

The Universal Concern of Saints in Communion,

REPRESENTED IN a

SERMON,

The Substance of which was delivered to the Church, Meeting near *Devonshire-Square*.

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. WALTER RICHARDS, To the Pastoral-Office,

AND OF

Messrs. *J. Tomkins, T. Cooke and G. Wilkinson*

To the Office of Deacons,

DECEMBER 14, 1762.

By BENJAMIN WALLIN.

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TO THE

CHURCH of CHRIST, meeting near Devonshire-Square

AND TO

All at whose Desire the ensuing

Discourses published.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

PEACE to the Brethren is the wish of an inspired Apostle, in which all true Christians should heartily join; but he that pursues it will find that this inestimable

blessing, more precious than Gold, is not to be maintained, in the present State, without the self-denial required in the gospel.

THIS sermon comes late and alone, no less contrary to my own inclination, than to the well-known custom on the like occasion; yet, I hope, it will prove a seasonable word of advice; for daily experience shows the loud call there is to consider and apply the subject in hand. This is the plan on which we may expect the Kingdom of CHRIST to flourish among us; nor will anything short of this spirit and conduct convince the world that we are disciples, or promote that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. How beautiful are the Children of God; when, laying aside private and selfish views, in lowliness of mind, they each esteem other better than themselves: and with brotherly love, in honour prefer one another!

To promote this lovely and Christian behaviour, the following discourse was composed, when I had reason to think myself safe from being intreated to publish; and this was the more agreeable, on account of the imperfect manner in which I was obliged to deliver it; for the time being greatly elapsed before I entered on my branch of the service, it was not convenient to enlarge on several points, as intended.

If, under a Divine-Blessing, my attempt should succeed to improve any, so as render them more useful in the church, and to spread the savour of vital religion, your request will answer a valuable end. God will be glorified, and it will be the joy of,
Sirs,

Your affectionate,

the unworthy

BENJAMIN WALLIN.

THE
Universal Concern
OF
SAINTS in COMMUNION.

THE Part assigned me in the present solemnity, is to give a seasonable word of advice to this Christian Church, who have this day before God, and us, the angels also bearing witness, set apart chosen persons to office among them, particularly our beloved brother, now their acknowledged Pastor and overseer in the Lord. My address is to you, beloved, on a joyful occasion, and that your joy may remain, under a Divine Blessing on the relation you stand in to each other. I shall remind you of some things which I apprehend needful as a means conducing to this desirable end, not doubting your readiness to apply what is agreeable to the oracles of truth.

What I shall recommend is laid up in that copious direction of the inspired Apostle, which is written.

ROMANS 14: 19

Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

For brevity's sake, I touch not on the particular occasion of this exhortation, and for the same reason omit the former part of the verse. The words, you see, are directed to the Church at Rome: A place once famous for the purity and power of the gospel but alas, now, and for ages past, the seat of antichrist, and many abominations, from whence multitudes are seduced in all parts of the world, our own nation not excepted. If we think ourselves secure from the attempts of popish emissaries, I fear we shall be greatly mistaken; for the errors and disorders that abound among us are probably more owing to the subtlety of these men in disguise than is generally imagined; however, had the professors at Rome closely adhered to this rule, that church had never fallen from her primitive glory.

I shall take it for granted that you will not scruple to allow that the spirit and conduct demanded in the text becomes the disciples of Christ in every age and place, and that you are willing to conform yourselves to it as of universal obligation, and as of the utmost importance in the House of God. The truth before us is plainly this,

namely, that it becomes the faithful united in a church-state, to follow the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another: This truth I shall endeavor to open and set before you with a freedom suited to the occasional service in which I am engaged; let me therefore beseech your serious attention, while I briefly consider the duty enjoined, remind you of those things which are to be followed, in order to obtain the ends proposed, and then mention a few motives to animate each individual in this glorious pursuit, and,

First, The text in general is a duty enjoined; in which you may observe the OBJECTS, the ACT, and the EXTENT of the command.

I. The OBJECTS; and they are peace and mutual edification; the one in order to the other; for unless peace is maintained, believers cannot edify each other, however regularly joined in church-communion. Peace is a comprehensive term, and is used to express any happy state, and indeed it is sometimes applied to that which is enjoyed by the saints in heaven; but in this place the Apostle plainly intends the peace of the church, or peace among brethren; and it should be noted that this exhortation is to a relative duty by which each Christian is called upon to act with a view, not so much to *himself* as to his *fellow* and the *community* to which he belongs. Peace stands opposed to any offence, grief, or stumbling, which too often arise through contentions, animosities and divisions from various causes whereby trouble ensueth, and the edification of the saints is prevented; it carries in it harmony and union, which promote the tranquility of a church, and the satisfaction of every member; and, in one word, this direction is parallel with that in Ephesians. 4: 3. where the Apostle beseeches the disciples *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.

The other object presented in the text is that of mutual edification; that *one may edify another*. A church you know is compared to a house, and believers are styled God's *Building* (1 Corinthians. 3: 9); they are to be built up *a spiritual house* (1 Peter. 2: 5), and each to be advanced in knowledge and faith by means of communion. The edification of a church naturally riseth in proportion to the growth of them who compose it, and accordingly the increase of each particular member is to be pursued for the good of the whole: So then the great work to be carried on in the house of God is *edification* (Jude xx), in which every one is concerned, and should be employed in respect of another, as we shall presently see: This is the genuine and noble spirit of Christian-communion! Every man, contrary to the maxims of this world, laying aside all private and sinister views, and, as it were, forsaking himself, under the influence of divine Love; is preferring and seeking the good of his brother (Romans. 12: 11;

Philippians 2: 3, 4. compared): In all appearance this is what some professors do not understand; but thus, we are directed, Romans. 15: 2. Every one to *please his neighbour for his good to edification*, and that this must be done at the expense of self-denial is plain from the context in which we are bid not to please ourselves, and the example of Christ is urged as a motive, who pleased not himself, but bore the reproach for his people; this disinterested labour of the saints indeed is not *carnal* but truly *good* policy, for the obligation being reciprocal, the advantage is mutual, and where this spirit sincerely and universally prevails, great is the comfort and glory of a Christian society! Thus, in Christ, *all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an Holy temple in the Lord*. May you, my friends, after this manner, wisely build up each other that ye also in him may be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. To proceed,

II. The text demands our pursuit of the things which conduce to these great and desirable Ends: *Follow after the things which make for peace, &c.* Thus, are you to be active in the house of the Lord, and it will appear on reflection that this includes,

1. That these things are the aim and scope of your conduct. Some by their behaviour in the Church of Christ are seeking themselves, they look every man on his own things, and not on the things of others, contrary to the Apostle's advice, but he, who in any tolerable sense or degree comes up to this exhortation, hath at least sincerely in view the peace of the church, and the edification of his brother; this is the drift of his conduct, and his conscience bears witness that this is his real design and earnest desire. Again,

2. It carrieth in it *diligence* and *labour*. To follow a thing is to pursue it with our utmost ability; the allusion is to a racer who in view of the mark is eager, and presseth forward with all his Strength that he may reach the goal, and lay hold of the prize; in like manner he that followeth after these things, as the Apostle directs, pursues them with vigour. Sloth is inconsistent with the injunction before us, as appears from (Hebrews. 6: 12.) *Be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*. A Man that complieth with this exhortation must not be lukewarm and inactive, he must watch and pray and strive, if by any means he may attain the end set before him. And, further,

3. Constancy and perseverance are contained in the phrase, and thus it stands opposed fickleness and apostasy. He that followeth gives himself to the pursuit; it is the business of his life, nor will he decline or rest short of obtaining the object

pursued, and accordingly we find the Apostle adds to the last quoted passage; *and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence in full assurance of hope unto the end.* Some run well for a season, till a temptation ariseth by which they are offended, then they discover the pride and vanity of their minds, disturb the peace of the church, and care not how much their brother is grieved; but the man who conforms to this direction will endure and prosecute his aim to the end. This it is to follow the things that make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another; it is to set these things before us as a mark, and make them the scope and end of our conduct, to press after them to the utmost of our power, and steadily to persevere therein; and he that is thus sincerely engaged will deprecate and avoid every occasion of trouble; he will rather suffer wrong than be turned aside, and will by no means connive at, much less be concerned in any measures that endanger the peace of society, or that he apprehends will justly offend the least of his brethren. But further,

III. Note the extent of this exhortation: It is universal, and layeth its command on each individual. This hath already been hinted, and calls for peculiar attention, that no one may think himself excused from the labour and self-denial of this important pursuit; there are duties in the house of God, which are special and incumbent only on Persons of distinguished talents or office, which are not required of others; there are also duties of general concern which depend on circumstances, and are only occasional; but the advice in our text is given to every member of the church, ministers and people, younger and elder, rich and poor, weak and strong; here is no exception as to person, no, nor time or circumstances, in one respect or another; each one at all times, in every part of his conduct and in whatever condition himself or the church may be, is called upon to *follow the things which make for peace and wherewith one may edify another.*

This is the duty enjoined; that every member of a Christian church should sincerely aim, and studiously endeavor, at all times, and in every station, to the end of his life, after the things which make for the public peace and the edification of his neighbour. O what glorious times would be seen, if this was the universal practice of nominal Christians? Is it not, my friend, the language of your heart? Lord enable me thus to pursue! As a means of assisting your endeavors, I shall go on, as proposed.

Secondly, To remind, you of some things you are to pursue in order to peace and mutual advantage: This opens a prospect spacious indeed! It contains the whole of practical Godliness. I can only touch on the principal articles which are to be regarded, in social religion as tending to these glorious ends, and I think it may be

useful to lead your Thoughts on this capital-head of discourse under a twofold division; namely,

I. As it relates to the body in general, and,

II. As it has a peculiar regard to the officers of the church in particular. And,

III. It is not impertinent, and I hope will be useful, my Brethren, to put you in mind of those things which make for peace in your general department together in the house of God. Indeed, the carriage of a people towards their minister depends much on their behaviour one among another; a mutual good conduct in this respect among the people of God will naturally preserve and promote a decent esteem for their guides; and now, beloved, the following things are greatly conducive, and in some degree, needful to the peace and edification of a Christian community.

1. A sincere and mutual affection. Charity edifieth: Love is the leading grace, the premium mobile, or grand spring of action in this spiritual body, without which it is dead. *Faith works by love* (Galatians. 5: 6). The Apostle in a fine description of the church, comparing it to the natural body, which being fitly joined together from the Head in its several parts, each supplieth according to its measure to the increase of the whole, concludes his account with observing, that all this is *unto the edifying of itself in love* (Ephesians. 4: 16). It is, by love the saints serve one another (Galatians. 5: 13); hence nothing is more frequently or earnestly exhorted. *Let brotherly love continue* (Hebrews. 13: 1). Again, above all things have fervent charity among yourselves (1 Peter. 4: 8); and further, (Colossians. 3: 14) above all things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection, i. e. as it may reasonably be interpreted, of peace and edification. But time would fail to rehearse the many warm exhortations to love. My Brethren, if you would attain the end proposed in the text, you must *provoke one another to love and good works* (Hebrews. 10: 24). The pains and self-denial needful thereto will be too much for flesh and blood without an undissembled and fervent mutual affection, but where this truly subsists all things are easy, therefore cultivate love: Your Minister will have cause to thank God when *the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth* (2 Thessalonians. 1: 3). Again,

2. Conformity in judgment. *Be of one mind, live in peace* (2 Corinthians. 13: 11). The one is needful to the other. It is written, that the primitive Christians *were of one heart and one soul* (Acts 4: 32); this was not only in point of affection, which engaged them to make a common stock of their substance, but also in point of judgment, they were unanimous in the faith of God's elect (Acts 2: 42), for we are told, they

continued steadfastly in the Apostle's *doctrine*. Some plead that in social Worship we have nothing to do with each other's private opinions, they decry all Creeds and Confessions, and reject, with disdain, every pretence of enquiring into what they believe; they tell us that if men agree in the form of divine institutions, if they maintain church-assemblies, if they bear their proportion in the expense of divine service, and are morally sober, nothing more is required; and indeed it would be very agreeable and useful, if persons related in Christian society were universally united and steadfast in these, but to make the union of the faithful consist wholly, or chiefly in these things, is in a manner to exclude vital religion from the communion of saints, and to introduce a wretched formality, and a miserable jargon in the house of the Lord; for on this principle men may externally join, whose hearts are strangely divided; they may neither adore the same object, nor trust in the same Saviour; while they seem to be one, they in truth may be many, and opposite in point of their faith, and their hope of justification and life everlasting may be on a very different, yea, on a contrary foundation ; besides, if this was the case, how can it be the duty of each to follow after the advancement of his Brother in the knowledge of Christ, or what means or opportunity could he have for pursuing the same as prescribed in the text? But experience shows that nothing more tends to interrupt the peace and edification of a church than the members being differently minded concerning the essential doctrines of their holy profession: Indeed, we are commanded to *receive him that is weak in the faith*. But this proves, that they, whom we receive, are to be in the faith, i. e. such who in the judgment of charity, are real disciples of Christ, and who know and believe the truths of the gospel, nor should the right hand of fellowship be given to any but such. In one word, the peace commended in the text is not like to subsist without this conformity in judgment, respecting what is *essential* to salvation, as well as to the order of communion. But further,

3. Another thing to be followed in order, to peace and edification, is mutual forbearance. There are many occasions for this on account of remaining infirmities and weakness from which none are exempt, but especially on account of the many different sentiments which are found to take place in the minds of God's people: A variety of Opinions among the faithful consist with their cordial union in the foundations of Christianity, and in this state of imperfection in knowledge, it is scarcely possible to find a considerable number of believers of the same mind in every particular; indeed the more liable to differ in this respect, the more we should strive to avoid it, for the less it prevails, the more secure is our peace, and the greater

probability of succeeding in our attempts, one to edify the other; yet differences have been, are, and are to be expected among Christians in fellowship, which call for the mutual exercise of charity and patience: The context shows that you are not to judge or grieve one another on account of these things; and if you would attain the end of this exhortation, beloved, you must exercise a mutual forbearance: And suffer me, to add that this, should be the especial care of those who excel in knowledge, experience, and gifts; such are liable to forget this part of their duty toward their Brethren, but *we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak* (Rom. iv. 1). It is unworthy the character of one long standing and advanced in the church to expect that he should always be indulged in his private opinion, he ought rather to prove his superior talents by yielding to others where peace is in danger, for in this glorious pursuit we are *all to be subject one to another* (1 Peter. 5: 5). Again, 2.

An impartial behaviour is likewise of great importance unto the peace and prosperity of a church. You know the solemn charge given by the Apostle to Timothy, that he would observe the things he had enjoined *without preferring one before another* (1 Timothy. 5: 21), and, saith he, *doing nothing by partiality*. This Rule is to be observed by every person in his station in the house of the Lord. Indeed, we are to prefer others before ourselves, but not to prefer one before another; a peculiar honour is due to one and to another according to his rank, capacity and usefulness, the rendering of which is not partiality but needful, in order to peace; to be partial is to act with prejudice, as the word signifieth, it consists in exceeding or coming short of what a Brother is entitled to in his station and circumstances through prejudice for or against him, as when one Brother is despised, and another under the same character and condition is honored and caressed, or when we are diligent to serve one fellow Christian, and at the same time neglect another, who is equally worthy and in the like necessity; now this respect of persons is to be carefully avoided, as tending to *wrangling* and dispute, according to the expression of the Apostle James, when he declares that the wisdom from above is without partiality (James. 3: 17), i. e. as you find in the margin of some copies, without *wrangling*, or this is the sad consequence of being partial; it creates uneasiness, jealousies, murmuring and contention; an early instance of which is to be seen among the primitive disciples (Acts 6: 1). Impartiality therefore is one thing to be followed in order to peace, and I hope, my Brethren, as you desire one may edify another, you will each endeavor, to carry it with an even hand. But, to proceed .

5. It greatly conduceth to these valuable ends when each member acts in his place. Nothing is more needful to peace and the mutual profit of Christians in communion than order (1 Corinthians. 12). The Apostle declares, that in the church there are diversities of gifts, administrations and operations, and again alluding to the natural body observes, that this one body hath many members, and in another place, he saith, *all Members have not the same office* (Romans. 12: 4). So is Christ: In this spiritual body, the church, there are acts peculiar to the pastoral office, and likewise those that belong to the office of a deacon; there are also some things to be transacted, as discipline in general, by the whole corporation or church gathered together, and in these assemblies and operations each one is more or less concerned according to his station and capacity; now it tends much to promote the ends proposed in our text, when the members of a church intrude not the one on the other; but, proceeding in order each in his function, acts freely for the good of the whole; by this means peace is preserved and the increase of individuals greatly promoted. And,

6. A strict adherence to the word of God in all your church acts is another thing to be pursued. There are plain rules laid down in many cases for the proceedings of a church which it were to be wished each Brother in communion made the matter of his study according to his ability. Many unhappy disturbances have arose among Christians which might have been prevented had they transacted their affairs in the manner prescribed in the gospel: And let it be noted that this observation is in no particular of greater importance than in relation to private contentions, which, as you have heard, are by no means to be introduced to the church till the measures are taken by the parties concerned, which the Lord hath commanded (Matthew. 18: 15,16,17); for want of attending to this, the peace of many communities have been broken, and not easily restored; but in some instances, have severely threatened, if not issued, in a total dissolution. Again,

7. Frequent prayer and spiritual conference is another excellent means of attaining this blessed design. A means sadly neglected among us! Such opportunities, if carried on with seriousness, humility and order, tend to promote knowledge and love, and greatly unite and edify the children of God; and it is highly pleasing to the Lord when they who fear him in this manner speak often one to another (Malachi. 3: 16). Moreover,

8. In a Compliance with the advice of the text, it will be needful to maintain a becoming behaviour in all church assemblies. It was the resolution of the Psalmist

and the direction of the Apostle to behave decently in the house of God; and this is incumbent on all. Some indulge a light and airy manner on those solemn occasions for which they are to blame, for *God is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence in the assemblies of his saints* (Psalm. 89: 7). Church-assemblies are of divine-institution, and honored with the special presence of the Lord according to his promise; this, together with the character you bear, and the end for which you gather, demands a most serious and reverend deportment. Nor is there any superstition in this: Indeed, every place is alike, but all assemblies are not; nor doth religion consist in being indecent: When a people behave with a becoming gravity in their Church-meetings, one good effect will be order and modesty throughout their debates, which tends to peace and edification, but a different conduct will end in confusion. In one word, as you would attain these ends, let each watch his own heart, and look well to his steps, and likewise bear his part in the inspection of the Church, as required, that no one may slide, or iniquity prevail. All this is included in that important exhortation; *looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled* (Hebrews. 12: 15).

These, my Brethren, are the things you are to follow, in your general conduct one among another: Namely, Brotherly love, union in judgment, mutual forbearance, an impartial conduct, that each one keep his station, respect to the rule in all your proceedings, frequent prayer and spiritual conference, reverence in your assemblies, and an holy watchfulness. Now, let me beseech you to regard these things, and you will find by the blessing of God that they make for peace, and will turn to your mutual advantage. I now pass on,

II. To remind you of those things which are to be pursued in respect to the officers of the Church in particular, on which I am obliged to be brief; these you know consist of two orders; namely, ministers of the word, or such who are invested with the pastoral office; and deacons: You have this day set apart persons in each of these characters.

As to the deacons, who are to serve tables, two things are essential.

1. That you honour their persons. Deacons are stewards, and, in some respects, guides in the house of God, and though their office is inferior to, and appointed for the relief and assistance of gospel ministers, it is truly honorable and the peace and edification of a Church depends much on their being duly respected. Again,

2. Let them use the office to which you have called them, as the Apostle directs (1 Timothy. 3: 10); this carries in it a caution not to invade their province, and it demands a proper submission to them in what relates thereunto: It becomes you to admit them into your houses and company as occasion requireth, to be ready to answer to their serious questions, and hearken to their prudent advice, giving them all reasonable satisfaction in those matters which lie within the compass of their office; you are likewise to assist them to your power; and more especially by a free and generous contribution of your substance, whereby they may be supplied for the discharge of their office. (*Deacons indeed are to be an example of liberality to the poor, for which reason among others, a covetous man is unfit to be preferred to this honour in the Church, but they are not to furnish the tables of the sanctuary out of their own proper substance, but from the Church's stock, the maintaining of which is absolutely necessary to the execution of their office.*) I say not that any are limited in their beneficence to the poor, but I may venture to affirm that no pretence of private and personal assistance will excuse a man from bearing his proportion in filling the hands of the deacons, and it seems by this appointment of the Lord, that it is agreeable to his will, that the bounty of his people in the Church should be chiefly disposed this way; however, if these servants of Christ are not properly respected in their character, and furnished for their work, it will greatly affect the public tranquility.

But the office your pastor being still higher, and of greater moment, it may be expected that I should speak more particular in relation to him, yet here I must not enlarge; doubtless his station renders your suitable behaviour to him the utmost importance. A pastor is the principal instrument of edification, it must therefore be allowed that the things which are required in respect of such fall within the number, and that indeed they are to be ranked among the chief things which make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another. Many are the obligations on a people to their minister, on which I cannot insist: In general, they contain everything in your power needful to comfort and assist him in the work of the Lord. It may suffice that I briefly touch on three or four principal points, in which the peace of Church is nearly concerned. And,

1. One thing to be followed in respect of your pastor, to accomplish these ends, is his credit among you. The scriptures demand a very high esteem for those who are over you in the Lord for their work's sake (1 Thess. v. 13), and truly their office on many accounts require it, and for no reason more weighty than this, that the prosperity of the Church is connected therewith.

You need not be told, that when once a minister sinks in his character, the peace of a community is easily broke, discontent and disorders ensue, and the work of the building is then interrupted, if not at a stand: A sorrowful case indeed! He therefore, who with a good understanding followeth the things which make for peace, will be careful in love to preserve, and will labor to promote an esteem of his pastor, in his own opinion, and in the breast of others, and there are various things conduce to attain it, not now to be mentioned, but which will be easily apprehended, and as readily complied with by those who have at heart the good of Jerusalem.

A person sustaining this office may forfeit his character; he may turn out unworthy ; and so unworthy as not to be endured, nor do I plead for any connivance at real or habitual evil in favour of a gospel minister; his sacred office doth not in the least extenuate, it rather aggravates his crime, and the consequence of not bearing a proper and seasonable testimony against such a man's sin is the reverse of what the apostle commends; the leaven will spread to the troubling of the Church, and the defiling or seducing of many, *for a righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring* (Proverbs. 25: 26). May the Lord keep us from falling! But, the credit a serious and upright servant of the Lord cannot be too much regarded. Nothing, my friends, is to be more sacred with you than your minister's character; he will, like the rest of his Brethren, if faithful, be subject to the slanders and reproaches of many; the malice of some and the weakness of others may lay you under a temptation to slight him, be therefore on your guard, discountenance all insinuations to his prejudice, nor easily take up a report against him which tends to undervalue his person or labours. In one word, As you would compass the design of this exhortation, hearken to the Apostle's advice; having received our Brother in the Lord, endeavor by every honorable method to hold him in high reputation. Again,

2. Follow his improvement and success. These indeed are from that God, who alone giveth the increase; yet, in the ordinary course of the Divine dispensation they are to be obtained in the use of means, and you may do many things towards your minister's improvement, and especially a young minister may obtain from his people much assistance in a variety of ways; you may as opportunity serves, supply him with books or other conveniences for study, in want of which, on first setting out, some have been greatly at a loss; to be early furnished with such means is of peculiar advantage, and a Christian may have great reason to acknowledge himself well paid for this kind of generosity by the blessing of God on the diligence of his pastor. He may likewise be greatly edified by a communication of your experience and

knowledge in spiritual matters; those of you who have been long called into the hope of the gospel may have met with many things, which will be profitable to your minister to know. The great Apostle of the Gentiles himself desired to be comforted this way by the Romans, *I long to see you ---- that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me* (Romans. 1: 11, 12). A Method in which a man may excel who hath scarce any other gift to impart to his pastor, and thereby become greatly subservient to the carrying on the work of the Lord, and 'tis much to be desired that these communications between ministers and their people were more frequent and free. It may also conduce to his visible success if you are watchful and ready to encourage enquiring souls whom you perceive awakened under his ministry; far be it to countenance any mean, carnal, or precipitant step to induce persons to join a particular Church; but sure 'tis becoming to take notice of those who seem to be looking towards Zion, for want of which, through prevailing lukewarmness, there is reason to apprehend that young converts are often discouraged, at least are turned aside from attending where they are neglected; but, above all things you are to pursue his improvement by earned and daily supplications to the God of all grace. *You also helping together by prayer for us* (2 Corinthians. 1: 11). This was the practice of the faithful of old; *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem* (Psalms. 122: 6). I make no doubt but that our Brother, your pastor, is ready to address you in the words of the Apostle in the close of this epistle, conscious that this is his heart's desire; *I beseech you, Brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me* (Romans. 15: 30). And so, say we all; *Brethren, pray for us* (Hebrews. 13: 18). Beloved, pray for your minister; pray for him in your closets, in your families, and also together in the house of God. And further,

3. Follow his support or maintenance, each setting an example and stirring up the other to fulfill this reasonable appointment of the Lord. Among other excellent things your pastor hath been told by way of under the difficulties and labour of his service, you know this is one; namely, that in a faithful discharge of his work, he is entitled to honour, and that this includes an honorable maintenance; let him not be deceived, unless he is thus provided for by you, he will not be duly honored among you, your hands will be slackened, and it will lay a foundation for trouble. If, through a neglect in this point a minister is perplexed and rendered incapable of pursuing his studies, one means of edification is lost, to the Church; how then can a man who withholds his proportion towards this work be said to follow the things recommended in the

text? And let it be observed that this is not only what a few persons, comparatively rich, are to pursue, but it should be endeavored by all, for want of attending to which, many persons are burthened, and some Churches decline. But once more,

4. Follow his ministrations. Every preceding article will be more or less affected by this: If you neglect his ministrations, his character, his usefulness, and consequently the means of his support will be lessened. No practice more unreasonable and preposterous, or more effectually subversive of the ends proposed in the text, than when the members of the Church desert the ministry among them, the pernicious consequences of indulging to this are more than can be told; I shall only say that if the endeavors of a pastor is the appointed means of edifying his people, and who will refute it, most certainly then they who habitually neglect to sit under him do not follow, but in fact, such forsake a capital and necessary thing which makes for peace, and wherewith one may edify another. These are the things you are to pursue in respect of such who are in office among you; you are to honour and assist them to the utmost of your power, and especially the credit, improvement, support, and ministrations of your pastor are to be diligently followed, as you would attain to the peace set before you. It remains,

Thirdly. That I mention the motives there are to animate each of you in this glorious pursuit. And,

1. One motive is this: It is the proper business of every man. Various are the duties of believers in communion, according to their different Stations and circumstances: Some are to give, and some are to receive, some are to preach, and some are to hear, some are to lead, and others to follow, but under all the exercises unto which we are called in the house of God, these are the things to be pursued, for it is of universal concern, without exception; and is not this a strong reason why everyone should follow the same? Again,

2. Every one is capable being subservient to this purpose, he is passively so; for who is so perfect as not to admit of further increase: Yea; or of being profited by the least of his Brethren? He is actively so; for there is no indifferent member in a Church, who is so inconsiderable as that he may not by his sloth, murmuring, talebearing, or some evil conduct, break the public peace, and stumble his Brother; or, on the other hand, by an humble, faithful, orderly, and affectionate behaviour be a means of promoting harmony and mutual edification? It is in the spiritual as in the natural body,

the least member may in some degree obstruct or promote the life and pleasure of the whole, and of every part. And further,

3. You are each accountable for his deportment towards the other. Thus, in the context; *we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ; every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Romans. 14: 10, 12); let no man, therefore, grieve or stumble his Brother. Woe be to the man who proudly disturbs the peace of the Church, or despiseth his Brethren; but blessed is he who denieth himself for the sake of the chosen, in meekness and love, when the Redeemer shall appear to acknowledge what the righteous have done one for another, as done unto himself! Moreover,

4. The pleasure to be found in this blessed pursuit may justly excite our zeal in this Service. 'Tis true, mortification is needful, in proportion to which it is grievous to the flesh, as the Christian himself may experience; but nothing is more pleasant to the renewed mind, constrained by the love of God, and in the prospect of life everlasting than to carry on the work of the Lord and to build up his people. *Therefore, saith the Apostle, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory* (2 Timothy. 2: 10). In this pursuit the spiritually minded rejoice, while they, who being sordid and carnal are seeking their own, cannot taste the inexpressible delight and satisfaction of heart that is felt in being an instrument of furthering the peace and the faith of the saints. And again,

5. The example of Christ hath already been hinted. He followed the things which make for peace through the course of his life, and humbling himself to the death of the cross, made peace by his blood, that he might build up the Temple of the Lord, and complete the salvation of his people. And shall not every disciple follow his steps; or, to use the words of the Apostle, "Let this Mind be in him, which was also in Christ Jesus?" Finally,

5. It is a Work truly honorable in the Sight both of God and Man. *For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of man* (Romans. 14: 18). These considerations may suffice to quicken your endeavor after the things which make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another. It is every one's business; you are each in some degree capable of it, and must strictly give an account of your conduct. There is a singular pleasure found in the delightful pursuit, it corresponds with Christ Jesus's example, and it is highly well pleasing to God and men; to all which may be added, as hinted already, that recompence of reward at the

appearance and kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. That person who cannot be animated by such motives, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

And now, my Brethren, from what hath been said, may we not justly admire the transcendent excellency of that sacred fellowship which the faithful have in Christ Jesus? What other kind of society on earth is founded on such noble, so disinterested principles? Is it not truly divine? And, should not this commend it to the practice of them that fear God? If indeed you are the disciples of Christ, wherefore, my friends, are you so backward to build up his house? It is true, no person enters with a good understanding into this gospel-communion, so much for himself as for others, and it requires great humility, self-denial, vigilance, and care, to be an honorable and useful member of the Church; but can this be an objection, or have you any reason to fear the grace of the Lord in your obedience to him?

I might go on to observe how shameful is the indolent professor, much more he that is contentious and quarrelsome, and continually giving offence to his Brethren! The Lord preserve you from such bitter roots! But 'tis time to dismiss you; yet, beloved, permit me to add one caution more. Remember, while you are following these things, to have your eyes continually up, for, the aids of the Spirit, without whose efficacious influences you cannot succeed; consider that *except the Lord build the house, however diligent or skillful, they labour in vain that build it* (Psalms. 127: 1). But, be assured that, if constrained by the love of God, your hearts are set on this work, your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians. 15: 58).

To conclude; who will not join in ardently wishing that this beautiful spirit and conduct might universally prevail. O that in every Church of the living God, each member pressed forwards to this glorious mark! Let us who are called to be guides, with holy courage lead on the van: Let us not only in our discourses and instructions to the flocks we preside, but likewise in our conduct towards each other, show them the way, that having us for an ensample, the people that follow may not fail, by this golden rule, to go on to perfection; and, O that the same noble pursuit may be conspicuous in all the congregation of the saints in their communion together! So shall peace be within our walls, and prosperity within our palaces! And, in one word; how great the encouragement for every one thus to seek the welfare of Zion; for they indeed who hate Zion, shall be as the grass on the house-tops, which withereth before it groweth up, and shall be confounded; but they who love her **SHALL CERTAINLY PROSPER.**