and promised, to be given, upon a different Behavior. Now, if this is the true State of the Case, *Peter* hath proper Ground for a *comparative* Boasting, or the same Reason, for paying himself a Compliment, and applauding his own Wisdom, as *Judas* hath for Censuring himself and condemning his own Folly. Because, each had the *same gracious* Tenders, and the *same Kind Helps*, and, therefore, the Welfare of *Peter* is owing to his own Wisdom and Care, as the Destruction of *Judas* is the Effect of his own Folly, or Neglect. For, *Peter* was not determined, by Divine Influence, to act, as he has done; but his Determination, to act the wise Part, he hath acted, followed, upon a *rational* Consideration of the *Fitness* and *Wisdom* of so acting. And it was possible, for *Judas*, to have determined, to act in the very same Manner, and, thereby, to have obtained the very same Benefits, as *Peter* hath acquired a Right unto. This is that *Boasting*, which is excluded in our Salvation, and, which it is impossible, that any should have Foundation for. Because, the *Whole* of our Holiness, in *Principle*, and *Acts* is from God, as the efficient Cause thereof. And if he intends to save you, he will certainly bring you to this humble and grateful Acknowledgement, that you *are nothing*, and that it is: *By His Grace, you are what you are*. Allow me, my Brother, to press it upon you, to try your Doctrine by this Rule, which is so plainly laid down in Scripture, and be lured to reject every Principle which agrees not with it.

3. The third Rule for your Trial of Doctrines is: *If they are a proper Foundation, for strong Consolation in the Saints*. It is the Will of God, that Believers should enjoy such *Consolation* (Hebrews 6:18.). And, therefore, Sentiments which are not suited to produce and maintain it in them, cannot be true, by whom so ever they are

embraced, and propagated. Their Peace and Comfort, spring from, and are founded on the Security of their most important Interest, viz.

The eternal Salvation of their Souls. If that is save and secure, their Joy will be full; but if it is a Matter, uncertain and precarious, *in itself* because it is not *effectually* provided for by God: They will fall into Dejection and inexpressible Perplexity. Nothing can more make the *Hearts of the righteous sad, whom the Lord would not have made sad*, than a Supposition, that their everlasting Welfare is doubtful, *in itself*. Which it must necessarily be, at least, if the Pardon of their Sins, if the Justification of their Persons, and if their Perseverance, in Faith, and Holiness, depend on their own *fickle* and *corrupt* Will, without a *determining Influence*, upon it by Divine Grace. Others, who are unacquainted with the *Plague of their Hearts*, may think it is a sufficient Ground of Peace, to have Offers of Pardon and Salvation, with Aids afforded, to facilitate obtaining a Right to them. But such, who are convinced of their *Impotency*, and the *Naughtiness* of their Hearts, can hear of Nothing more *dismal*, than this: That their future Happiness depends upon, the free Acting's of their own Will, without being determined in its Volitions, by the good Spirit of God. Because they know that their Determination, to choose what is spiritually Good, is *only* and *entirely* the Effect of the Grace of God. I may proceed much farther, and affirm, that if it is Fact, *that final* Salvation, is dependent on the Will of the Saints, without an effectual Influence upon it, by Divine Grace, their future Blessedness, is a Thing impossible, and that they certainly know, it must be. Because, they are sensible, that all Acts of Holiness in them, are the *pure* Effects, of an efficacious Operation, of God upon them; Who *worketh in them, both to will, and to do, of His good Pleasure*. And therefore, my Brother, fail not to examine your Doctrine, by this Rule; you may be assured, that no Principle, which is not calculated, to administer *strong* Consolation, to regenerate Persons, can be true; however plausible, at first View, it may seem.

4. The fourth Rule for the Trial of Doctrines is: *Whether they are according to Godliness?* No Principle can come from God, which gives Countenance to Sin. Or, which supposes, that a *lower* Degree of Obedience, is required of us now, because, of our Incapacity, to yield a perfect and sinless Obedience, through that Depravity, which attends us. To accommodate the Law, to our present Weakness, in its Precepts, is, as I remember, that excellent Divine Dr. *Owen*, somewhere says, speaking in Relation to some other Things, *the worst Kind of Antinomianism*. And to affirm, that we are not under the Law, as a Rule of Action is down-right *Libertinism*. That, necessarily implies, that no Acts are unlawful, or sinful. For, *where no Law is, there is no Transgression*. We are not freed from the Law, as a Rule of Conduct, nor is any Abatement made, in its preceptive Part. Neither, does the Divine Law-giver make any Allowances, for our Defects, or Imperfections, and what are sometimes called, our *unallowed*, and *involuntary* Sins, and justify our

Persons, on the Ground of a *partial* Obedience, to His just and holy Law. My Brother, you ought strictly to examine your Doctrine, by this Rule, and not advance any Principle, which is inconsistent with the Purity, Perfection, and extensive Commands of the Law. For, God cannot abate of the Strictness of his Precepts, in order to save Sinners, nor justify their Persons, without a Righteousness, that is fully answerable to them, in their utmost Extent. As you are not to corrupt evangelical Truths; so you must maintain the Doctrine of the Law, in its Purity, and full Compass. If you fail of doing that, you will not *approve yourself to God, as a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, nor, rightly divide the Word of Truth.*

5. The last Rule, whereby you should try your Doctrine is: *If it be consistent — Truth is one and uniform.* Contradictory Principles cannot possibly be Truths. One, or other of such Principles, must certainly be false. There is no Inconsistency in the Gospel. It is all of a Piece. Your *Word*, or your Preaching, let it not be *yea and nay*; but *yea, yea.* *If the Trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the Battle?* Works and Grace, as Causes of Salvation, are *Opposites.* And, therefore, do not attribute it *partly* to Works, and *partly* to Grace; nor ascribe it, sometimes to one, and sometimes to the other. There have been many, and I fear there are still too many inconsistent Preachers. Sometimes the doctrinal, and applicatory Part of a Sermon, *clash* and *disagree*, either through the *mistaken* Conceptions of the Preacher, relating to some Points, or for *Want* of a due Consideration, in what Manner to express himself, so as that his Discourse, may in all Parts of it be uniform, and consistent. The former, is the Effect of a wrong Judgment, the latter is a Discovery of a Neglect to *compare spiritual Things, with spiritual.* Let it be your Care, that neither may be found in you.

These Rules are most plainly scriptural, and, therefore, infallible. No Doctrine, which eclipses the Glory of Divine Grace: Which excludes not Boasting: Which is not a proper Ground of *strong* Consolation, in the Saints: Which is not according to Godliness: Which is inconsistent, or agrees not with the Analogy of Faith, can be true. My Brother carefully examine every Sentiment, by those plain and easy Rules. You may be certain, that those Principles, are Divine Truths, which agree with them, and, that those which do not, are Errors, let who will embrace, and defend them. If Men would but try their Notions, by those Rules, and be determined, in their Opinions, by them, which we all ought to be, they could never *pester* the Church with pernicious Doctrines, which many have done, to the Dishonor of God, and the inexpressible Grief of pious Souls. I hope that you will never be guilty of acting such a Part, through Inattention to this necessary Duty. Which, I beg Leave, most earnestly to recommend, and press upon you. By no Means fail of closely attending to it. And never be ashamed of, nor afraid to preach Doctrines, which are capable of being proved true, by those Divine Rules; though many may object to them: The Gospel always had, and we must expect it will have, numerous Opposers: So long

as the human Mind remains *carnal* For, that will eternally esteem the Things of the Spirit of God *Foolishness*, and such, as ought to be rejected, by *every wise Man*.

VI. Continue in them. It is the Duty of a Minister to abide, in the Ministry, into which he is put by Jesus Christ. No lucrative Views,

or temporal Advantages, ought to induce him, to desert that most important Service. Nor should Discouragements, which he may meet with, therein, cause him to quit it. Neither, should he think of discontinuing, in that Station, unto which he is called, by the Head of the Church, because of those Oppositions, which the Enemies of the Gospel, make against. him, in his Work. He ought to *endure Hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ*. No Man can justify himself, in leaving a Service, unto which, he hath Reason to think, that he was called of God, either for Profit, or on Account of Difficulties, which arise to him, in his Attendance unto it. Having *put his Hand to the Plough*, no *enticing Allurements*, or *formidable Oppositions*, should prevail with him to *look back*. And, my Brother, as you are to abide in this honorable Vocation, so, you must continue, conscientiously, and diligently, to attend unto the Duties of it. You must not grow weary of a *painful and close Study* of the Holy Scriptures, and the Doctrines, therein, contained, although it is a *Weariness to the Flesh*, and it may impair your natural Strength. Pray, that you may be enabled, by Divine Grace, to persevere, in the Practice of those Duties, which are enjoined on you, in your ministerial Character.

That you may meditate in a proper Manner, on the Things of God. That you may give yourself wholly to them. That your Heart may be fixed on them, and your Joy and Delight be in them. That you may be influenced to take Heed to yourself, as a Christian, and as a Minister. That you may be assisted, to take Heed to your Doctrine, and strictly try it, by those infallible Rules, which I have mentioned, and which are so plainly Scriptural. To this End, that your Proficiency, in the Knowledge of sacred Things, may appear to all Sorts of Persons, both to the Friends, and Adversaries of Truth. And also, in every Article of the Christian Faith. Unless you so do, you can't reasonably hope, to be *a Workman, that needeth not to be ashamed*. Nor expect, that happy Effect to follow, which is proposed to our Consideration, as Ministers, in order to quicken us unto Diligence and Care, in our important Work. That is,

VII. In doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them, that hear thee. A very animating Consideration indeed! What, that is more important, and striking can be urged, to engage us to Diligence, Care, and Perseverance in our Work, as Ministers? Our own spiritual Welfare, and that of others, who attend on our Ministry, under the Blessing of God, it seems, will be promoted, thereby. Your due Attendance to the several Branches of Advice, given in the Text, will be conducive, to the Preservation of yourself, and your Hearers, from embracing Principles, which are dishonorable to God, destructive of the Consolation of the Saints, and are likely to have an ill Influence, on the Morals of Men. *And*, therefore, be diligent, in your Studies, in order

to increase your Acquaintance, with those Doctrines which it is your Duty to preach, unto Ends so salutary and important. We cannot be engaged in a more noble Service, than the Propagation of evangelical Truths, the Establishment of the Faith, of the Saints, and the Promoting of Holiness, in them. Shall we then think any Labor too great, to answer Purposes, of such vast Moment? Surely, we cannot. Besides, as the Gospel is *the Power of God to the Salvation of them that believe*, and, that *Faith cometh by Hearing*, wherewith, Salvation, is inseparably connected: No Consideration, more weighty, can be thought of, to excite us, unto Care and Assiduity, in our ministerial Function. Let us never grow weary of *intense* Study, and *laborious* Preaching, since it is the Pleasure of God, thereby, *to save them, who believe*. If we have a due Concern for the Glory of God, and the Good of immortal Souls, nothing can give us such Satisfaction and Pleasure, as being instrumental, in the eternal Salvation of any of those, for whom, the Son of God, graciously condescended, to obey, suffer, and die on the Cross. This is a Consideration of the *most animating* Nature, to stir us up to use Diligence in our *Work*. If we act under its Influence, we shall not *faint*, and *grow weary*, of the *most painful Labor*. Thus, my honored, and beloved Brother, I have attempted, briefly, to explain, the several Branches of Advice, given to you, in there Words. May the Lord assist you to practice, the important Duties, therein, recommended! And, my Desire is, that you, and this Church, many Years hence, may have Occasion, to look back, on the Solemnities of this Day, with the highest Satisfaction, and Thankfulness.

FOOTNOTES

That which I here intend might be illustrated by the divine Reasoning of the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews* in various Instances. How clear and full are the Proofs which he produces, to evince the Dignity of the Person of Christ, as inclusive of both his Natures, divine and human, in the first Chapter of that most admirable Epistle? In what a convincing Manner does he prove, that Christ is a Priest, and a Priest not after the Order of *Aaron*; but of another, quite distinct from? And with what Perspicuity does he prove, that the *Sinai-Covenant* was to wax old and vanish away?

Also, that Christ is the Mediator of another, and better Covenant? And that, therefore, *the Sinai-Covenant* was not intended, *really*, but only, *typically*, to take away Sin? And, consequently, that the Pardon of Sin, and Salvation from it, could not be expected, by the Observance of any, or all the Rites, which were instituted, in that Covenant. There and other Instances, in that Epistle, are most excellent Directions, how we are to demonstrate and confirm evangelical Truths. When I consider the Scope of the divine Writer therein, and the Manner of his treating on the many important Subjects, upon which he discourses, I cannot but think it is exceedingly strange, that any should object to an argumentative Way of Preaching in order to confirm the Truths of the Gospel. Some so do, it may be, out of Supinates,

and Indifferency about sacred Truths; and others, perhaps, from a Consciousness, that they are not furnished with proper Talents, for such a *demonstrative* Way, of Preaching. ** Some, of late, affirm, that there is no Holiness in Believers. Or, that they are not *new Creatures*. That they have no other Holiness, than what is in Christ. Light they have, by which, they see spiritual Things; but Purity they have none. The Medium, whereby, those Persons endeavor to prove their Assertions, is this, that we all have Sin, and commit Evil, which no holy Man, will deny, concerning himself. Everyone who is godly, knows he hath Sin in him, as well as Holiness, that evil Acts, as well as good ones proceed from him.

By the like Medium, it might be equally proved, that Believers have no Sin. For, it is as just to conclude, that they have no Sin, because they have Holiness, as it is to conclude, that they have not Holiness, because they have Sin. And, that they do not commit Evil, because they perform Good. This is not a Doctrine according to Godliness. It is calculated to persuade us, that we may *see the Lord, without Holiness*. Than which there is *Nothing, more false*. The Faith which they speak and boast of, is not worth a *Fig*. It does not *work by Love*. *It is dead, being without Works*. And, it is a dreadful Delusion, to imagine, that Salvation is connected with it. If we have not spiritual Purity, we have not spiritual Light, nor any Discernment of the true Nature of spiritual Things. *Light without Holiness is nothing worth*.