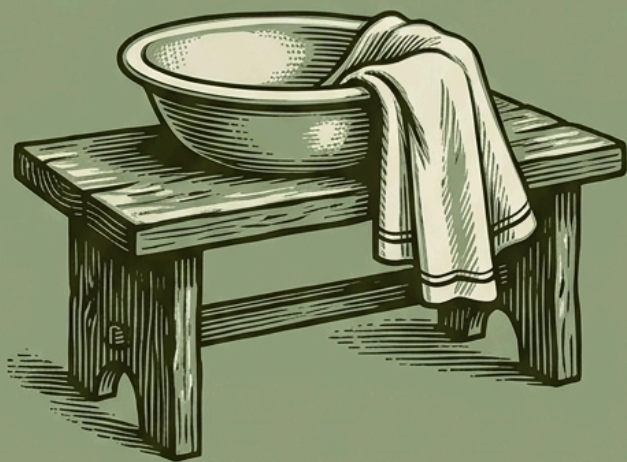


CHRIST THE  
GREAT EXAMPLE  
OF GOSPEL  
MINISTERS

JONATHAN EDWARDS



# CHRIST THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF GOSPEL MINISTERS

*Jonathan Edwards*



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## ABOUT THIS BOOK



A stirring ordination sermon drawn from **John 13:15-16**, where Christ washes his disciples' feet and commands them to follow his example. Edwards argues that gospel ministers must pattern their entire ministry after Christ — his **humility, compassion for souls, fervent prayer, tireless labor, and willingness to suffer**. He elevates the ministerial calling as a co-working with Christ himself, while soberly warning that unfaithfulness brings proportional judgment. A deeply pastoral work urging ministers toward Christlike self-denial and congregations toward faithful support of their shepherds.



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HALF-TITLE PAGE



**M**r. **Edwards's** Sermon at the Ordination of the Reverend  
Mr. **Job Strong**, **June 28**, 1749.

## INTRODUCTION



**C**HRIST the Great EXAMPLE of Gospel Ministers.

A SERMON Preached at **Portsmouth**, at the ORDINATION of the Reverend Mr. **Job Strong**, to the Pastoral Office over the **South** Church in that Place, **June 28**, 1749.

By **Jonathan Edwards**, Master of Arts, Pastor of the First Church in **Northampton**.

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## CHRIST THE EXAMPLE OF MINISTERS



### CHRIST THE EXAMPLE OF MINISTERS.

**John 13:15-16.**— For I have given you an Example, that you should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

In this passage, we find an account of one of the many remarkable events that took place on the night Christ was betrayed. That night was, in many ways, the most remarkable night in history. The event in question is Christ's washing of His disciples' feet. This action was extraordinary in itself, but it was also clearly symbolic. It represented something far more important and wonderful -- the greatest event that has ever taken place, which was accomplished the next day through His final sufferings. There were three symbolic representations of that great event given that evening. The first was the Passover, which Christ shared with His disciples. The second was the Lord's Supper, which He established at that time. The third was this remarkable act of washing His disciples' feet. Washing the feet of guests was the job of servants, and one of their lowest duties. Our Savior chose it as a fitting picture of the great

humiliation He was about to endure. He would take the form of a servant, becoming obedient to the point of death -- even the shameful and cursed death of the cross -- so that He might cleanse the souls of His disciples from their guilt and spiritual corruption.

This spiritual washing and cleansing of believers was the purpose for which Christ humbled Himself and gave Himself for them. Titus 2:14. **Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for Himself a special people.** Ephesians 5:25-26. **Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water.** That Christ's washing of His disciples' feet symbolized this spiritual washing of the soul is clear from Christ's own words in the eighth verse of this passage. Peter **said to Him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.** When Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross, He not only served God as a servant, but in some ways also served us. This is not the only place where His deep humiliation for our sake is compared to the role of a servant to guests. We find a similar picture in **Luke 22:27. For who is greater, the one who sits at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.** What Christ meant by being among the disciples as one who serves is explained in **Matthew 20:28 -- namely, His giving His life a ransom for them.**

When Christ had finished washing His disciples' feet, He solemnly called for their attention to what He had done and commanded them to follow His example. Verses 12 through 17. **So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His gar-**

**ments, and sat down again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.**

When our Savior called on His disciples to imitate the example He had given them, we should understand Him as referring not merely to the symbolic act of washing feet in itself. He was pointing especially to the far greater act that it represented -- His willingness to humble Himself so deeply and suffer so much for the spiritual cleansing and salvation of His people. This is what is chiefly held up as the great example Christ gave us to follow. He returns to this theme again and again in His discourse with the disciples that same night. In verse 34 of the chapter containing the text, He says: **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** Chapter 15:12-13. **This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.** And so in 1 John 3:16. **By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

In the words of the text, Christ does not only recommend this example to the disciples as **Christians**, or as some of His professing people, but especially as His **Ministers**. This is clear from the

words He uses to enforce this counsel: **Neither he that is sent is greater than he that sent him.** In these words He is clearly referring to the great mission on which He had **sent** them, when He told them to **go and preach the Gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** **Matthew 10:5-6**, and the mission on which they were to be **sent** after His resurrection, when He said to them, **Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.** This is the same mission Christ refers to in **John 20:21. As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you.**

What confirms this is that Christ elsewhere recommends to officers in His Church -- those who are chief among His followers -- the example He set in humbling Himself to be like a servant who waits on guests at a table, in His giving His life for us. **Matthew 20:27-28. Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.** Compare **Luke 22:25-28.**

The work and business of ministers of the Gospel is, in a sense, the work of servants -- to wash and cleanse the souls of people. This is done through the preaching of the Word, which is their main responsibility. **Ephesians 5:26. That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.**

The words of the text, considered in this way, clearly lead us to this conclusion and teach us this doctrine --

It is the duty of ministers of the Gospel, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master.

With God's help, this is the subject I intend to discuss.

I plan to address this subject in the following way.

1. I will describe how ministers of the Gospel should follow the example of Christ.

2. I will give some reasons why they should follow His example.

3. I will apply these truths to myself and to others who are called to the work of ministry.

4. I will show how the people of this church and congregation should respond to these truths.

1. First, I will show how ministers of the Gospel should follow the example of their great Lord and Master Jesus Christ in the work of their ministry.

On this point --

First, in general, ministers should follow their Lord and Master in all the excellent virtues and the complete, outstanding holiness of life that He demonstrated in His human nature.

The ministers of Christ should share the same spirit their Lord had -- the same spirit of humility and lowliness of heart, for the servant is not greater than his lord. They should share His spirit of heavenly-mindedness and disregard for the glory, wealth, and pleasures of this world. They should share His spirit of devotion and passionate love for God. They should follow the example of His prayerfulness. We read again and again how He withdrew from the world, away from the noise and praise of the crowds, into mountains and solitary places for private prayer and holy communion with His Father. Once He rose a long time before dawn and went to a solitary place to pray (**Mark** 1:35). Another time He went up a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God (**Luke** 6:12). Ministers should follow Christ's example in His

strict, constant, and unwavering obedience to the commands God had given Him, regarding what He should do and say. He spoke nothing on His own, but only what the Father had commanded Him. He always did the things that pleased the Father, and He maintained complete obedience through the greatest trials and the fiercest opposition anyone has ever faced. Ministers should share Christ's quiet, lamb-like spirit -- the same spirit of submission to God's will, patience in suffering, and gentleness toward people. They should have the same calmness and composure under insults and persecution from evil people, the same spirit of forgiveness for wrongs done to them, the same spirit of love, of passionate and far-reaching generosity. They should share His desire to show compassion to the miserable, to weep with those who weep, to help people in their struggles of both soul and body, to hear and answer the requests of the needy, and to comfort the afflicted. They should have the same spirit of coming down to the level of the poor and lowly, tenderness and gentleness toward the weak, and great and effective love for enemies. They should also share His spirit of zeal, hard work, and self-denial for the glory of God, the advancement of His kingdom, and the good of humanity. For the sake of these things, Christ endured the greatest labors and the most extreme sufferings.

Second, more specifically, ministers of the Gospel should follow the example of their great Master in the way they seek the salvation and happiness of people's souls. They should follow His example of love for souls. Though it is impossible for them to love to the same degree, they should have the same spirit of love and concern for people's salvation, to the extent of their ability. Christ's love for people's souls was far above any concern He had for His

own comfort, ease, honor, or even food and drink. The same should be true for His ministers. They should have the same spirit of compassion for people in their spiritual suffering and misery that He had, of whom we read in Mark 6:34. **When He came out and saw the large crowd, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.** The word translated **moved with compassion** means that He was deeply affected, with His very inner being stirred by pity. We also read in **Luke 19** that when Christ was riding to **Jerusalem** -- that wicked city -- just a few days before His crucifixion, and came to the slope of the **Mount of Olives** where He had a clear view of the city, He looked at it and wept over it. He wept because of the misery and ruin they had brought on themselves through their sin. The very sin that had made them so miserable was their terrible treatment of Him, for **Jerusalem** was a city that had been especially hostile to Him. Christ knew how cruelly He would be treated in that city before the week was over -- how He would be rejected, and with great hatred bound, falsely accused and condemned, mocked, spit on, whipped, and crucified. Yet none of this kept Him from shedding the most tender tears of compassion for them. **When He came near, He looked at the city and wept over it, saying, If you had known, even you,** (you, as wicked as you are, and as vile as you have been in your treatment of Me; even you) **the things that belong to your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.** (Compare **Matthew 23:37** and **Luke 13:34**.) You would have thought He would have been more concerned for Himself than for **Jerusalem**, since He had such a dreadful cup to drink and was about to suffer such extreme things

at **Jerusalem's** cruelty that week. But He seemed to forget His own sorrow and death, and wept over the misery of His cruel enemies.

Ministers should imitate their great Master in His passionate prayers for the good of people's souls. We find that whenever Christ was about to undertake something especially important in His ministry, He first withdrew to pour out His soul in extraordinary prayer to His Father. For example, when He was about to set out on a journey through all of **Galilee** to preach in their synagogues, **He rose a great while before dawn, went out, and departed to a solitary place, and there prayed.** Mark 1:35-39. And when He was about to choose His twelve apostles and send them out to preach the Gospel, He first **went out to a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.** Luke 6:12. **Etc.** The night before His crucifixion, when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the souls of people, He poured out His soul in extraordinary prayer for those He was about to die for, as we read in **John** 17. That wonderful and deeply moving prayer was not so much for Himself as for His people. Although He knew what staggering sufferings He would endure the next day, He seemed to set aside His own concerns. His heart was completely consumed with care for His disciples. He showed this by spending so much time comforting and counseling them, and praying for them with deep affection, compassion, earnest concern, and fatherly tenderness. The prayers He offered in the Garden of **Gethsemane**, under the overwhelming awareness of the cup He would drink the next day, seem to have been prayers of intercession. This is especially true of the last of the three prayers He prayed there, **when, being in agony, He prayed more**

**earnestly; and His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.** In that final prayer, He did not ask that the cup pass from Him as He had before. Instead, He prayed that **God's will might be done.** (Compare **Luke 22:44** with **Matthew 26:42.**) That prayer, as the apostle teaches us in **Hebrews 5:6-7**, was a prayer He offered as our High Priest. Therefore it must have been a prayer of intercession for us -- a prayer offered with His blood, which He sweat in His agony, just as prayers in the Temple were customarily offered with the blood of sacrifices. His prayer at that time -- **Your will be done** -- was not only an expression of submission. It also had the form of a petition, as in the Lord's Prayer. He prayed that God's will might be done in **His** being enabled **to do the will of God**, persevering in obedience even to death, and in the success of His sufferings. This could rightly be called the will of God in the highest sense, as in **Psalm 40:7-8. Then I said, Look, I come -- I delight to do Your will, O my God.**

Ministers should follow the example of Christ in His hard work and tireless labor in His work. **He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.** Acts 10:38. He was so devoted to His labors that He often barely allowed Himself time to eat or drink. His friends sometimes came out to take hold of Him, saying, **He is out of His mind.** Mark 3:20-21. Those three and a half years of His public ministry were so filled with action and labor that one of His disciples, who was constantly with Him and an eyewitness of His activity, tells us that if **all that He did were written down, the world could not contain the books.**

Ministers should follow Christ's example in His readiness not only to labor, but to suffer for the salvation of souls -- to spend and be spent for them. In this, the apostle **Paul** imitated his Lord and Master. Philippians 2:17. **Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.** Colossians 1:24. **I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church.** 2 Corinthians 12:15. **And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.** Christ, in His prayers, labors, and sufferings for the souls of people, is described as laboring in birth with them. Isaiah 53:11. **He shall see the labor of His soul.** In the same way, ministers should labor in birth for the conversion and salvation of their hearers. They should imitate the faithfulness of Christ in His ministry, speaking everything God commanded Him and declaring the whole counsel of God. They should imitate His manner of preaching. He taught not like the scribes, but with authority -- boldly, zealously, and passionately. He focused mainly on the most important matters of religion. He frequently warned people about the danger of damnation, describing the greatness of the future misery of the ungodly. He emphasized not only the outward duties of religion, but also the inward and spiritual ones. He spoke often about the great danger of spiritual pride and a self-righteous attitude, yet strongly insisted on the necessity and importance of true holiness and the practice of godliness. He conducted Himself with remarkable wisdom in everything He said and did in His ministry, despite the many difficulties, enemies, and temptations that surrounded Him. He wonderfully adapted His teaching to the people, the circumstances,

and the occasions. Isaiah 50:4. **The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary.**

Ministers should follow their Master in His zeal, which was wonderfully blended with gentleness and kindness in His dealings with souls. He preached the Gospel to the poor, and from time to time graciously noticed little children. They should also imitate their Lord in pursuing the work of ministry not for selfish gain or worldly advantage, but for God's glory and people's salvation. His heart was fully engaged in His work. It was His great delight and His food to do the will of His Father and finish His work (**John 4:34**). His heart was set on the success of His great mission in the salvation of souls. This was the joy set before Him, for which He ran His race, endured the cross, and despised the shame. His delight in the prospect of the eternal salvation of souls more than outweighed the dread He had of His extreme sufferings. Many waters could not quench His love, and the floods could not drown it, for His love was stronger than death -- yes, stronger than the mighty pains and torments of such a death.

2. I now move on to the second point I proposed, which was to give some **reasons** why ministers of the Gospel should follow the example of their great Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

1. They should follow His example because He is their Lord and Master. Christ, as a divine Person, is the Lord of heaven and earth, a being of infinite dignity to whom our highest respect and worship are due. Because of this, He is infinitely worthy that we should honor not only His commands, but also His example. The

infinite greatness and honor of His person commends His virtues to us, and being conformed to them is our greatest dignity and honor.

Christ is especially the Lord of Christians, who are therefore under special obligations to follow Him. He is their Shepherd, and surely the flock should follow their Shepherd. He is the Captain of their salvation, and it is right for soldiers to follow their Captain and Leader. He is their Head -- not only their Head of rule and authority, but their Head of influence and life. He is their living Head, and Christians are members of His body. As members who share in the life and Spirit of the Head, they are made to resemble the Head.

But Christ is the Lord and Master of ministers of the Gospel in an even more particular way, since they are not only members of His Church but officers of His kingdom and honored servants of His household. It is common for a people to imitate their ruler, but especially for the officials of his kingdom and the officers of his household. The whole army has a duty to follow their general, but especially the officers who hold a commission under him.

2. Ministers of the Gospel are, in some respects, called and devoted to the same work and mission that Christ Himself was appointed to. Ministers are not mediators between God and people, for there is only one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They are not our priests who make atonement and produce righteousness for us, for Christ by one offering has perfected forever those who are sanctified. They are not lords over God's heritage, for one is their Master, even Christ. Yet ministers of the Gospel, as Christ's servants and officers under Him, are appointed to advance the purposes of that great work of Christ -- the

work of salvation. This is the work that ministers are devoted to. That is why they are described as **co-workers with Christ**. 2 Corinthians 6:1. **We then, as workers together with Him, urge you also not to receive the grace of God in vain.** Christ is the Savior of the souls of people. Ministers are also spoken of in Scripture as **saving people's souls**. 1 Timothy 4:16. **In doing this, you will save both yourself and those who hear you.** Romans 10:14. **If by any means I may stir to action those who are my flesh, and might save some of them.** 1 Corinthians 9:22. **That I might by all means save some.** And in Obadiah 21, where it says **Saviors shall come upon Mount Zion**, ministers of the Gospel are understood to be intended.

The work of ministers is in many ways like the work that Christ Himself was appointed to as the Savior of people. It is especially similar to the work Christ does in His prophetic office, with this difference: ministers speak and act entirely under Christ, as taught by Him, holding forth His Word and working by the light and strength He gives them. Christ Himself, after His baptism, carried out the work of ministry. He was **a minister of the true sanctuary** (Hebrews 8:2). He spoke and acted as His Father's minister. He was a minister of the Gospel, and as such He preached and administered sacraments. Pastors of churches are ministers of the same Gospel, but in their ministry they act as ministers of Christ. Jesus Christ is the great **Bishop of souls**. Ministers are also **bishops** under Him. Christ came into the world **that He might be the light of the world**. Ministers are set to be lights to the churches, and are also called **the light of the world**. Matthew 5:14. Christ is the **bright and morning star**. Ministers are **stars**

**in Christ's hand.** Christ is **the messenger of the covenant.** Ministers are called **messengers of the Lord of hosts.** Christ is His people's **Shepherd, the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd of His sheep.** Ministers are also frequently called **shepherds,** and are directed to feed the flock of Christ, which He purchased with His own blood.

Since this is the case -- that the work ministers are called and devoted to is none other than the work of Christ, or the work that Christ does -- they certainly ought to do His work. And they do not truly do His work unless they imitate Him and follow the example He has set.

3. The example of Christ is supremely worthy of ministers' imitation. His example was perfect, without error, flaw, or defect. It is therefore worthy to be our standard, to be followed without exception, limitation, or reservation -- except in those things He did that were unique to His particular office. Christ's virtue was not only perfect, but was exercised in circumstances and under trials that made His virtuous actions far more beautiful than any ever displayed by any creature, whether human or angel. If we consider the perfection of the virtue Christ exercised, His virtue surpassed that of the most outstanding saints more than the purest gold surpasses the lowest and foulest ore. And if we consider the manner of its exercise, the trials under which it was exercised, and the blessed results it has produced, His virtue surpasses that of all other perfectly innocent creatures -- even the brightest angel -- as the sun in its glory surpasses the stars.

This example was set for us in our own nature, and so it is especially suited for our imitation. In the man Christ Jesus, who was one of us and lived among us, there were exercises of virtue suited

to our condition and circumstances in the world -- as those who live in frail flesh and blood, as members of human society, and as dwellers in a world of sorrow and death.

These beautiful exercises of virtue in Christ were displayed chiefly in the things He did in the very work that ministers are called to share in as co-workers with Him. The bright and glorious example of Christ set before us is chiefly seen in what He did during the three and a half years of His public **ministry** -- in the devotion, heavenly-mindedness, humility, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, self-denial, and love He exercised through the labors and sufferings He endured for the good of people's souls. His example is therefore especially set for the imitation of those who are set apart to make the pursuit of that same good of souls the entire business of their lives.

4. Ministers should follow the example of Christ that has been described, because if they are fit for ministry and have any right to take this work upon themselves, Christ has set this example for them in what He has **done for their souls. I have given you an example**, Christ says in the text, **that you should do as I have done** to you. Ministers should be driven in this work by a great love for the souls of people, and should be ready to spend and be spent for them. For Christ **loved them** and gave Himself **for them**. He loved them with a love stronger than death. They should have compassion for people in their spiritual miseries, just as Christ had pity on them. They should pray fervently for the people of their flock, considering how Christ prayed and agonized for them in tears of blood. They should labor in birth with the souls committed to their care, since their own salvation is the fruit of the labor of Christ's soul. They should show a humble and gracious

spirit to the lowly, the weak, and the poor. They should, as it were, wash the feet of Christ's disciples, remembering how Christ stooped to them when they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, and humbled Himself to wash their feet.

The chief trials of Christ's virtue, and therefore the brightest and most outstanding displays of it, were in the humiliation, labor, and suffering He endured for our salvation. This should certainly make those virtues dear to us and strongly motivate us to imitate that example. The things that make up this example are the very things by which we receive infinite benefit. Without them, we would have been unspeakably miserable forever. Through them, we have the glorious privilege of being children of God and hold a full title to the crown of surpassing glory and eternal pleasures at God's right hand.

3. I now proceed, as proposed, to the **third** point: to apply what has been said to myself and to others who are employed in the sacred work of the Gospel ministry, to those who are about to undertake it or are candidates for it, and particularly to the one who is now to be solemnly set apart for this work in this place.

These things belong especially to us. We may hear Christ saying to us this day, **I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done.** The words of Christ in the text were not only spoken to the twelve, but are also spoken to us. We have now had set before us, though in a very imperfect way, the example Christ has given, and the reasons why we, above all others, should imitate it.

It is not only our great duty, but our greatest honor to imitate Christ, do the work He has done, and act as co-workers with Him.

There are two kinds of beings that are given to Christ, appointed and devoted by God to be His servants, employed with Christ and under Him in His great work of saving the souls of people. They are **angels** and **ministers**. The angels are all of them, even the most exalted, placed under our Redeemer by God the Father and given to Him as His servants, to support the great purposes of saving and glorifying His elect. Hebrews 1:14. **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** They were doubtless created for this very purpose. God made them for His Son, to serve Him in this great work, which seems to be the chief purpose behind all of God's works. The role of ministers of the Gospel in this respect is like that of the glorious angels. The rulers and authorities in heavenly places do not consider it beneath them, but their great honor, to be employed as Christ's ministers in this work. In this service, they are ministers of God in the greatest and most honorable of all God's works -- the work that displays His glory above all others, and the work His heart was set on from eternity. It is the honor of the Son of God Himself that He is appointed to this work. It was because God the Father infinitely loved His Son and delighted to give Him honor that He appointed Him to be the author of the glorious work of human salvation. When we consider the greatness, importance, and excellence of this work, we have reason to be astonished at God's willingness to use mere creatures as co-workers and ministers of Christ in this task. **For who is sufficient for these things?** 2 Corinthians 2:16. **Who is fit, or worthy? Who is equal to a work of such dignity and vast importance?** We have particular reason to marvel that God employs not only holy and glorious angels, but feeble, frail, sinful hu-

man beings in this work -- people who need redemption themselves. And yet the honor given to faithful ministers is in some respects greater than that given to the angels. They seem to be the more highly honored kind of servant. Christ makes His angels into ministering spirits to serve faithful ministers. The angels are their angels, since faithful ministers of the Gospel are not only ministers to the Church but honored members of the Church -- that bride of the King of Glory, on whom the most glorious angels, the highest servants in the court of heaven, are appointed to attend. Christ seems especially to delight in carrying on His work of saving souls through the service of human beings, who share the nature to which Christ is united and who are among the sons of men in whom He delighted before the world was made. It is through the service of people that the Scriptures are given. They were the writers of the holy Bible. Through them the Gospel is preached to the world. Through them ordinances are administered, and through their service especially souls are converted. When Christ Himself was engaged in the work of ministry during His time on earth, relatively few were brought to Him directly through His own ministry. It pleased Christ to reserve this honor for His disciples and ministers after His ascension, to whom He promised that they would do greater works than He did (**John 14:12**). And it was through their preaching that the Gentile world was converted and Satan's kingdom overthrown. In this way, God delights **to bring perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and infants, that He may silence the enemy and the avenger.**

It will be our great honor that we are called to this work of Christ, if we follow Him in it. In doing so, we will be like the Son of God. But if we are unfaithful in this office and do not imitate our

Master, our offense will be as serious as the dignity of our office is great, and our final and everlasting disgrace will be proportionally severe. We who in honor are raised up to heaven will be cast down proportionally low in hell.

Let us also consider that following the example of Christ in the work of ministry is the way to enjoy the real, joyful presence of Christ with us. The disciples had the comfort of Christ's presence and fellowship by following Him and going where He went. When we stop following Him, He will go from us, and we will soon lose sight of Him.

Being conformed to Christ's example will also be the way for us to be conformed to Him and share in His privileges. It is the way for us to have His joy fulfilled in us. In doing the work the Father appointed Him to, Christ won a glorious victory over His enemies. Having disarmed rulers and authorities, He triumphed over them. If we imitate His example, it will be the way for us to likewise conquer rulers and authorities -- indeed, to be far more than conquerors. It will be the way for us to always triumph in Christ Jesus. It will be the way for us to find success in our ministry and to actually become happy instruments of the eternal salvation of souls. Christ has not only **told** us but **shown** us the way to success in our work and the way to victory over all who oppose us in it. Imitating Christ in our ministry will be the way for us to share in His glory -- the way for us to be approved, openly honored, and rewarded by God. It is the way to be brought to sit with Christ on His throne, just as He is seated with the Father on His throne. As Christ is now exalted to shine as the bright light and glory of heaven, so following His example will be the way for us to be exalted to **shine** with Him, **as the stars forever and ever** (Daniel

12:3). As Christ in heaven rejoices in His success and will receive His Church, presented to Him without spot, as His everlasting crown, so imitating Christ in our work will be the way to share in His joy. The souls whose salvation we help bring about will be our crown of rejoicing forever. In this way, Christ and we will rejoice together in that world of glory and joy where there is no more labor or sorrow. We must enter into that joy and glory by following Christ in our work. There is no other way for ministers to enter there.

To follow Christ's example and share in His glory, we need to pray earnestly for His Spirit. Christ Himself, though the eternal Son of God, received the Holy Spirit through prayer. Luke 3:21-22. **Jesus, having been baptized and praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him.** If we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we will have Christ Himself living in us, and then we will undoubtedly live like Him. If that fountain of light dwells richly in us, we will shine like Him, and so will be burning and shining lights.

To **be** and **behave** like Christ, we should earnestly seek a deep knowledge of Him, a great love for Him, and frequent private communion with Him.

It is natural and almost inevitable that we imitate those we know well, spend time with, and have a strong affection for.

To imitate Christ in the work of ministry to any reasonable degree, we must not let our hearts be weighed down or our time consumed by worldly desires, worries, and pursuits. The duties of a

minister that have been described are completely incompatible with a mind consumed by worldly profit, glory, amusements, and entertainment.

Another thing of great importance, if we are to do the work Christ did, is that we make sure the religion we promote is the same religion that Christ taught and promoted -- not any of its counterfeits and deceptive imitations, or anything substituted by the cunning schemes of Satan or the empty ideas of people in its place. If we are zealous and very active in promoting religion but do not carefully distinguish true religion from false, we will be in danger of doing far more harm than good with all our zeal and effort.

4. I now come to the fourth and last point originally proposed - - to show how the people of this church and congregation should apply what has been said. You are about to solemnly entrust your souls to the care of the one you have chosen to be your pastor, and he is now about to be set apart for that office.

**You, my brothers and sisters**, all have immortal souls to save. If you have considered the things that have been spoken, you cannot help but recognize that it is not only your chosen pastor's great concern to take care in how he carries out his important work as a co-worker with Christ for your salvation. It is also of infinite importance to you how you receive him and behave toward him. Since he is appointed to watch and labor for **your** eternal salvation, and since his task is to do the work of Christ for you, it naturally follows that your reception and treatment of him should in some way reflect the Church's reception of Jesus Christ. Galatians 4:14. **You did not despise or reject the trial which was in my flesh, but received me as an angel of God, even as**

**Christ Jesus.** In the text, Christ commands those He sends to follow His example, and then in verse 20 following, He directs those to whom He sends them on how to treat them. **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.** Since the work of your minister is in some respects the same as the work of Christ, and he is to be appointed and devoted to doing this work for your souls in particular, you should certainly esteem him very highly in love for the sake of his work. You should do everything in your power to help him and give him the best possible opportunity to imitate his great Master **in** this work, to give himself entirely **to** his work as Christ did during His ministry, and to be successful **in** his work. As was noted before, it is impossible for ministers to imitate Christ's example in their work to any adequate degree if their minds are weighed down with worldly cares and concerns. You should therefore provide for him and support him so that he has no need to entangle himself with such things. Otherwise, you will not only put a great temptation before him that will seriously hinder him in the work of Christ among you, but for the sake of keeping a little of your worldly wealth to yourselves, you will foolishly and miserably starve your own souls and the souls of your children. You will only cheat yourselves, for you will not be on the path to prosperity in either your spiritual or earthly affairs. The way to have your houses filled with plenty is to **honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of all your increase.** Proverbs 3:9.

Just as it is your duty and in your interest to support your pastor well, it also matters that you pray earnestly for him. Each of you should do everything you can to encourage and help him and

strengthen his hands by attending faithfully to his ministry, receiving the truth in love, treating him with the honor due a messenger of Christ, and carefully avoiding all conflict with him and with one another. Take special care that you do not abandon him to follow those who, under the pretense of extraordinary purity, are doubtless doing the devil's work by separating themselves and trying to draw others away from the ministers and churches of this land in general.

If you think I have spoken somewhat freely to you, I hope you will consider that this is probably the last time you will ever hear me speak from the pulpit, and that I will never see you again until we see one another in the invisible, eternal world, where these things will become clear to us all in their true importance.

Now nothing remains but to express my sincerest wishes and prayers. May the God of all grace be with you and your chosen pastor. May He give you in him a great and long-lasting blessing, and may you enjoy much of the presence of Christ with you through him. May the great loss you suffered in the death of your former faithful and distinguished pastor, whose praise was in all the churches, be made up in him. May you receive him as you ought to receive a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. May you be a great comfort to him, and may you receive great spiritual and eternal benefit through him. May you be each other's crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

FINIS.

## THANKS FOR READING



If you spotted a typo or have feedback, the email is **[sam@goodsoilapps.com](mailto:sam@goodsoilapps.com)** — or use the in-app feedback form in *Christian Reader*.