

**JOHN JENNINGS & AUGUSTUS FRANCK**



# **ON PREACHING**

JOHN JENNINGS & AUGUSTUS FRANCK



**ON PREACHING**

**TWO DISCOURSES:**

**THE FIRST,**

Of Preaching **CHRIST;**

**THE SECOND,**

Of particular and experimental **PREACHING.**

BY THE LATE REVEREND **Mr. JOHN JENNINGS.**

With a PREFACE by the REVEREND **Dr. ISAAC WATTS.**

The **THIRD EDITION.**

To which is added,

**A LETTER** concerning the most useful way of preaching; written in the German Language by the late Reverend and Celebrated **Dr. AUGUSTUS HERMANNUS FRANCK**, Professor of Divinity in the University of Hall in Saxony, Pastor of a Church, and Director of the charitable Foundations there. Translated into Latin by order of his Son, the present Professor **FRANCK**, and out of the Latin into English by **DAVID JENNINGS.**

*1 Cor. ii. 2. I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ.*

*2 Tim. ii. 15. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth.*

Printed for **RICHARD HETT**, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, in the YEAR **MDCCXXXVI.**

**LONDON:**

**TO THE UNITED  
MINISTERS  
OF THE SEVERAL  
CONGREGATIONS**

OF

**PROTESTANT DISSENTERS**

In the COUNTIES of;

*Leicester, Northampton, Warwick,*

*and Rutland;*

These DISCOURSES

Are humbly inscribed and submitted.

*By their affectionate Brother,*

*and Fellow Labourer,*

**JOHN JENNINGS.**

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A LETTER TO A FRIEND

THE PREFACE.

A LETTER to a friend concerning The Most Useful Way Of Preaching.

Testimonies of the Reverend Dr. Bates and Mr. Baxter to the design of these discourses.

He preached Christ crucified our only *wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. His design was to convince sinners of their absolute want of Christ, that with flaming affections they might come to him, and from *his fulness receive* divine *grace*. This is to water the tree at the root, whereby it becomes flourishing and fruitful; whereas the laying down of moral rules for the exercise of virtue, and subduing vicious affections, without directing men to derive spiritual strength by prayer, and in the use of divine ordinances, from the mediator the fountain of all grace; and without representing his love as the most powerful motive and obligation to obedience, is but *pure philosophy*, and the highest effect of it is but *unregenerate morality*.

Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon on Dr. Jacomb.

All our work must be done *spiritually*.—There is in some men's Preaching a spiritual strain, which spiritual hearers can discern and relish: And in some men's, this sacred tincture is so wanting, that even when they speak of *spiritual things*, the manner is such as if they were *common matters*.

Mr. Baxter, in his Gildas Salvianus, c. III.

### The Preface.

When I see a book well written for the *instruction of mankind*, I always hope it will spread its good influences as far and wide as it finds readers. But when I meet with a valuable treatise, whose design is to improve the sacred *skill of preaching*, I am ready to persuade myself, “Surely this will become a more extensive benefit; and the good influences of it will reach as many whole assemblies of men, as there are ministers who shall happen to read it.” For this reason I cannot but take a special satisfaction in recommending these *two discourses* to the world, which, in my opinion, are founded upon the general principles of Christianity, and therefore invite the perusal of all, being written without the narrow spirit of a party. They seem to be calculated for the common good, nor have I offered anything in them that can justly give disgust, or awaken any reasonable resentment.

It must be confessed, without controversy, that there are some things where in several of the preachers of the *present time* have the advantage of our learned and pious fathers: But there are other excellencies in the sermons of the *puritanical age*, which I would rejoice to find more studiously revived and cultivated in our day. Among these I know none of more eminent necessity, glory, and usefulness, than those *two* which are the subjects of this little book; I mean the *evangelical turn of thought* that should run through our ministry, and the *experimental way of discourse* on practical subjects.

It hath been justly observed, that where a great and universal neglect of *preaching Christ* hath prevailed in a Christian nation, it hath given a fatal occasion to the growth of *deism and infidelity*; for when persons have heard the sermons of their clergy, for many years together, and find little of *Christ* in them, they have taken it into their heads, that men may be very good men, and go safe to heaven without Christianity; and therefore, though they dwell in a land where the Gospel is professed, they imagine there’s no need they should be Christians. But what a blot and reproach would it be to our ministry, if *infidels* and *heathens* should multiply among us, through such a woeful neglect of preaching the peculiar *doctrines of Christ*?

Besides, let us consider how little hath been our *success* in comparison of the multitudes converted by our fathers in the day of their ministry. Hath not this been matter of sore complaint these many years past? Now it is worth our enquiry, whether it may not be ascribed to the *absence of Christ* in our sermons. And what reason indeed can we have to expect the *presence* and influence of the *Spirit of Christ*, if we leave his person, his offices, his grace, and his gospel, out of our discourses, or give but a slight and casual hint at these glorious subjects, which ought to be our daily theme. This is what our author would put us in mind of in his *first discourse*.

And perhaps another cause of our *want of success* hath been this, that we have too much left off the way of our fathers, in distinguishing the characters of our hearers, and dividing the word aright to saints and sinners, to the stupid and the profane, the awakened and convinced, the mournful and penitent, the presumptuous and obstinate, the deserted and despairing.

This method appears eminently in the labours of the former age. Those two great and good men, *Mr. Flavell*, and *Mr. Baxter*, might be divided in their sentiments on other subjects, but you find this conduct runs through all their practical writings. This is a great part of what the *second discourse* here recommends to us, under the title of *Experimental Preaching*.

Our author indeed assumes not so much to himself, as to address any besides *students* and *younger ministers*. But if in the *middle age of life* we should examine our performances by the light of this treatise, 'tis possible we and our people might be gainers by it.

Have we not been too often tempted to follow the *modish way*, and speak to our hearers in general terms, as though they were all converted already, and sufficiently made Christians by a national profession? Have not some of us spent our labour to build them up in the practice of duties, without teaching them to search whether the foundation has been laid in an entire change and renovation of heart? Do we lead them constantly to enquire into the inward state of their souls, the special tempers and circumstances of their spirits, their peculiar difficulties, dangers and



temptations, and give them peculiar assistance in all this variety of the Christian life?

With how much more efficacy does the word of God impress the conscience, when every hearer finds himself described without the preacher's personal knowledge of him? When his own spiritual state is painted to the life, and (as it were) set before his eyes in the language of the preacher? When a word of conviction, advice, or comfort, is spoken so pertinently to his own case, that he takes it as directed to himself. How much more powerful and more penetrating will our sermons be, when those who *come into our assemblies* shall be *convinced and judged*, and have the *secrets of their hearts made manifest, and confess that God is in the midst of us of a truth?*

The perusal of these excellent *discourses* in manuscript hath given me so much satisfaction, that I take a sensible pleasure to think that the press will communicate them to the world; and then I hope for a further share of profit, by keeping them always at my right hand when I am preparing for the service of the sanctuary. May the blessed Spirit of God teach those who enter into the sacred office, this holy skill of winning souls! May He awaken us all to see what may be mended in our ministrations, in order to publish the gospel of Christ with more illustrious and divine success!

London, June 14, 1723.

I, Watts.

**Advertisement.**

That excellent Letter concerning the best method of preaching, which stands annexed to this new edition of Mr. Jennings's discourses, was written in the *German* tongue by that venerable and apostolic man *Herman Augustus Franck*, late professor of divinity at *Hall* in *Saxony*, and was communicated to me last winter by his worthy son *Gotthilf Augustus Franck*, who happily fills and adorns the same post in that university, and seems to be possessed of the same spirit of faith and love. 'Tis now turned into *English* by my valuable friend *Mr. David Jennings*, the surviving brother of the author, who perfectly agreed with me in this sentiment, that it should be made public in our own language, and printed together with these two discourses, as being eminently suited to promote the same design of an experimental and evangelical way of preaching. And I persuade myself that every reader who could relish and approve of what *Mr. John Jennings* has written on this subject, will be very well pleased and entertained with the perusal of this small *essay* of that great man, Professor *Franck*, on the same argument; and may both be attended with divine success.

Newington,

August 28, 1736.

I. Watts.

## DISCOURSE I. Of Preaching Christ: Addressed to Younger Ministers.

Dear friends and brethren,

We profess ourselves Christians, and are, I hope, upon careful and rational enquiry satisfied that the religion of *Jesus* comes from God; and that it is a most glorious dispensation, not only for the sublime wonders of its doctrine, and the divine purity of its precepts, but that it excels all other religions in the strength of its motives, the richness of its promises, and the sufficiency of the divine aid attending it.

Now in all the peculiar glories of this religion, *Christ* is interwoven, like *Phidias's* name in the shield, which could not be effaced without destroying the shield itself.

The doctrines concerning *Jesus* make the glory and advantage of his religion; and so run through the whole, that *preaching Christ*, and *preaching the gospel*, are, in scripture style, synonymous terms: As in 1 Cor. i. 23.—ii. 2. and innumerable other places.

The *preaching of Christ* is our business, our charge, and our glory; but oh! *who is sufficient for these things?* Give me leave then, my dear brethren and friends, to remind myself and you, what regard a minister should have to our Redeemer in his preaching and other administrations.

I. *Let us make Christ the design and end of our preaching.* If we seek principally to please men, then are we not the servants of *Christ*. If we look no farther than our own humour, reputation, or temporal advantage, and expend our talents to our own private use, how shall we make up our accounts to our master? and what reward can we expect from him?

Our ultimate end should be the personal glory of *Christ*. That the glory of *Christ*, as God, is the ultimate end of the gospel, none can doubt: Nay, as a creature, he is in his perfections and felicity, far superior to the rest of the creation; so that it is said of this divine person, Heb. ii. 10. *All things are for him, as well as by him.* Is he not worth ten thousand of us? More worth than the world? The only begotten Son of God, whom the highest angels adore? Now if the glory of *Christ's* person, to the honour of

the Father, be the principal end in the divine schemes and actings, it should also be our highest view and design. Nor want we motives of gratitude to lead us to this: He is the founder of our religion, to whom all our hopes are owing: He has honoured us, and well deserved that we should honour him: Nor is there any danger of lessening the honour of God the Father thereby, when we consider him, as the Scriptures represent him, *as one with the Father, the equal image of the invisible God, to the glory of God the Father.*

Again, as the glory of *Christ's* person should be our ultimate end; so the advancing the kingdom of his grace amongst men, is to be the subordinate end.

The recovery of fallen creatures to holiness and happiness is the immediate design of the gospel. *Christ is come into the world to save sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15, And he sends us to preach his gospel, that we might promote the same salvation, *That men might live soberly, righteously and godly, looking for that blessed hope*, Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13. To make men holy, to bring them to the faith of *Christ*, the imitation of him, and communion with him, here and hereafter, to the glory of the Father through *Christ*, must be the constant end of our preaching. We should not think it enough to inform, to amuse, to please, to affect, but we must aim farther than this, to bring them to trust in *Christ*, and withal, to make them penitent and holy; and every subject must be managed with this view: And let it be our great care, on a more speculative subject (as suppose one of the sublime doctrines of grace) still to keep the end in view, and apply it practically, or our labour is lost.

Let us by all means endeavour to save precious souls, but yet aim at a higher end, than this, *viz.* that we ourselves may be *a sweet savour of Christ unto God*, 2 Cor. ii. 15. And then, though we miss of our secondary end, and are not, as we could wish, *the savour of life unto life*, unto any great number; yet in being the *savour of death unto death to them that perish*, we shall be instruments of glorifying the justice and long-suffering of *Christ*, and be witnesses for God, *that there has been a Prophet amongst them*; our primary end is answered, *our labour is with the Lord*, and we in

the meantime are supported, *though Israel be not gathered, for the word shall not return empty.*

Nay farther, it is not enough that the strain of our preaching is adapted to the true design of the gospel, but we must at heart sincerely intend it; otherwise, though our discourses be unexceptionable, yet, if our designs be wrong and base, though others be saved through our ministry, *we shall be castaways.*

II. *Let Christ be the matter of our preaching.* Let us display the divine dignity and loveliness of his person, by the light of his word, as *God manifest in the flesh.*

Let us unfold his mediatorial office, the occasion, design, and purport of his great undertaking.

Let us remind our hearers of the particulars of his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession.

Let us set forth the characters he bears, as a prophet, priest and king; as a shepherd, captain, advocate and judge.

Let us demonstrate and shew the sufficiency of his satisfaction, the tenor and excellence of the covenant confirmed with and by him, our justification by his righteousness, adoption through our relation to him, sanctification by his Spirit, our union with him as our head, and safe conduct by his providence; and how pardon, grace and glory accrue to the elect through his suretyship and sacrifice, and are dispensed by his hand.

Let us in his name declare and explain his most holy laws, and teach the people whatever duties he has commanded, to God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

Let us quicken the saints to duty, raise their hopes, establish and comfort their souls, by the exceeding great and precious promises of his gospel, which in him are *yea and amen.*

I but just give short and imperfect hints of these things, and refer to the apostolical writings, which you'll find are made up of discourses on these and such like topics.

III. *Let the manner of our preaching on any subject, distinguish it from mere discourses on natural religion, by a continual regard to Christ.*

If we are upon the perfections of God, let us consider them as shining in his Son, and exemplified in his undertaking, *who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

If we set forth gospel-blessings and promises, let us consider them as purchased by a Saviour's blood, and distributed by his bounty; *For by his own blood he has obtained eternal redemption*, Heb. ix. 12. And *from him the whole body is supplied*, Eph. iv. 16.

If we take notice of the providence of God, let us not forget that *all power is given to Christ, in heaven and in earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18. And that *he is head over all things for the church*, Ephes. i. 22.

If by the terrors of the last judgment we persuade men, let the *wrath of the Lamb*, be denounced, and the dreadful reckoning for abused grace and a slighted Saviour; for *this is the condemnation*, John iii. 19.

If we are assisting the devotions of the people in confession, prayer, or praise, let their repentance spring from *looking on Christ whom they have pierced*, Zech. xii. 10. Let their faith in prayer fix steadily on *Jesus*, as to him is owing our acceptance and success, and *our boldness at the throne of grace* flows from regarding *Christ* as our great *High Priest*, Heb. iv. 14, 16. And let us teach them to *give thanks to God the Father through him*, to whom it is owing that God is our Father, Col. iii. 17.

When we are upon the subject of duty, *Christ* is by no means to be forgotten; for to persuade men to practical godliness, is one of the most difficult parts of a minister's work. Men will hear with a curious satisfaction a speculative discourse; and with some joy attend to the displays of God's grace; nay, a *Felix* may tremble when judgment is preached: Many indeed will bear to hear of duty too; but to induce them to practise it, *hic labor, hoc opus*: Here we had need call in all helps, and take all advantages, which the gospel as well as the light of nature can furnish. In other discourses, we are rather attacking *satan's* out-works, a blind and prejudiced understanding; in practical subjects we assault *satan's* strongest fort, a corrupted will: We may gain the understanding on our side, and gain

some share of the affections; but to subdue a perverse will, and make men good practical Christians, is not so easy a thing, that we can afford to spare any motive or quickening consideration. But here I must be more particular in explaining how we should regard *Christ* in preaching duty.

1. Let us represent duty as the natural and necessary fruit of faith in *Christ*, and love to him. When by faith we behold a crucified *Jesus*, do we not tremble at the severity of God's justice, and regret and hate those sins that occasioned his sorrows? When we farther consider, that *by his stripes we are healed*, can we forbear *to love him who hath first loved us*? Shall we not *live to him that died for us*? Can we have the heart to *crucify him afresh*? No, let us make his service our business, his sufficiency our confidence, his life our example, and his blessings our portion and choice.

From such actings of faith and outgoings of love, flows that divine temper which constitutes the new creature, and lays the foundation of all right gospel-obedience. Thus therefore let us continually trace gospel duties up to their fountain-head, that the people may learn, 'tis not outward reformation that will stand the test in the day of judgment, but an inward renewal of the soul; that *the tree must first be made good, before there can be any good fruit*; and that all must be done for *Christ's* sake, and flow from *faith working by love*, Gal. v. 6.

2. Let us enforce duties with motives respecting *Christ*; as grateful love to him should constrain us; as fear of his wrath should awe us; as we would approve ourselves the disciples and followers of *Christ*; as we would enjoy communion with him; as we would promote his honour and interest; and as we would have joy, and not confusion, at his appearing. Not that we should neglect any motives which the light of nature can furnish, and are level to the capacities of the people: We have need enough of all; but if we go no further than these, our exhortations will want far the greatest part of their weight: *We must beseech and exhort by the Lord Jesus*, 1 Thess. iv. 1.

3. Let us consider duties, as to be performed by the grace of *Christ*: Telling the people, that our fruitfulness depends on our being engrafted into this vine; and that a holy walk is being *led by the Spirit*; and when we do good, it is *not we, but the grace of God that is in us*; that out of a sense of

weakness, *we must be made strong, and do all things through Christ strengthening us*, Phil. iv. 13.

4. Let us consider all good works as acceptable through the merits of *Christ*; and remind our hearers, that *could we do all, we were but unprofitable servants*; and that we must *seek to be found at last, not having on our own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9.

IV. *Let us deliver ourselves in a style becoming the gospel of Christ*: Not with *great swelling words of vanity*, or in the style of the heathen sophists, or words that *man's wisdom teacheth*, and may perhaps sound best in our own ears; but let us use *great plainness of speech*, and seek to find out such *acceptable words*, as may best reach the understanding and affections of the bulk of an auditory.

As for the affectionate part of a discourse, brethren, I suppose, upon a view of ancient and modern learning, you allow that the men of the east, and next to them the ancient *Greeks*, excelled in fire, and works of the imagination; and that the moderns inhabiting milder western climates, even the *French* (from whom upon many accounts we should expect the most of this sort) produce but an empty flash, in comparison of the solid heat of the ancients; and rather amuse us with little delicacies, than by masterly strokes command our whole souls. Now the scriptures are the noblest remains of what the east has produced, and much surpass the best of the *Greeks* in the force of their oratory: Let us take the spirit and style of them, and thence borrow bold figures and allusions, strong descriptions and commanding address to the passions. But I'm prevented in all I would say on this so important head, by the Archbishop of *Cambray's Dialogues concerning Eloquence*, which I'm as little capable of improving upon, as I am of commending them as they deserve.

And now, brethren, let me lay before you some reasons and motives to back this friendly admonition concerning *preaching Christ*.

(I.) 'Tis the way to have our labours accepted of *Christ*, and to have communion with him in our work:—Even Paul cries out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* With how much more reason may we? Does not our



cheerful progress in our work depend on a divine *afflatus*, and the Spirit dispensed by *Christ*? But if we take no notice of him in our preaching, and do not distinguish ourselves from the moral philosophers of the *gentiles*, how can we expect any more of this enlivening and encouraging presence of *Christ* than they had; nay, we have less ground to expect it, if we wilfully slight and slur so noble a revelation, which they were never favoured with.

(II.) 'Tis the way to win souls to *Christ*, and make lively Christians. The success of the gospel is certainly no less owing to the power of its motives, than to the clearness, fulness, and purity of its precepts. These peculiar motives of the gospel have all such a respect to *Christ*, that they are enervated if he be disregarded: The gospel scheme is what God in his wisdom has pitched upon to reform mankind, and save them; and he seems in honour concerned to crown it with greater success than any other scheme whatsoever; *the preaching of Christ crucified is the power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. If we maim the gospel, and suppress a good part of it, we can expect but a very defective success in the nature of things; nay, may we not fear God's honour is concerned in such case to blast us, and we shall be like to labour almost in vain.

Observation agrees with this theory: The great masters of reason, who have less regard to *Christ* in their preaching, may, indeed, have a charm for one of an hundred, who have a taste of the beauties of fine reasoning, and be of use to them, whilst the bulk of an auditory is asleep: Alas! with what heart can we go on, entertaining two or three, to the starving of most of the souls in an auditory. May we not also observe a happier effect of a strain prudently evangelical on Christians themselves; that they who fit under it are more lively, zealous, ready to every good work, and heavenly-minded, than those Christians who have heard less of the gospel.

(III.) It is a direct imitation of the apostles of *Christ*: *Christ* himself, whilst upon earth, preached the gospel in parables, in a concealed manner, distantly and with reserve: He could not so fully take the advantage of his resurrection, satisfaction, ascension, and the like, not yet done, made, or proved: He had many things to say, which his disciples could not then bear, but he declares them afterward by his Spirit in his apostles: They therefore

are the true pattern of our preaching, now, after the mystery of redemption is brought to light, and hath its full evidence.

How then did the Apostles preach *Christ*? 'Tis endless to attempt a full detail of particulars; any part of the apostolical writings is authority sufficient to our purpose; and therefore I've been sparing in quotations all along, as needless, to those who will look into these writings with this view. And here we don't desire to allege or insist upon any passages in their writings, which may be supposed to be writ and inserted for reasons peculiar to that age and country in which the apostles wrote, and in which perhaps we are not so much obliged to imitate them in our preaching; for what will remain after all these are put out of the account, will, I am satisfied, be as full to our purpose, as these that are struck off.

I'll only then, by way of specimen, select some of the apostles discourses on duties most moral, where we are apt to forget a mention of *Christ*, or respect to him, that it may at once appear the apostles shunned not the pressing such duties, or a regard to *Christ*, in the treating on them.

1 Cor. vi. 8. Honesty is pressed by these motives—the *unrighteous, thieves and extortioners, shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (which in the style of the New Testament is *Christ's* kingdom of grace and glory.)—That Christians *are converted by the spirit of Christ, and justified by his righteousness*.

1 Cor. vi. 15. Chastity is enjoined, *as our bodies are members of Christ, as we are one spirit with him, temples of the Holy Ghost, and bought with a price*.

1 Cor. viii. and ix. Alms is recommended, as it will bring a large tribute of *praise to God for our subjection to the gospel of Christ—and Christ became poor for our sakes*.

Tit. iii. 2. Evil speaking is forbidden, because *we were foolish and wicked; but the grace of God has made the difference; not for our righteousness, but of his free mercy he has regenerated us, and given us his Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, by whom we are justified, and heirs of glory*.

Rom. xiii. Subjects are commanded to obey magistrates, *because the gospel day is come, and we should put on Christ Jesus.*

Eph. v. 25. Husbands are charged to love their wives, *as Christ loved the church.*

Eph. v. 22. Wives obedience is urged, because *the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.*

Tit. ii. 9. Servants are exhorted to their duty, *as they would adorn the doctrine of Christ—because grace so teacheth, and that we look for Christ's appearance, who gave himself for us, that we might be holy.*

Now what is there in these motives peculiar to one age or nation? Are not all these as good now as formerly and are men so ready in their duty, that we have no need of them?

Nay, it is worth observation, that the apostles do not confine themselves to motives peculiarly adapted to the duty they are pressing, and which serve to enforce one duty rather than another; but, as you may look back and see, when such proper motives are not at hand, they take without any scruple common or general ones, which will equally enforce any duty whatsoever.

And why should not we introduce the peculiarities of the gospel on all occasions, as frequently as the apostles did? If our schemes of theology will not allow us, we have reason to suspect we are in a different scheme from the apostles. Are we afraid men will make perverse use of such doctrines as the apostles used for motives? The apostles chose to venture it, and why should not we? If we will not dare to preach such a gospel as may be perverted by men of corrupt minds to their own injury, we must not expect to be instruments of any good: If we'll be *the savour of life* to some, we must expect to be *the savour of death* to others, or not preach at all.

I confess even the *Remonstrant* scheme (which, I think, considerably sinks the doctrines of grace) does allow room to regard *Christ* abundantly more than most preachers of that set do: I would meet them on their own principles: What hinders their frequently inculcating the merits of *Christ*, the depravity of our natures, the necessity of regeneration, the aids of grace,

and union and communion with *Christ*? These topics, it were to be hoped, might have their effect: But alas! how few of the *Remonstrants* improve to advantage so much of the gospel as they hold and receive: And it makes me less inclined to this scheme, that it so generally draws those that embrace it into a strain of preaching, even on practical subjects, so different from that of the Apostles; and inclines them, I know not how, to suppress those glorious motives (which yet their own principles might allow) by which the apostles enforced gospel duties.

(IV.) So only shall we deserve the name of preachers of *Christ*—Only did I say? I am afraid this may sound too harsh—Come let us put the matter as soft and candid as common sense will allow us—So shall we most evidently or best deserve this honourable title.

Whilst a preacher keeps off from the peculiarities of the gospel, and says nothing but what the light of nature would also suggest and authorize, give me leave to say, a stranger might possibly doubt whether he is a Deist or a Christian; the question is like an imperfect mathematical problem, which equally admits of different solutions.

Suppose the ghosts of *Paul* and *Seneca* to come, mere strangers, into an assembly where one was haranguing the people in this abstracted manner; I am apt to think *Seneca* would claim him as a philosopher of his own sect and religion. Now if *Paul* should also make his claim to him as a minister of *Christ*, how could the question be decided without allowing *Seneca* to be a preacher of *Christ* also.

On the other hand, If a preacher picks out some of the truths of the gospel of *Christ*, and even the peculiar and glorious truths of Christianity, but so unhappily manages them, as not to lead people to holiness, and the imitation of *Christ* thereby, what is this to the purpose of preaching, to the design of *Christ* and the gospel? Such are quite off that scheme which is calculated *to destroy the works of the devil, and to teach men sobriety, righteousness, and godliness*: It is not only *Christ without us* we are to preach, but *Christ in us*, and our *putting on Christ Jesus* by a holy heart and life.

If the apostle *James* should come again, and make a visitation to our churches, and hear such a preacher, he would imagine he was got among such people as he writes against in his epistle; he would be apt, when the minister had done, in his zeal for *Christ*, to take the text in hand again, and supply what the preacher had omitted, *viz.* the application; and to say to the auditors, *Know ye not that faith without works is dead?* If the preacher should here interrupt him, saying, ‘Hold, spare thy pains, the Spirit of *God* will make the application, and teach men holiness;’—would not *James* reply, ‘I and the rest of the apostles were taught to preach otherwise, and to give particular exhortations to duty; we judged we might as well leave it to the Spirit, without our pains, to reveal the doctrine, as to instruct men in the practice of the gospel.’

Upon the whole, brethren, let it be our resolution to study and preach *Christ Jesus*: On this subject, there is room for the strictest reasoning and most sublime philosophy; it deserves, invites and inspires the strongest fire of the orator; in extolling *Christ*, we cannot shock the most delicate taste by overstrained hyperboles; here the climax may rise till it is out of sight; our imagery cannot be too strong and rich; and what more moves than an apostrophe to *Christ*? Or what profopopœias more commanding than those in which he is introduced?

Should our Lord himself appear and give you a charge at your entrance on the ministry, would he not say (what indeed he has said already:)

*‘As the Father hath sent me, so send I you to preach the kingdom of God; that every knee may bow to me, and every tongue confess me:—teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and tell them, that without me, they can do nothing; that when they have done all, they are unprofitable servants, and must be found in my righteousness:—become all things to all men; seek words which the Holy Ghost teacheth; that you may gain souls, and bring in my sheep for whom I laid down my life;—If ye love me, feed my sheep:—I have called you friends; do all in my name, and to my honour; so I will be with you always; and if you thus watch for souls, you shall give up your account with joy at my appearing.—This is the preaching, which though it seem*

*foolish to many, shall prove the power of God and wisdom of God: cast forth the net on this side, and so may you expect to catch many souls: be followers of my apostles as they are of me, and in my name shall ye do wonders: if you preach me, I and mine shall therein rejoice, be not ashamed of my gospel, and I will not be ashamed of you.'*

But to arrive at any tolerable perfection in preaching *Christ*, is a work of time, the result of a careful perusal of the Scriptures, and studying the hearts of men: It requires the mortifying of the pride of carnal reason, a great concern for souls, and humble dependence on the Spirit of God, with the lively exercise of devotion in our closets.

As for the reasoning part on the more agreed points of our religion, a young preacher sooner may get to considerable excellence: but the Christian orator is longer in finishing: We may sooner get necessary truths into our own minds, and come at minds of our own size and taste; but by proper motives and ways to reach souls of different make and turn, even the lowest of the vulgar, is what very few quickly *arrive at*. But let us not despair; if we thus regard *Christ* in our ministrations, we may very reasonably expect the assistance of his Spirit, and we shall be *able to do all this through Christ strengthening us*.

**DISCOURSE II. Of Particular And Experimental Preaching: Addressed to Younger Ministers.**  
Gentlemen,

Rightly to divide the word of truth is the necessary care of a minister, if he would *be approved of God, and be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*, 2 Tim. ii. 15. And it is a skill worth studying for, and labouring to attain: Our success, and the good of souls, depends upon it more than is commonly imagined.

No question you may have heard many honest people express their dissatisfaction with many preachers, in such terms as these: “*They go on constantly in a general way that does not come close to the heart, reaches not my case and experience, and I cannot edify by them.*—Their complaint is not altogether without meaning or reason, as I hope you’ll be convinced by and by.

To keep a little in view that passage of scripture I’ve mentioned, the *dividing the word* may mean these four things.

I. *Going through the variety of gospel subjects*: Declaring the whole counsel of God, the doctrines of grace, threatenings, promises, and duties of morality; and giving each its due proportion.

Some finding their thoughts flow most readily and affectionately on the doctrines of grace, and that by these they best command the affections of the hearers, are altogether upon them; and neglect to *teach the people to observe what Christ has commanded them*. I bear many of them witness they have a *zeal for God*, but I wish it were more *according to knowledge*: They do not sure sufficiently consider that holiness is the design of Christianity; and our preaching on other heads, is in order the better to enforce duty, and make men like to *Christ*.

I am afraid, from what I’ve observed, that this strain of preaching will increase the number of such hearers, whom our Saviour describes by the stony ground in the parable of the sower; namely, such who are all notion and affection, with a forward profession; but have an unsubdued will, no root in themselves, and bring forth no fruit to God. This strain, I fear, though it brings many toward *Christ*, will bring but few safely to him:

Many of their hearers, with *Christ* much in their mouths, will prove but hypocrites settled on their lees, and slaves to lust. Nor is this strain more happy for the uniform growth of the sincere Christian: They that fit under it, are too frequently low, imperfect, and partial in practical godliness; distempered with conceit and preposterous zeal for words and phrases, and things of little or no consequence; perplexed and perplexing others with a thousand groundless scruples; *children in understanding*, and it were happy were they so in malice too; but alas! their narrowness of mind infects the heart with uncharitable affections to Christians of different persuasions.

Others having not arrived at the relish of the doctrines of grace themselves, suppress them in their preaching, and are altogether on morality; enforcing it with no motives of the gospel, except some of those addressed to fear.—These, if they are masters of much fire, may convince some; but it fares with most of their convicts, as with the man in the parable, out of whom the unclean spirit went for a while; but finding his house empty, returned with seven more; and the latter end of such is worse than the beginning.—Or else, the awakened hearer takes up with a proud dependence upon a mistaken, external, and pharisaical righteousness.—Or else the convinced sinner, not being by his teacher led to *Christ*, proceeds not, settles not, but abiding long under the doubtful concern, is wearied with it, weary of it, and comes to nothing; which seems to be the thought in Hos. xiii. 13. *Ephraim is an unwise son; he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children*—Or lastly, if any are converted under his ministry, 'tis very usual that they are forced to desert it, to find richer and sweeter pasture for their souls.

Some of their hearers may possibly prefer this strain of preaching; but it does not thence follow they are the better for it: And here I'll recite a paragraph out of *Remarkable Passages in the Life of a private Gentleman*. "*Spiritual searching discourses I did not so much savour as mere moral doctrines; though God knows too immoral myself.—The hopes I had conceived of the strength of my good resolutions rendered them grateful—Seneca's Morals I read with great pleasure—Mr. Baxter's Saints Rest frightened me; so in reading a few pages, I threw it by.*"



Thus with regret he tells us what little profit he had in that way, of his fondness of which he was ashamed, when he came to be of Paul's mind, *to count all dross; and dung that he might gain Christ.*

II. *The putting of a thought in several distinct views and lights for different purposes and designs.* The sacred writers are herein our pattern, and that not by chance, but for wise reasons. One view is designed to raise one affection; another view, to excite another of a different sort: And farther, one of the views is designed as an antidote against the poison, which the corruption of men's hearts might draw out of the other.

For instance, the terms and way of our justification and salvation are frequently stated thus—

*That we must be found in Christ, having on the righteousness which is of God by faith,* Phil. iii. 9. and *we must be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21.

And this view is exquisitely adapted to humble us, to draw forth love and gratitude, and encourage our hopes and dependence.

But lest this phraseology alone made use of, should beget security, at other times we are told.—

*That by works a man is justified, and not by faith only; and that faith without works is dead,* Jam. ii. 24, 26. and that the inquiry at the last day, shall be, *who has fed the hungry, clothed the naked? &c.* Matt. xxv.

And most commonly these two views are united in the same paragraph; that one may prevent the ill consequences man's perverseness would draw from the other: As physicians finding some dangerous effect likely to follow from a drug of sovereign virtue, mix some other with it to prevent the fatal consequences.

So we are said to be *elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus,* 1 Pet. i. 2.

Again we are told, that *by grace we are saved through faith, the gift of God, not of works; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ unto good works,* Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I may give another instance in the different ways the Scripture speaks of power and duty.

Sometimes we are told, that *we cannot come to Christ except the father draw*, Joh. vi. 44. That *without Christ we can do nothing*, Joh. xv. 5. That *if we live, it is not we, but Christ that liveth in us*, Gal. ii. 20.

Now these views tend to hide pride from man, to create a diffidence of ourselves, and to centre our hopes and dependence in *Christ*.

But lest the slothful and wicked servant should make his impotence his excuse; we are called upon to *turn and make us new hearts*, exhorted to *ask and we shall receive*, and are assured *God will give the Spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 9, 13.

And how happily are these two views united in Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do.*

Now, less skilful dividers of the word deal entirely in one of these views only, and neglect the other; and whilst they are labouring to excite one good affection, they raise another of a bad tendency together with it: To this in part is owing that there are so many low or distempered Christians. Nor is this partiality more happy at effecting the real conversion of sinners, who generally under such management are either left asleep, and settled in a fond conceit of their own righteousness; or else *stumble at the rock of offence*, (in a different manner indeed from what the *Jews* did) thinking to find by *Christ* a way to heaven, without holiness or moral honesty.

III. *Distinctly explaining and enforcing particular duties, and opposing particular sins.* It is true, the whole scheme of gospel duty is deducible from the general heads of faith and love; but alas! most men's minds are slow, confused, and erroneous in long deductions, and it is our business to lead them on in every step, and to shew what particular duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, will flow from these principles, and are necessary to make the man of God perfect. We must particularly teach them to *add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity*, if we would not leave them blind and unfruitful, 2 Pet. i. 7. And we should in a particular manner speak of *the*

*fruits of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance;* and at proper seasons explain and enforce each of them, Gal. v. 22, 23. We should apply the lamp of the word to detect and disgrace all the particular *works of darkness*, and to make manifest *the fruits of the flesh; such as adultery, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

If I should read to a sick person, a learned lecture of the benefit of health, and exhort him to take care to recover it; but never enquire into the nature of his disease, or prescribe proper methods and medicines for the cure; he would hardly acquiesce in me for his physician, or resign the care of his bodily health to me.

Nor is it a more likely way to the soul's health to rest in general exhortations to holiness only, without distinctly handling the several branches thereof, and sins opposite thereunto.

IV. *Particularly applying to the several cases, tempers, and experiences of the hearers.* Besides many thoughts suited in general to all cases, there might properly arise in the application of most subjects, thoughts distinctly proper to the converted and unconverted, to notional hypocrites, and mere moralists, to mourners, to backsliders and lazy Christians, and at several times to a much greater variety of characters, and persons.

Now such particular addresses, when the case is lively drawn, in the natural language of the sort of men intended, and judiciously and artfully spoken to, are the closest, most weighty, and most useful parts of the application.

That *this* is the true way of addressing an auditory, *viz.* to divide them into several classes, and distinctly speak to each, will be plain, if we look through the apostolical writings, and I might add the prophetic also, with this view; and we shall find that both prophets and apostles frequently take care to distinguish *the holy and the vile*, the converted and the unconverted. As for instance, as to their knowledge and apprehensions of things. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit—they are*

*foolishness to him—he cannot know them: But the spiritual judge all things.* And also as to their obedience to the Law. Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.—is not subject to God’s law, nor can be subject, or please God.*

They particularly rebuke scoffers, and confute gainsayers—*behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish*—as for instance, those who denied or cavilled at the resurrection. 1 Cor. xv. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die, &c.* and also those that were for a faith without works. Jam. ii. *Wilt thou know, vain man, that faith without works is dead? &c.*

They address to carnal stupid sinners in an awful way; denounce *woe to them that are at ease*: As *Paul* when he made *Felix* tremble, Acts xxiv. 25. or as *Stephen*, Acts vii. 51-54, *Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised, &c.*

They lead convinced sinners to *Christ*; to those that are enquiring they say, *If ye will enquire, enquire ye, return, come, turn to the strong hold; if the Lord hath torn, he will heal*: As in Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, &c.* Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.*

They reason with the moralist, and those that *trust in themselves that they are righteous; shewing their righteousness is as filthy rags*. Rom. iii. *The law saith, there is none righteous, but all the world are guilty before God; therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; but the righteousness of God is manifested, that God might freely justify them that believe on Jesus; therefore man is justified by faith; boasting is excluded by the law of faith.* And Gal iii. *Ye received the Spirit by the hearing of faith—the gospel was before preached to Abraham—they that are of the works of the law, are under the curse. But the law could not disannul the covenant confirmed before, but was a school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith; they then that are Christ’s, are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

They sharply rebuke and expose pretending hypocrites, shewing them their abominations, detecting and confounding the wretches that *delight to know God’s ways, and hear his word, but will not do it*: As Peter, Acts viii.

21. *Thou has no part in this matter; thy heart is not right in the sight of God*; and James in chap. ii. *Shew me thy faith without thy works—the devils believe and tremble.*

They spirit up Christians that have but a little strength, and persuade them to make farther advances in religion; that he that is *feeble may be as David*: as in Heb. v. at the end, and the beginning of ch. vi. *Ye are dull of hearing—for the time ye ought to have been teachers—strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age—therefore leaving the first principles, let us go on to perfection.*

They deal with the several sorts of distempered Christians tenderly, and yet plainly and faithfully; as particularly with those who idolized one minister, and despised others; telling them, it is *not by might or power of man, but by God's Spirit*, that the gospel is successful; as in 1 Cor. iii. *While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal; Who is Paul or Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? 'Tis God that giveth the increase—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all are yours.*—They endeavour to soften those of too rigid a temper, exhorting them *not to speak to the grief of those whom God hath smitten*: as in 2 Cor. ii. 7. *Ye ought rather to forgive and comfort him: I beseech you confirm your love towards him.* Gal. vi. 1. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering lest thou also be tempted.*—They talk roundly to those, who are apt to make God the author of sin; who say *we unavoidably pine away in our iniquities, and how can we then be saved?* as in Jam. i. 13, &c. *Let no man say, I am tempted of God; for God tempteth not any man.*

Declining Christians are quickened, awakened, and put in mind of the *love of their espousals*: as in Rev. iii. 2. *be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.*

They awfully warn those who are in danger of sinning and falling back to perdition; telling them, *the righteousness they have done will be remembered no more, and God's soul will have no pleasure in them*: as in Heb. vi. 4. &c. *It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh.*

They encourage the persecuted and afflicted; telling them, *when they pass through fire and water, God will be with them*, and that *when they are tried they shall come forth as gold, and be the Lord's in the day that he maketh up his jewels*: As in Rom. viii. 18. *The sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed*. And Heb. xii. *We are compassed with a cloud of witnesses—Jesus endured the cross, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high—whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and that for our profit—chastening yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness*. And more particularly, those that lament relations dead in *Christ*, are told, they shall go to be happy with them, though the dead shall not return; as in 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. *Sorrow not as others that have no hope; for them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*.

There are also particular lessons for strong Christians, *viz.* to be tender to the weak, and to be public-spirited, that as *Ephraim should not envy Judah, so neither should Judah vex Ephraim*: Rom. xvi. *Him that is weak in the faith receive—Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not—Let none put a stumbling-block in his brother's way—Let not your good be ill spoken of—Has thou faith, have it to thyself—Bear the infirmities of the weak—Let everyone please his neighbour for his good to edification*. And in 1 Cor. viii. *Knowledge puffs up; but charity edifies—Let not your liberty be a stumbling-block to the weak—nor through thy knowledge let thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died—If meat make my brother to offend, I'll eat no flesh whilst the world stands*. Again they are told, that *a mark is set upon the men* that deplore the sins of the times; and *a book of remembrance is written* for those who distinguish themselves by their piety in times of abounding wickedness: as in Rev. iii. 4. *Thou has a few names who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy*.

You find also a suitable portion for those who are groaning under corruption; who complain they were *shapen in iniquity*, and their actual errors are *past understanding*: in Rom. vi. Although *I am carnal, sold under sin, and what I would I do not, and what I hate that do I; in my flesh dwells no good, and to perform good I find not, yea with the flesh I serve the law of sin (oh wretched man that I am!) yet I consent to God's*

*law, and delight in it after the inner-man; it is not then I that do this evil, but sin that dwelleth in me—I thank God through Christ, with my mind I serve God’s law, and God will deliver me from the body of this death.* And they are told how God has *laid on Christ our iniquities*, and he will be *the Lord our righteousness; and strength*: 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

The humble and penitent, who are of *a contrite spirit, and tremble at God’s word*, are comforted, 2 Cor. vii. *Ye were sorry indeed, ‘twas but for a season—’Twas after a godly manner—I rejoice in it—Such sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of—It wrought in you carefulness, fear, desire, zeal and revenge; you have approved yourselves clear in this matter.*

They who want direction, and cry out, *Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* are sent to God for counsel, Jam. i. 5. *If any lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, and it shall be given him.*

The deceiver and the deceived, (*viz.* those of evil minds, who seduce others, and those that are misled in the simplicity of their hearts) are to be distinctly and differently treated, Jude 22. *On some have compassion, and others save with fear.*

As for those of the house of *Israel* in desertion, who *mourn after the Lord, who walk in darkness; and see no light, and say the Lord hath forsaken me*, there were, I believe, few, if any, in those days of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, when the gospel-church was in its infancy, and *a nation was to be born in a day*; but few, I say, who had doubts about their sincerity: they had persecutions, distress, and exercises of another sort; and those were sufficient. I am apt to think such cases were also rare in the beginning of the reformation from *popery*: which seems to be the occasion of some of the first reformers confounding faith with assurance. However, there are laid up, in the New Testament, some proper hints of counsel, for such as should in after-times labour under the hidings of God’s face; as, *to examine themselves—For this to beseech the Lord—To clear themselves of sin—Not to faint in well-doing*; and the like.

Brethren, from your acquaintance with the scriptures, you'll easily perceive that I could as happily run this specimen much farther through the sacred writings. And if you peruse the writings of the most powerful and successful preachers, particularly the *Puritan* divines, you'll see that they herein imitated the great leaders of the Christian profession; and were large in their particular application to several sorts of persons; suiting their discourses to all the variety of the hearts of men, and sorts and frames of Christians, according to the true precepts of oratory and Christianity. In this way they found their own hearts warmed, and thus they reached the hearts of their hearers; whilst many were imagining the minister had been told of their case, and made the sermon for them: and so was verified that passage in Heb. iv. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful—a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Now what success can we reasonably expect, if we do not take into close consideration the case of our several spiritual patients?

If a man professing *physick* should administer or give out one constant medicine for fevers, and another for consumptions, and so for other distempers, without considering the age, constitution, strength, and way of living of his patient; and not vary his method and medicines as those varied; we should hardly call this the regular practice of *physic*: nor can I think this general and undistinguishing way will be more safe, or likely to answer its end, in *Divinity* than in *Medicine*.

Now I rest persuaded, brethren, the thing is so evident you can't but allow, 'tis the best to suit ourselves to all the variety of tempers and experience of the hearers, if it can be done; and I hope I may successfully offer some thoughts upon the way how this skill may be attained.

Above all then, carefully study your own hearts, and preach over the ruder sketches of your sermons to yourselves first; by which means the corresponding workings of your own hearts and affections may furnish you with proper thoughts wherewith to apply closely to all, whose temper, and experience, and case is like your own: for what is supplied to your imperfect notes, out of the applicatory meditations of your own minds on the subject, will very probably, according to the usual way of the Spirit, happily and powerfully reach those of the same make in like circumstances.



But alas! one man's experience falls far short of all the variety of men's hearts, and of the Spirit's work; nay, those whose heads are turned for close and regular thought, and whose time has been spent in study and letters, as they go on more rationally and evenly in religion, have less variety of experience, than many of a different mold and way of thinking. Here it will be needful then to look out of ourselves, and take a larger view, in order to be acquainted with cases and tempers different from our own; and with such methods of the Spirit's work, as we ourselves have never experienced, but many others have. Now the best and original way of getting this acquaintance with men, and with God's workings in them, (and I may add of satan's workings also) is by conversing freely with the serious people of our flock.

I know your thoughts will prevent me with an objection: You'll say, this is almost impracticable, especially amongst persons of politeness and figure; these alas! too rarely will use any such freedom with us, in laying open their hearts, and communicating their experiences to us, as to give us the needful information—If we ever do arrive at any acquaintance with the experience of Christians, 'tis little thanks to such as these; they expect we should preach suitably to them, and that with as much reason as *Nebuchadnezzar* demanded of the wise men to interpret a dream they knew not. The middle and lower sort of people indeed, are more unreserved to grave ministers of age and standing; but will hardly use the same freedom with young men.

To help you over this difficulty, I would observe; that as for *the polite*, and *men of some thought and reading*, your own experience, with the allowances and corrections a moderate skill in human nature will enable you to make, may lead you into happy conjectures at their way of thinking: besides, in the time of their visitation, under some sore affliction, you shall find them more communicative; and an hour's free discourse, with such as can give a rational and intelligible account of themselves, in a season when they are disposed to do it, is as valuable and useful, as it is rare and difficult to enter into.

Again, have an eye upon the *serious youth*, whom nature and providence has designed to place in a superior class; and especially at a

time when the impressions of religion are new to them: You shall find them more open than elder persons, if you court their intimacy, and relieve their bashfulness: And if you can see into the heart of a youth, then with the proper allowances for the alterations that age and business will make, you may pretty well guess at their turn of mind in more advanced years.

With the generality of *serious and more advanced Christians*, there needs not so much nicety, to get into such a spiritual intimacy with them as we desire; the laying aside nicety and ceremony, and getting into such a grave good-natured way as our character requires, is more than half-way to our purpose: Where this is insufficient to encourage the people to freedom, lead them into it by communicating first, either what yourselves have experienced, under the name of a third person (if modesty or prudence require) or else what you have learned from others, without betraying the confidence they have put in you: By these methods we shall seldom fail of drawing serious people on to such a freedom, as will be of use to them and ourselves—If we heartily go about it, we are pretty sure to succeed.

I may farther hint at a compendious way for the gaining much knowledge of men's hearts in a little time, *viz.* If you have any tolerable skill in the different tempers and complexions of mankind, distribute in your thoughts your people into classes, according to their natural genius and temper, and select one of each class to be more particularly acquainted with; for amongst those whom nature has formed alike, you shall find upon farther enquiry, a strange uniformity in the Spirit's work and way of proceeding with them.

I might recommend a way of knowing these things at second hand, *viz.* from the most popular and experimental authors; but this way is far inferior to the other; and we shall but faintly paint any phenomenon of the heart, by copying another picture; 'tis infinitely preferable to do it from the life. Yet would I earnestly recommend the perusal of such authors, as deal much in an experimental strain, and have been very successful in it; but with a different design, *viz.* That we may learn from them, how to describe, in a discreet and lively manner, such cases as we ourselves have observed; and how to address properly to those cases, with the like thoughts and

expressions, as have in the course of their preaching happily answered the end.

After all, rightly to divide the word of truth, with true wisdom, is a matter of no small difficulty; but if we carefully and diligently go about it, with a zeal for our master's interest, and sensible of our own insufficiency, *asking wisdom of God*, we know *he giveth liberally*, and will surely make us *wise to win souls*, to the honour of his name, name, and our own *rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus*; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, that one God whom we adore, be paid the highest honours and praises to eternal ages.

*Amen.*

**A LETTER TO A FRIEND**

Concerning the most useful **WAY OF PREACHING**. Written in the *German* language by the late Reverend and Celebrated Dr. **AUGUSTUS HERMANNUS FRANCK**, Professor of Divinity in the University of *Hall* in *Saxony*, Pastor of a Church, and Director of the charitable Foundations there.

Translated into *Latin* by order of his son, the present **Professor FRANCK**, and out of the *Latin* into *English* by **DAVID JENNINGS**.

**LONDON**: Printed in the YEAR MDCCXXXVI.

## THE PREFACE.

The good acceptance so which the two preceding discourses met with, when they were first published by the author, (a little before his death) and the speedy demand of a second edition, together with the frequent enquiries which have been made for them since they have been out of print, encourages this republication of them. Were it proper for me to add anything to that recommendation which is prefixed to them, I might mention the acceptance which they have also met with in foreign parts. For, besides a large edition printed in Scotland, they have lately been translated and published in the German language, by order of the Reverend *Dr. Franck*, the present worthy professor of divinity in the University of *Hall* in *Saxony*. The Reverend *Dr. Watts*, who corresponds with that professor, sent him these discourses the last year; with which he was so well pleased, as not only to give them a very high encomium in his next letter to the doctor, but to get them translated into *High-Dutch*, and inserted in a collection of papers, which is published in that country about once a month, for the advancement of religion. In return for this present, which proved so very acceptable to the good professor, he soon after sent the doctor a *Latin* translation of a letter, which his excellent father, and predecessor in the Divinity Chair at Hall, had published in the *German* language, pretty much on the same subject which the doctor has been so kind as to communicate to me, and which I have translated into *English*, and here added to these discourses of my brother's; in hopes that, by the blessing of God, it may be a considerable means of furthering the good design of them, *viz.* to form skilful labourers for the Lord's vineyard, and to revive that too much neglected strain and way of preaching, which large experience has abundantly proved to be most useful and successful.

The two preceding discourses were originally prepared for academical lectures, and were delivered by the author to a set of pupils, who were training up under his instruction for the service of the sanctuary. In the letter, which is now added, we have the sentiments of one of the most celebrated preachers and divines, and perhaps one of the most truly apostolic men, that some past ages have known, on the same subject; A man whom God did very uncommonly own, not only as a preacher and a tutor, but above all in that almost miraculous work (if I need say almost) his

building and establishing the orphan-house at *Glaucha* in the suburbs of *Hall*; a work which both in the beginning and progress of it can be attributed to no means so properly as to the power of faith. An historical account of that affair, wrote by the professor himself, as it was laid before *Frederick I. King of Prussia*, to whose dominions *Hall* belonged, and who in the year 1700 gave a commission to four of his privy counsellors to examine strictly into it, was afterwards published, under the title of *Pietas Hallensis*, and has since been translated into *English*. I suppose it will not be unacceptable, to such persons especially as have not read that larger account, to give a brief abstract of it in this place.

When the professor was first settled as a minister at *Glaucha*, he, according to the custom of charitably disposed persons in those parts, appointed one day in every week for the poor to come to his door for alms. Their miseries, but especially the gross ignorance and wickedness which generally prevails among that sort of people, very sensibly touched him; and above all to see numbers of children among them growing up in that dissolute way of life, was to him a very affecting and pitiful sight, This made him resolve on some attempt for their spiritual as well as their bodily relief. Accordingly every Thursday, which was his day for distributing alms, he took all the poor that came, into his house; and there, besides giving them money, he instructed the children, in the presence of the elder persons, in the principles of religion, and concluded with prayer. This exercise was set up in the beginning of the year 1694. The number of the poor who came to this exercise (many of them probably for the sake of the alms) soon increasing, and consequently the charge that attended it increasing too, obliged the professor to seek for some assistance in carrying on this good work. For that purpose therefore he set up an alms-box in his parlour, with these words written over it, *1 John iii. 17. Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* and under it, *2 Cor. ix. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.* This was intended as a tacit admonition to all that came in, to open their hearts towards the poor. About a quarter of a year after this box was set up, a certain person put into it at one time, to the value of eighteen shillings and

six pence English. When the professor took this sum into his hands, he said, in full assurance of faith, "This is now a considerable fund, worthy to be laid out in some important undertaking; therefore I will even take this for the foundation of a charity school." And immediately he laid out eight shillings of it in books, and hired a poor student to teach the children two hours in a day. When this stock was just spent, some friends who came to visit the professor, and were much pleased with his charitable essay, contributed more; upon which the two hours of teaching were enlarged to five, and alms were distributed to the children three times a week, to engage them to come more constantly to school. But after matters had gone on in this way for some time, the professor but too plainly saw that all his endeavours upon those poor vagrants were like to be frustrated, by their keeping such bad company out of school-time. Some of them ran away with their books, and returned to school no more. This made him resolve to choose out twelve of the most hopeful of the children, and to venture upon their maintenance, as well as their education. At first he put them out to persons of known integrity and piety, to be educated by them. But as this little beginning came to be known abroad, several persons sent in contributions to carry on so good a design; particularly the Lord put it into the heart of a person of quality to give a thousand crowns, and two other persons contributed four hundred. Upon which a house was purchased, and converted into an hospital for the poor orphans. This was in the year 1696. Afterwards alms were sent in by several other persons; many of them came from unknown hands. Accordingly more children were still admitted into the hospital, till the house grew too strait for them; which put the professor on a design of building a large and commodious hospital; for he clearly foresaw, that the hiring of more houses, scattered up and down, would be attended with very great inconveniences. One gentleman had lately sent him five hundred crowns, with a desire that some part of that sum might be disposed of to poor students; which the professor looked upon as a call of providence, to make indigent scholars a part of his care. This enlarged his charitable design beyond his former intention. He now wanted a building that would hold at least two hundred persons; but his stock of money was by this time so far spent, that, as he writes, he had not enough to build a small cottage. No wonder then that several of his friends dissuaded him from so hazardous an undertaking! But the Lord strengthened his faith in so

powerful a manner, and supported him with such a presence of mind, as carried him above all discouragement. Accordingly, July 13, 1698. the foundation of a spacious hospital was laid, in THE NAME of GOD, without any settled fund, or so much as a promise from any great persons to contribute to the building of it. “And now”, the professor writes, “I was to wait upon God, and from week, to week to receive at his hand what he would be graciously pleased to furnish me with for carrying on the building.” It must also be remembered, that the weekly expense of maintaining the poor, which he had already under his care, was very considerable; but nothing could discourage the pious professor, his faith kept pace with his growing charity, and he had a firm trust in providence for the fulfilling of those kind desires, which he was confidently persuaded God had put into his heart. Nor were his expectations in this matter at all disappointed; for the building was carried on successfully, and the poor supported all the time merely by seemingly accidental contributions, which were sent in from time to time by charitable persons, living not only in Germany, but in most other protestant countries of Europe. So that in the year 1702 the hospital was finished, which had cost five thousand pounds, and was peopled with above two hundred poor. The steps of providence in carrying on this affair, were indeed very extraordinary. God several times suffered the good professor’s faith to be tried by very pressing necessities; as when the workmen were to be paid, the poor to be maintained, and yet the stock of money was quite exhausted, and there was no rational prospect of any further supply. This often happened, but his recourse was always to God by prayer, which as constantly met with a gracious answer. I will here set down two or three passages of this sort, by way of instance, out of a great number that are recorded in the *Pietas Hallensis*. Memorable instances of the power of faith and prayer.

“At one time, he writes, all provisions were gone, when the steward declared there was a necessity of buying some cattle to furnish the table, and other necessaries. Under these pressing circumstances I found one comfort, which was a *presence of mind in prayer*, joined with a confident dependence upon the Lord, who heareth the very cry of the young ravens. When prayer was over, I heard somebody knock at the door, which when opened there was an acquaintance of mine holding in his hand a letter, and a



parcel of money wrapt up, which he presented to me, and I found therein fifty crowns, sent a great way for the relief of our poor.”

“At another time, there was want again in every corner. The steward brought his book and desired me to defray the weekly charges. My recourse was to God through faith. The expenses were necessary, and I saw not the least provision, nor any way to procure it. This made me resolve to retire into my closet, and to beg the Lord’s assistance in so pressing a necessity; but as I was preparing for prayer, I received a letter from a merchant, intimating that he was ordered to pay a thousand crowns to me for the relief of the hospital. This put me in mind of that saying, *Isai. lxxv. 24. It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear.* Nevertheless I entered into my closet, but instead of begging and praying, as I had designed, I praised and extolled the name of the Lord.”

“Another time, I stood in need of a great sum of money, insomuch that an 100 crowns would not have served turn, and yet I saw not the least appearance how I might be supplied with an hundred groats. The steward came and set forth the want we were in. I bid him to come again after dinner, and I resolved to put up my prayers to the lord for his assistance. When he came again after dinner, I was still in the same want, and so appointed him to come again in the evening. In the meantime a friend of mine came to see me, and with him I joined in prayers, and found myself much moved to praise and magnify the Lord for all his admirable dealings towards mankind, even from the beginning of the world; and the most remarkable instances came readily to my remembrance whilst I was praying. I was so elevated in praising and magnifying God, that I insisted only on that exercise of my present devotion, and found no inclination to put up many anxious petitions to be delivered out of the present necessity. At length my friend taking his leave, I accompanied him to the door, where I found the steward waiting on one side for the money he wanted, and on the other, a person who brought an hundred and fifty crowns for the support of the hospital.”

Thus was this famous hospital, which has since been one of the most illustrious ornaments and supports of the Protestant interest in Germany,

built without any other fund but that of faith. Surely, we must say, ***This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*** Whether it may pass for a miracle or no, yet thus much I take for certain, that if any popish monastery had ever been founded in the same manner, and such remarkable steps of providence had attended the building of it, as did actually attend this Protestant hospital at ***Hall***, the world would have rung with the noise of the miracle, and it had indeed been a much better miracle than any which the papists boast of. But to return to the story. The hospital being thus finished, at least as far as was intended when the foundation was laid, it was still to depend immediately on providence for its future support and maintenance. Nor for this did the professor's faith fail, nor were his hopes disappointed; for the author of the preface to the English translation of professor ***Franck's Christus sacræ Scripturæ Nucleus***, informs us, that in the year 1706 the state of the hospital was as follows.

Ten schools, in which 988 children were instructed by 72 masters. The number of persons lodged and subsisted in the hospital was 360, and 84 poor students of the university had their diet there. Eight poor widows were maintained, with a chaplain and a maid servant, and provision also was made for the relief of casual poor.

The death of this excellent professor, which happened in the year 1727, in the 65th year of his age, filled many persons with fear, that this good work of charity, now it must be deprived of the support of his influence and prayers, would languish and die too; but in this their fears have been happily disappointed. It was honour enough for this holy man to be such an illustrious instance of faith, and to be the instrument of so great and good a work: But the Lord has since made it appear that the work was his, and that the residue of the Spirit is with him. For I find in the before-cited preface, that at the conclusion of the year 1731, which was four years after ***Dr. Franck's*** death, the number of the scholars and children in the several schools of the Orphan-house amounted to 2300, and the number of students who instructed them to 160. I am further informed by the Reverend Mr. ***Zeigenhagen***, the present worthy pastor of the ***German*** Church at ***St. James's***, that the hospital still continues in a very flourishing state, and that some further additions were made to the buildings, but about three years ago.

Many useful instructions might be deduced from this narrative. What arguments for a providence, what encouragement to prayer, what motives to works of charity, might it yield us? But I have already swelled this preface almost beyond all reasonable bounds, and therefore must not insist here on these topics.

I have only to observe further, that the letter which follows was written by this great and good man about two years before his death, in which we have his opinion and judgment, ripened by age and large experience, concerning *the most useful way of preaching*. And what minister, who is in good earnest concerned to approve himself faithful in his work, to advance the honour of Christ, and do good to souls, would not be glad to consult so great and experienced a master? And who would not pay some considerable deference to the judgment of such an apostolic man, a man so highly honoured of God, as Professor *Franck* was?

The good professor himself had, it seems, such an opinion of this little piece, as to desire it might be transmitted to posterity. He therefore inserted it entire in a preface to a quarto volume of sermons which he published in the year 1726, on purpose, as he there declares, that it might not be lost, as single sheets are apt to be; but that posterity might know his thoughts upon this matter. And after the end of it, he declares in a very solemn manner, *as in the presence of the Lord*, that what he had thus written was the result of his own experience; and that these rules and directions which he had given to other ministers, were the same that he had constantly followed and practiced upon in the whole course of his own preaching and ministry.

May this publication of them in our own language prove a means, through the blessing of God, of forming many such useful and successful preachers of the gospel, in our country, as that holy and excellent man was in his. May many ministers be made wise hereby to win souls to Christ, *to save themselves and them that hear them*. So shall this little but valuable treatise *redound through the thanksgivings of many to the glory of God*.

London, David Jennings.

August 24, 1736

**A LETTER to a friend concerning The Most Useful Way Of Preaching.**

***Honoured and Dear friend,***

In answer to the question which you have proposed to me, *viz. how a faithful minister, who earnestly desires to save and to edify the souls of his hearers, to gain sinners unto Christ, and to inflame their hearts with a growing love to their Saviour, may best adapt his preaching to these excellent purposes?* I can only at present suggest a few things briefly; whereas if I had more leisure, I should choose to write more copiously on so weighty a subject.

I. I must take it for granted that a minister, who sincerely desires and who is likely to do good by his preaching, is such a one, both in heart and in life, as *St. Paul* describes, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. *Who hold fast the form of sound words* (or the pure apostolic doctrine) *which he has heard, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; and who keeps that good thing which has been committed to him by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in him.*

II. It will not a little subserve the good ends proposed in the question, for a minister, very frequently, to lay down in his sermons the distinguishing marks and characters both of the converted and of the unconverted, and that with all possible plainness, that so every one of his hearers may be able to judge of his own state, and may know to which of these two classes he belongs. But then great care must be taken that those distinguishing characters are justly drawn: For it may easily happen, through a preacher's unskillfulness in this affair, that the unconverted, on the one hand, may be deceived into a good opinion of their present state, and may grow there upon more secure and careless; and that some converted persons, on the other hand, may be unreasonably disquieted and filled with groundless and fruitless fears. However, a prudent minister, who has experienced a work of grace upon his own heart, will have no great difficulty so to describe it to others, as sufficiently to guard against the mistakes on both sides; and to lead both one and the other, by the unerring light of scripture, into the knowledge of the true state of their own souls.

III. For this purpose also let a minister carefully and clearly distinguish in his preaching, betwixt mere morality and true religion;

betwixt the moral honest man and the sound believer, who, from a deep conviction of the depravity of his nature and the errors of his life, has learned to hate sin from his heart, and lives by the faith of the Son of God. For it is hardly credible what multitudes of persons there are, even in Christian countries, where the gospel is publicly and faithfully preached, who, though they are wise enough in other matters, yet in this are they grossly ignorant, and thereby miserably deceive their own souls.

IV. And, because this kind of self-deceit is so very common, it is highly necessary for a minister to instruct his hearers with all possible plainness, in the duty of self-examination; and very often to exhort them to it: As more especially to enquire, If ever they were awakened from their natural sleep in sin? If they have escaped out of the snare of the devil? If ever they have had a lively and affecting sense of the corruption of their own hearts, and of the misery of their natural state? And, in short, whether they have good and solid reasons to conclude that they are regenerate persons? Whether they can find in themselves the genuine marks of a true conversion to God, and a living faith in Christ? &c. Or whether, on the other hand, they do not conclude that they are true Christians and in a state of salvation, merely from their being moral honest men, and their not living in any gross and scandalous sin? And, perhaps too, from their saying prayers, hearing sermons, and frequenting the places of public worship, and from their practising such like outward duties of religion? Or again, whether they do not flatter themselves that their eternal state is safe, merely because their lives are not altogether so bad as the lives of some others

V. It would also be of very considerable use for a minister often to explain, and to shew the difference betwixt a legal and an evangelical frame and principle of religion; or betwixt that slavish fear, by which alone it is that some persons, even of a serious turn of mind, are forced and dragged as it were to their duty, and that evangelical newness of spirit, that filial love to God and delight in his service, which usually grows and flourishes in the soul where it is once planted, and which produces a free, unconstrained and acceptable religion. This would be an excellent means, not only of awakening sinners out of their carnal security, but of turning them unto God, to a holy walk and to a pleasurable converse with him, even such as becomes his children. And for this end it is of very great moment,

that a minister not only instruct his hearers what they must do, and how they ought to act, but that he also labour fully to apprise and to convince them, by the evidence of scripture, of their own native weakness and impotency for all that is spiritually good; and that he further shew them, by the same word of truth, from whence they must look for, and from whom they may hope to receive, all grace and strength, not only to renew their souls in their first conversion, but also afterwards to enable them to perform every duty, as well of outward as of inward religion. They must be told that they can do nothing without Christ, according as he has assured us, *John xv. 5. Without me ye can do nothing.* And again, that by the help of his grace they may do all things, according as St. *Paul* writes, *Phil. iv. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* Thus should gospel ministers constantly make it the aim and drift of their preaching, to lead their hearers to Christ, and to his grace; to him by *whose stripes we are healed*, and whose blood takes away all the sins of all that truly repent and believe in the Lord Jesus; and to him by whose *divine power all things are given to us that pertain both to life and godliness, 2 Pet. i. 3.* Thus the holy apostles preached; these were the topics which they insisted much upon; and if their example is not followed in this matter, it will be no wonder if our modern preaching comes vastly short of the success of theirs: And by this means some of our hearers will be in danger of sinking into a mere legal frame and spirit of bondage, while they are pressed to duty and working, but not encouraged by the grace of Christ, nor directed where to look for strength to perform it; and others of them will take up with a false peace, a carnal security, for want of being directed to Christ, who is the only foundation of the sinner's reasonable hope and solid comfort. But on the other hand, when both these points are well explained and duly insisted on, no other means are so powerful to awaken secure sinners, to bring them to Christ, and to settle their souls in solid peace and comfort. Hereby, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, they find themselves transported as it were into a new life; and now they go on with vigour and pleasure in the practice of universal piety.

VI. It would further be useful, and it is highly necessary that ministers should not only preach up the necessity of conversion, and instruct their hearers to depend on the grace of Christ for it, but also that they should,

very frequently, in their sermons explain the nature and the whole progress of conversion, sometimes more largely and distinctly, and at other times more briefly, endeavouring thereby to lead their hearers into a true knowledge of the state of their souls; and shewing them how they must repent of their sins, what they must do to be saved from their natural misery and ruin, and, in short, how they may obtain the full salvation of the gospel; that so every one may be able to give an answer to that most important question, *What must I do that I may be a child of God and inherit eternal life?* For let a minister entertain his hearers with the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, let him also declaim against sin and exhort them to their various duties in the most earnest and pathetic manner, and let all be adorned with the finest beauties of wit and eloquence; yet, after all, if his sermons are not so contrived and framed as, at the same time, to inform the ignorant how they may obtain an interest in the gospel-salvation for themselves, and what means and methods God has appointed for that purpose; what will it profit them? No more than a parcel of shreds of cloth, of various dyes, though they were of the finest thread and liveliest colours, would serve the purpose of a man who wants a handsome garment; whereas a sermon that informs the ignorant sinner, not only of the necessity of conversion, but also how that happy change may certainly be effected in his own soul, may not unfitly be compared, in respect to its usefulness, to a complete garment, made all of a piece, well fitted to the man's shape that wants it, and which he may therefore put on and wear with honour and pleasure.

But now in order to all this, a minister must take pains with his own heart, as well as in composing his sermons; he must have a zeal for Christ, and must aim at nothing so much as to bring sinners to him. This should be in some measure the design and drift of every sermon that he preaches, that so if a person should happen to hear him but once in all his life, he might, even by means of that one sermon, get some notion of the one thing needful, and be just entered at least into the way of salvation. For this should every minister study and strive, and for this should he continually pray that God would fill his heart with pious zeal and holy wisdom, that so he may divide the word of truth aright, and minister grace unto his hearers.

VII. It might probably make some good impressions on the minds of the people, was a minister pretty often to inculcate, with great plainness and seriousness, the necessity of prayer; and more particularly what need they have to pray very earnestly to the God of grace that he would set home his word upon their hearts, that he would bring the good seed to perfection in their full and blessed conformity to himself. And further, so great is the ignorance of many persons concerning the duty of prayer, that they seem to have no other notion of it than merely a reading some forms out of a prayer-book. This makes it to be as necessary, as it would probably be a useful thing for a minister to lead them, as it were by the hand, into this path of their duty; that is, to explain it to them in a most easy and familiar manner, to shew them that it requires no great art and skill to pray acceptably unto God; for they are to speak to him as children to a loving father, they are to spread before him their sorrows and complaints, they are to tell him of the state and condition of their souls, just as they find and feel it; and they need not be at all solicitous about propriety of expression and elegant phrases in their secret prayers; for God regards the sense of the heart, rather than the language of the lips. The scriptures themselves furnish us with several examples of such artless and yet acceptable prayers. Let a minister then diligently instruct his hearers how they are, in the first place, to get their hearts disposed for prayer; and it may be of use too to assist and furnish the more ignorant with words and fit expressions; but at the same time let him inform them that they need not tie themselves to use those very words, nor any form whatever; but that they should learn to pour out their hearts unto God, in such words by which they can best express the real sentiments and affections of their own souls, according to the psalmist, *Psalm* lxii. 8. *Ye people, pour out your hearts before him.*

VIII. It is further extremely necessary that ministers should very often take occasion to explain in their sermons that renewing or change of the mind, which is so essential to all true religion, and which yet, alas! but very few persons seem to understand, or indeed to have almost any notion of. Nor is it enough to explain that first and mighty change, which is at once made in a sinner at his conversion, when he comes to love that good which before he hated, and to hate that evil which he before loved, when from being an unbeliever he becomes a believer; or when his false and dead faith



is changed into a true and saving one: But that further progressive change should also be much recommended, in which the Christian must be improving to the very end of his life, which St. *Paul* refers to, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. *But now* (the veil which was upon the heart being taken away, and the Spirit of the Lord having taking up his dwelling in it,) verses 16, 17. *we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord.* Hereby the mind is more and more renewed, the Christian grows up in the spirit and temper of Christ, and his lovely image is drawn upon the soul in fairer lines every day than other.

IX. It is of considerable moment also that the whole faith and duty of a Christian be represented in its most amiable and attractive light, that so sinners may be won to religion upon a full conviction, that if they would do well for themselves and obtain true peace and comfort, the shortest, the surest, and indeed the only way is to turn in good earnest from sin to God and holiness; and that religion is by no means a grievous and melancholy thing, which any may need be afraid of, but full of pleasure and greatly desirable even for its own sake; and though it calls us, indeed, to a present combat, and requires us to fight and strive against sin; yet this is but in order to peace and to a certain victory, which will much more than recompence the toils of the war.

X. It were much to be wished that ministers would not take up more of their sermons than needs must in explaining their text, but rather, after as short an explication of it as is sufficient to lead their hearers into the true sense and meaning, (which must by no means be neglected) hasten to the application; and in that, let a minister address himself to his hearers with a becoming seriousness and earnestness; let him apply his subject both to saints and sinners, to the converted and to the unconverted, in order to awaken the secure and careless, and to build up true believers in their faith and holiness. Experience would soon shew that this is by far the more profitable way, than to spend almost the whole discourse, as some do, in explaining their text and subject, and then close with a very short application, because the time is gone.

XI. It were also greatly to be wished, that those under-shepherds of the flock of Christ would make it more designedly and zealously the purpose of their preaching to bring sinners to him, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep; that they would strive by the most winning arguments they can possibly use, and especially by such as the grace of the gospel will naturally suggest, to persuade and even to compel them to come to him. As the hen when she lights on a few crumbs or grains of corn, how earnestly does she invite her brood to come and share the treasure with her! She will by no means be satisfied nor leave off calling them till they come. Thus did our blessed Saviour; how graciously did he call and invite sinners to come to him in the days of his personal ministry upon earth! As *Matt.* xi. 28. ***Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, &c.*** Again *John* vii. 37, 38. ***If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink: He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*** And much to the same purpose we find him speaking in several other places. Thus also we hear the prophet *Isaiah*, in the Old Testament, inviting sinners unto Christ, *Isai.* lv. 1. ***Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c.*** and thus St. *Paul*, in the New Testament, *2 Cor.* v. 11. ***We beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*** And thus doth the Apostle *John* over and over in his divine writings. Remarkable to this purpose also are those words of our blessed Saviour concerning *Jerusalem*, *Matt.* xxiii. 37. ***How often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing!*** Christ called sinners to come to *himself*, as their proper Lord and Master, as their only Redeemer and Saviour; whereas *we*, says St. *Paul*, ***preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, 2 Cor.*** iv. 5. and therefore we endeavour to bring sinners not to ourselves, but to him. But now in order to this, and that a minister may be thus happily successful in his preaching, he must not only sincerely love his people and have an affectionate concern for their salvation, but he must be an ardent lover of Christ too; he must wish and desire and covet nothing so much as to bring all that hear him to Christ, to deliver every one of them, as it were, into his gracious arms, could he but persuade them to be so happy; that thus they may learn, even by the example of their minister, to love the Lord Jesus.

XII. For this purpose it is farther requisite that a minister should very often take occasion to display, in the most lively colours that he can, the excellency and glory of Christ's person, the kindness of his heart and the exceeding riches of his grace both as he is God and man, as he is now a glorious triumphant Saviour, as well as once he sustained and executed the same office in a humbled and suffering state. And that he further inform his hearers what excellent blessings are treasured up in Christ to be bestowed on all his friends and people, that so they may be drawn to him by a principle of desire and love, that they may most willingly give him their hearts; and that so it may be the breathing of their souls and the matter of their most earnest prayer to Christ, that he would be pleased to manifest his love to them, that he would *shed it abroad in their hearts by his holy Spirit, Rom. v. 5*, that he would more and more reveal to them the glory of his majesty, that he would impress and affect their minds with a lively sense of it, that so they may yet more and more love and honour him their heavenly spouse, by whom it is that they have, and that they farther hope for access to and acceptance with the Father, and with whom they also hope to dwell forever and ever.

XIII. The love of Christ ought to be much more insisted on by preachers than what is commonly done; because when we apply to ourselves in a right manner his passion, death and atonement, his merits, and that purchase of salvation which he hath made for us, the knowledge of his love to us, and of our pardon and justification through faith in his blood, is the truest spring and most powerful attractive of our love to him. Now the more we love Christ, and that for this very reason, *because he first loved us*, the better will every other branch of our religion flourish, every other grace and every duty will then flow from its proper fountain; and therefore the more a minister endeavours to instill this principle of sacred love into the hearts of his hearers, the more comfortable success will he probably see of his labours, in their spiritual improvement and growing obedience to the gospel.

But especially, and in the first place, let every minister look to his own heart; and see to it that he himself loves Christ fervently, lest he should be as *the sounding brass and as the tinkling cymbal*, which the apostle speaks of, I *Cor. xiii. 1*. And besides, without a sincere love to Christ in his

own soul, there will be little probability of his recommending him effectually to the love of others. It is not enough for him to preach a great many sermons upon the love of Christ, and to exhort his hearers to love him; for if his own heart is not warmed with this sacred love, his discourses on that subject will be apt to be cold and lifeless, and therefore unprofitable and fruitless. Nothing could be more pertinently answered in a few words, to one that asked another, How he might learn to be a good and a useful preacher? than this, *Si multum ames Christum*, You must learn to be a zealous lover of Christ.

But then let it be further noted, that sincere love to Christ will always express itself not only in words, but by suitable or correspondent actions. So our Saviour has taught us, *John* xv. 14. *Ye are my friends*, said he, *if ye do whatsoever I command you; i.e.*, this is the best and most substantial evidence of your sincere friendship, and that you truly love me.

XIV. I reckon also the duties of self-denial and weanedness from the world and its carnal pleasures, and, in short, from all the present things of sense and time, to be among those more important and necessary subjects which ministers should often preach upon, oftener indeed than most of them do. These are subjects which our Saviour Christ, when he was a preacher upon earth, very much insisted upon in his sermons, as you may see particularly *Matt.* xvi. 24, 25, 26. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Luke* xiv. 26. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, &c. yea and his own life also, i.e.* in comparison of me, *he cannot be my disciple.* And how needful are these subjects now. For alas! how many persons are there, who can talk well about Christ and religion, nay who carry a fair appearance of virtue and godliness, and who perform many outward duties with reputation and honour, and yet not having learned to deny themselves, their love of the world not being sufficiently mortified, they are easily overcome in a day of trial, and sacrifice their religion and their souls to their worldly interest. Let self-denial then be earnestly recommended, and that, not merely as a moral virtue or philosophical attainment, I mean not upon such principles only as the heathen moralists used to insist upon; but let it be recommended and urged as a Christian grace, as that which flows chiefly from love to Christ, even such a love as will make us ready to deny ourselves the pleasures,

riches and honours of this world, all manner of sensual gratifications, and our very lives themselves, (*Grk. excluded*), for his sake, as Christ not only expects but requires of us, *Matt.* xvi. 25.

XV. Though the diligent reading of the scriptures themselves, even the inspired writings of the prophets and apostles, and the very words of our Saviour Christ, should be chiefly recommended, as they are undoubtedly far preferable to any other books of mere human composure; yet besides these a minister may very profitably recommend to his hearers some other good books of religion, both ancient and modern, to be read by them at home in their own closets or families: Such books I mean as are written in a truly evangelical strain, and with a spirit of lively devotion and piety, which would be no inconsiderable means, both of preserving and nourishing the fire of divine love in their hearts. I might mention, by way of instance, *Martin Statius's Lutherus Redivivus*, which is nothing else but an abridgment of *Luther's* works, in which the most considerable passages are collected into a narrow room, and such passages more especially, as have the most direct and powerful tendency to awaken and to excite the minds of men to lively practical religion. However, I mention this but as one instance, out of a great many very excellent and useful books which the providence of God has now furnished his Church withal, and which we ought to account as a precious treasure to it. And further, let not any minister think that 'tis the people only who are to be profited in their souls by the reading such good books, while all the use that he is concerned to make of them for himself, is only to form his style by reading them, or to borrow thoughts from them, or it may be to steal sermons out of them (which is shamefully the practice of too many preachers) but he should read them, chiefly and in the first place, with a view to his own spiritual edification. He should endeavour so to use and improve the gifts which God has bestowed on other men, as that his own soul may be the better for them, as well as the souls of the people to whom he preaches.

XVI. Once more, let faithful ministers by no means forget to recommend it to their hearers, that they would familiarly acquaint themselves and converse with serious, lively, and growing Christians, and with such more especially as excel in the gift and spirit of prayer; for as a live coal kindles another that is cold and dead, so will the savoury

discourse, the fervent prayers and the holy conversation of warm and lively Christians, be a probable means of kindling the same fire of divine love in the souls of dead sinners; or at least of nourishing and improving the sacred flame in the hearts of their more intimate Christian friends. Ministers should therefore do all they can to promote such Christian conversation, amongst the more serious part of their hearers: Observing however the rules of necessary prudence, particularly that of the Apostle, I *Cor.* xiv. 40. ***Let all things be done decently and in order.*** They should exhort them as St. Paul does the *Colossians*, *Col.* iii. 16. ***Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord;*** to which pious purpose that large and rich treasure of sacred hymns, both ancient and modern, with which God has graciously blessed his Church, is not a little conducive, for which therefore we are bound to render him immortal praises.

Thus I have briefly answered your question, and given you my thoughts on the most useful way of preaching. May God, for Christ's sake, attend what I have written with his effectual blessing. To him I would now humbly offer up the following prayer.

“O Lord God! give, I beseech thee, both now and at all times hereafter to thy Church pastors and teachers after thine own heart, even such as shall bring the sheep of Christ into his fold, and who, through the influence of thy good Spirit, shall feed them with saving knowledge and understanding. Make every preacher of thy word to know and always to remember, that ***neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth,*** but thou art all in all, who alone canst give the increase. Let none of them vainly presume on their own skill and ability to do any good by their preaching, and obtain any good success; but let them all humbly wait upon thee, and by fervent daily prayer let them seek for and obtain the aids of thy grace, to enable them to dispense the word of life, and let thy blessing render their preaching happily successful to the souls of those that hear them. Amen.”

May 25, 1725.

FINIS.

OCR Edit by Thomas M Witte

10-11-2019