

Government and Ministry

IN THE

Church of God.

AN ADDRESS

BY THE LATE

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GOVERNMENT & MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

N considering a subject of such importance as this, it is needful that we should understand the character of God's ways with man in the past; and thus learn, that He has ever acted upon such principles, as maintain order and discipline in the government of His Kingdom.

All history goes to prove, that it is only by this means that His great Name is glorified upon the earth; and the happiness and prosperity of His subjects ensured.

Psalm xvii. 28, reminds us, that Jehovah is "The Governor among the nations," which truth is further illustrated in Dan. ii. 21., iv. 17. 25: and in the Epistle we are taught, that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

We learn from Gen. i. that at the outset, GOD GAVE **ADAM** DOMINION over all creation; calling upon him to acknowledge the sovereign rights of His Creator by rendering absolute obedience to His will.

That he failed in this responsibility, and banishment from Eden was the result, is a fact known to us all.

In Gen. ix. we get a further revelation of God's thoughts concerning government. When God blessed **NOAH**, and gave him DOMINION IN THE EARTH, He then committed to Noah the sword of government, with which he was instructed to punish evil doers. (see ix.

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5-6) and rule for God in the earth.

FAILURE was likewise stamped upon this. We next find in Gen. xii. that God called Abraham out from the ruin that ensued, and constituted him the head of an elect *family*; and in this connection the important principle of Gen. xviii. 19 is found. "For I know Him that he will *command* his *children*, and his *household* after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

When the heads of such families failed to hold the reins of government, and allowed license and iniquity in their children, we see them involved in sorrow and punishment.

God held His people responsible for the conduct of their households.

The sad records of failure and divine judgment upon the families of Eli, Samuel, David, and Solomon, are too well known to need comment.

In the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, we get the statutes and judgments of God, telling us what He required from His redeemed people; and the penalties also incurred by disobedience.

All the historical and prophetical books show us clearly, that God is a God of government.

When the children of Israel refused to hear His voice; despising His law, and doing despite to His grace; He finally withdrew His throne and glory from their midst; gave them into the hands of their enemy the King of Babylon, and transferred the ruling power to Nebuchadnezzar. (see Dan. ii. 37.)

Since then, EARTHLY GOVERNMENT HAS REMAINED IN THE HANDS OF THE GENTILES.

God in sovereign grace is working in the present

dispensation, calling out from the world around “A people for His Name.” That call constitutes all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, “a heavenly people,” and the Epistles refer to them as all having been baptised in one Spirit into One Body : of which Christ Himself is THE HEAD: and in this aspect, we see the wondrous place of divine privilege unto which we have been brought, and from which no human power can dissever us. This is set forth in Ephesians, and kindred epistles. But by reference to the Corinthian epistles we see, that there is a sphere of government viz.—in “THE CHURCH OF GOD :” the fellowship of “Jesus Christ, our Lord,” and in this circle, we are responsible to give effect to God’s instructions relating to government. The Church, is HIS HOUSE, and our present concern is, to learn on what principle its government proceeds.

Are we brought into a Democracy where every man can do what seems “right in his own eyes?” Most assuredly not! Old Testament history has its solemn warnings in all these matters, and we may learn from the Book of Judges, how disastrous were the effects upon Israel, when they forgot the allegiance that was due to God as their KING, and acted in the license of pleasing themselves, every man doing “that which was right in his own eyes.”

And to this we may add the testimony of every nation’s history, which clearly shows that social disorder, commercial disaster, and all the horrors of internal dissolution takes place wherever the ruling power in any state is relaxed, and the hand of the law is slow to maintain *order*, according to God’s principles laid down for RULERS in Romans xiii. 1-5.

Now, let us turn to the CHURCH OF GOD. Does its present state impress us with the grand ideal set before

us in the Scriptures? Alas, No! We see the spirit of faction and self-pleasing rife upon every hand, and very little heed paid to Divine principles.

Expediency has given place to the spirit of lowly *obedience* to OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and even amongst those who are professedly gathered unto His Name, there is a deplorable lack of conscience, exercised in the matter of pleasing Him, in our family and church life—and a readiness to act upon human maxims, instead of clinging, with a reverent spirit, “to the law and to the testimony.”

The spirit of lawlessness is creeping in upon every hand, under the false impression, that because we rightly reject the assumption of certain classes of humanly-ordained priests, bishops, ministers, pastors, and clergy, most of whom assume the right to *officiate*, by virtue of appointments received at the hands of their fellow-men, we must therefore recognise no order in divine things at all.

We know these to be contrary to the arrangements made by our Lord and Master for HIS HOUSE, and therefore dissociate ourselves from them. Nevertheless, we recognise God’s ministry, and a government that is of God, and according to His will in the church, and pray that He may raise up, fit, and commission men of His choice, to act as overseers, pastors, rulers, and teachers amongst His gathered people.

Now, our object is to show that there still are such men amongst us. That we do well to pray continuously for them; and to “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” That it is incumbent upon us to obey and honour them in every possible way, so long as we see them doing God’s work, in His way. Their

title to our esteem and honour being, the grace and the gift that we see manifested in them, and not any earthly status.

I Cor. xiv. 23, reminds us, that "God is not the author of confusion." But He everywhere enjoins ORDER upon the assemblies of His people: and nowhere gives any countenance to the lawless spirit of the age, which says that "Jack is as good as his master."

A pure THEOCRACY was God's mode of Government with Israel, until in their apostacy, they desired to be like the nations; and nothing less than a recognition of the wondrous truth that "JESUS IS IN THE MIDST," AS LORD over our souls, and spirits will put and keep us right in these matters."

The teaching is plain in I Cor xii, xiv; that all things must be done "decently, and in order," and "unto edifying." Col. ii. 5, expresses the apostle's joy in beholding their *order* and the stedfastness of their faith." Titus was sent to Crete, "to set in *order* the things that are wanting."

GOD'S CHURCH IS TO BE A CIRCLE OF DIVINE RULE.

MOSES was faithful in all His house as a servant; but Christ as a Son, over *his own house*; *whose house are we.*" Heb. iii. 6.

In connection with this thought, remember the Centurion's words in Matt. viii. 8-9. "I *also* am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to one man, go, and he goeth, and to another man come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it."

What a picture this presents to us, of the obedience and order that should be manifest in *God's House, or*

Church! The recognition of Christ's authority there.

The Centurion owned the authority of Cæsar as absolute, over himself. So should we own and obey the rule of Christ Jesus AS LORD, over our entire being.

The effect of this would be such circumspection in what we say, and do, that our very thoughts would be "led" into captivity to the obedience of Christ ; and a readiness to avenge all disobedience. (2 Cor. x. 5-17. Rom: xiv. 8-9).

Then should we know, how to act unitedly as ~~we are gathered together,~~" and we then realize "the blies, when, "In the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, power of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," to put away any evil person, and maintain godly order in the assembly.

This would also lead us to wait upon God more patiently ; and be more clearly assured of the promptings of the Holy Spirit, before we venture to give out a hymn ; read a portion of Scripture ; lead the assembly in prayer ; or teach, and exhort fellow-saints.

We need to *realize* that we are "*servants under authority.*"

There is doubtless a divine order in the Scriptures of truth, which suggest to us the need of a more wholesome exercise of our souls in God's holy presence before we act in Divine things ; and this will prevent any "talk of the lips ; which tendeth only to penury."

Observe how that remarkable chapter (Rom. xii.) dealing with GIFTS commences !

The believer is there exhorted to "present his body, a living sacrifice" before he is instructed, concerning the various GIFTS bestowed by Christ upon His Church. And we shall do well to learn practically, what it is to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we

may "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Then we shall THROUGH GRACE GIVEN UNTO US, not think more highly of ourselves than we ought, but "soberly, as God hath given to every man the measure of faith."

From 1 Cor. xii. 4. 11, we learn, that the Holy Spirit is the Sovereign *dispenser of GIFTS*; and Eph. iv. 11. R.V., tells us these are given, for "the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Many a young brother, instead of waiting upon his gift; and seeking the Spirit's teaching and guidance in the use of it, is more anxious to exercise it in the assembly, with the desire to obtain a place in the saint's esteem: forgetting that "a man's gift maketh room for him." The Spirit of God dispenses to every man *severally, as He will*. Prayer, singing, speaking, and giving of thanks, are all the operations of the Holy Spirit in the individual souls of the gathered saints.

Remembering this, let us now proceed to consider the subject of GOVERNMENT AND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

There are seven leading GIFTS, mentioned in the Word.

First of all, we should point out, that the gift of the EVANGELIST belongs to another category. Its sphere of operation is not in *the Church*, but in carrying the gospel message to a *world* of sinners "lost and ruined by the fall."

Such as have this gift, are free to exercise it, wherever their LORD opens a door for the testimony, and this will certainly involve the liberty to minister the whole Word of God, and keep back nothing that is

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profitable. But it is amongst the lovely things, that we should all seek to work in *fellowship* with those with whom we are associated in testimony, as gathered unto the Name of the Lord : and keeping His ordinances, as delivered to the Church.

We mention this, as it is needful to show the difference existing between the assembly gifts referred to in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv ; and the testimony that God has given to the world.

To apply the principles relating to worship and ministry in believers' meetings, to Gospel Services (even when they are held for convenience sake in the building commonly used for worship etc.), will lead to confusion and disappointment.

The duty of the assembly in regard to the Gospel testimony (usually given in connection with it) seems rather to be, to see that those who are qualified to preach the Gospel, have facilities and opportunity to do so, at the stated time—thus acting in good faith with those who are invited to attend such meetings.

The responsibility of arranging such meetings, should devolve upon those to whom God has given this special gift, and the assembly should show all possible fellowship with them, in helping to gather in the unsaved, and to hold up the preacher's hands with prayer.

For GOVERNMENT AND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH, God has bestowed the following GIFTS.

1. RULERS, referred to in Rom. xii. 8., &c.
2. OVERSEERS, (commonly translated BISHOPS),
Phil. i. 1, &c.
3. DEACONS, 2 Thess. iii. 8. &c.
4. ELDERS, Acts, xv. 2, 1 Peter, v. 1, &c.

5. TEACHERS, 1 Cor. xii. 28, &c.
6. PASTORS, Eph. iv. 2.
7. EXHORTERS, Rom. xii. 4.

Now in dealing with these several aspects of this great subject, we shall aim principally at throwing out *practical suggestions* which are intended to exercise the hearts and consciences of God's people, so that we may all betake ourselves with greater diligence to the holy business into which we have been called ; and that some who have assumed positions as overseers and teachers, *without the Divine call and qualifications*, and are thus too often the cause of weakness and stumbling, may reconsider their course, and seek the mind of their Lord as to what HE would have them to do.

Then let us first turn to Rom. xii. 8. And be it remembered, that according to 1 Cor. xii. 28, there are amongst God's people everywhere, those whom "HE has set in the church," to exercise rule, or govern, in accordance, with the principles of His Word.

The Greek word used in this connection is *proistemi*, which signifies—"to stand forward : to be over : to rule : to maintain." Therefore, we read in 1 Tim. v. 17 : that "the ELDERS, who RULE well, "are to be accounted worthy of double honour," especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine." Again in 1 Thess. v. 12,— "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are *over you in the Lord.*" The force of this word is "those who *weary themselves in labour* and admonish you : and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Phil. ii. 30, gives us a touching illustration of this in the case of Epaphroditus, who longed after his absent brethren in Philippi, from whom he had borne loving gifts and

greetings to Paul in Rome. Therefore, he exhorts them to "hold such in reputation." He was evidently a labourer "who had wearied himself" in serving them. All who share this great work of *taking oversight* in "the church of God," will know something of the solicitude and perseverance which is becoming such work.

The testimony concerning Moses, given by Jethro, in Ex. xviii, is interesting: for, assuredly all who become heartily engaged in the great business, of leading and guiding fellow-saints, will find it a toilsome work, as suggested in these lines—

" Desirest thou a shepherd's work ? Ask wisdom from above ;
It is a work of toil and care, of patience and of love.
Ask for an understanding heart, to tend with godly fear,
The feeble flock, of which the Lord, hath made thee overseer.

Alas ! thou surely must expect, some evils to endure,
E'en children's faults are hard to bear, and harder still to cure ;
They will be wilful, proud, perverse : in temper unsubdued,
In mind obtruse and ignorant : in manners coarse and rude.

Thou mayst contend with sluggish minds till weary and depressed,
And trace the windings of deceit, in many a wilful breast.
Yet, scorn them not ; remember Him, who loves His lambs to feed ;
Who never quenched the smoking flax, nor broke the bruised reed.

Who, for the thankless and the vile, poured out His precious blood ;
Who makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good.
The love of God extends to all the works his Hand hath framed ;
He would not that the most perverse, should perish unreclaimed.

Pray that His Holy Spirit may, thy selfish heart incline,
To bear with all their waywardness, as He hath borne with thine.
And, oh ! what blessings may be thine, when thou hast daily
striven,
To guide them in the narrow path, that leadeth up to heaven !

What joy to see the humble walk, of those that once were wild ;
To mark the crooked mind grow straight, the rugged temper,
mild ;
To note the sinful habit checked, the stubborn will subdued ;
The cold and selfish spirit warmed by love and gratitude.

To read in every sparkling eye, a depth of love unknown,
And hear the voice of joy and health, in every silvery tone !
If such the joys that now repay, the shepherd's work of love ;
If such the recompense *on earth*, what must it be *above* !

Oh ! blessed are the faithful dead, who die unto the Lord ;
Sweet is the rest they find in heaven, and great is their
reward ;
Their works, performed in humble faith, are all recorded there,
They see the travail of their souls, the answer to their prayer ;
There shall the shepherds and the sheep, one glorious anthem
raise,
And they who sow, and they who reap, unite in endless
praise !”

Thus, may our hearts be encouraged to occupy every position of service in the church of God, “with reverence and godly fear ;” and when called “to stand forward,” and to act as *leaders* amongst the people of God, see to it that we do so in the spirit of Acts xx. 18-27. Then others will take knowledge of us that we “have been with Jesus ;” and have partaken of His spirit, which is a far higher qualification for this service, than having only our heads filled with “Church truths :” although knowledge of the will of God, is most essential, and useful, when it is held and ministered in its due measure, and proper spirit, but apart from this it will only produce schism and sorrow.

It certainly is not an easy or enviable position to “stand forward,” as a leader amongst God's people; and those who do so, ought to be very sure they are *called by God* to it, and they should have the confidence and constant prayers of their brethren.

Another application of this term RULER, is found in Heb. xiii. 17. “*Remember* them that have the *rule* over you : who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow.” This probably refers to some who had exercised the gift in the past, and whose services

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were to be held in grateful remembrance, and their example followed. But v. 17, tells them "Obey them that have the rule over you, and *submit* yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they which must give account."

We may well pause here, and meditate upon these solemn words. Did we set about the great business of "WATCHING FOR SOULS," before we took our place amongst those whom God has called to RULE in the church? Is the heart exercised about that now, so that fellow-saints may recognise the divine qualification in us? The consciousness that "we must give account," should certainly increase our diligence and care. We turn now to the word OVERSEER, generally translated *Bishop*. This is from the Greek word *Episkopos*: This word is from Epi-over; and Skopos—"to look after, visit, work, or care for." This term is used in Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 7; Titus, i. 7; Acts xx. 28; and the qualifications are found in 1 Tim. ii; We also find reference to Christ, as the Shepherd (*poimen*) and Bishop (*Episkopos*) of our souls in 1 Peter ii. 25. The word *Episkopè* (i.e. *visitation*) also occurs in Luke xix. 44; and 1 Peter ii. 12; and the same term is found in Matt. xxv. 36; where Christ said "I was sick, and ye visited me." This therefore is suggestive of some of the work of one who is an *overseer* in the Church of God. To visit fellow-saints, as *under-shepherds*, that we may comfort the feeble-minded: support the weak: lift up the hands that hang down: and the feeble knees: to make straight paths for the feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed. (Heb. xii. 12-13.)

Let such as are *ambitious* to be "in the oversight," get

alone before the Lord, and examining every motive that actuates them, and ask themselves whether they are doing the work that the place they seek demands. Let them emulate the Chief Shepherd, who was "meek and lowly in heart," and let them ponder the deep significance of those words in 2 Cor. x. 1-5 : "I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." If we but "waited upon God" more diligently, about matters relating to our moral and spiritual fitness for His work : and yielded ourselves to the teaching and enabling influences of the Holy Spirit, we should not have such sorrowful spectacles of self-assertion, and schism, in the Churches of God.

Brethren would not enter into this sphere of service, with the teeth of self-will sharp enough to "bite and devour one another." But the process of waiting upon God, and seeking unto the mind of Christ for His work, would so humble our souls ; and prove to be to us a kind of spiritual dentistry, to file down the pride, arrogance, and perverseness of our own wills, which are so often the cause of strife, and weakness, and which mars rather than helps the work of true shepherds in the Church of God.

If men have to *pass standards*, and *take degrees* in the schools of men, to *qualify* them for the spheres they occupy ; surely there is an essential *training* necessary in "The School of God," to fit those who are called to any position in the Church. This is seen in the history of Moses, being kept for 40 years in the backside of the desert, before he was morally fit to be the leader of God's people. Paul also refers to a period of three years of isolation in Arabia, before he appeared prominently in public ministry. And so we may see

amongst God's servants of this day, men of God, who have gained experience of heart and mind by God's training and discipline in many ways, that has fitted them especially to be *under shepherds*, ministering amongst "the little flock." They have no desire to rush into prominence at public meetings; but do much more effective service in the Church.

"Content to fill a little space;
If God be glorified."

The true spirit in which all this service should be done, is enjoined upon us in 1 Pet. v. 2-4." "Feed the flock of God, which is *among you*, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre: but of a ready mind: neither as being lord's over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away."

Now we must proceed to consider the gift and work of a DEACON, which is translated from the Greek work "*diakonos*" which signifies "*a servant, or a minister*;" and is derived from a root word, that signifies "*to toil, or labour on account of*;" and this *toilsome work* will surely fall to those who are "*ready to every good work*," and willing to work during the short hours of their earthly *day*, in the Lord's vineyard.

Our Lord said to His disciples, "Whosoever is great among you, let him be *your minister* (*diakonos*.) (Mat. xx. 26).

The same word is found in Rom. xv. 8; Eph. iii. 7: vi. 21; Col. i. 23 25: 1 Thes. iii. 2; Tit. iv. 6. Christ Himself being the pattern of this lowly service. (Matt. xx. 28 : John xiii.)

'The *qualifications* for this DEACON work, 1 Tim. iii. 8,

and it is requisite that *such* "should first be proved."

In 2 Cor. viii. 4, Paul prays, with much entreaty that those saints who were so elated with their gifts of teaching, would also receive *this grace*, and become more diligent in this form of ministry to the saints. Some features of this deacon work are referred to in 2 Cor. ix; Rom. xiii. 7; Acts xx. 19-29; and it would be a blessing for God's Church, if there was more of this, and less of that "talk of the lips, that tendeth only to penury."

Something may also be gleaned from 1 Thess, 1. 3. "Your *work* of faith, and *labour* of love," and in Chap. ii. 9; he reminds them of "His *toil*, and *travail*;" for them "labouring night and day," because he would not be chargeable unto them.

Further, we read in 1 Cor. xvi. 15, that "*The household of Stephanus*," appointed themselves to this *deacon work*; and were commended, on this account, to the esteem of their brethren.

May the Holy Spirit, exercise the hearts of all who profess to serve the Lord in these matters, that all we do, shall be animated by right motives, and regulated by right principles: so that constrained by His love, we shall be "ready unto every good work." And then it shall be said of us, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labour of love; in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. vii. 10). Toilsome, and sorrowful, as this business may be; it involves the laying up of treasures in heaven, and His words, by and by; "Well done, good and faithful servant," shall fully recompence it all.

4. Next, we have to consider the work of those called **ELDERS**. These are referred to in Acts xx. 28.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves (*presbuleros*, i.e. *seniors*, or *elders* of the church at Ephesus,) and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, (*episkopos*) to feed the church of God.” In v. 11-35, Paul tells these *elders*, “how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, it is more blessed to give, than to receive.” Again in Tim. 1 v. 17. “Let the *elders* that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine.”

Evidently the word “*presbutteros*” implies experience and moral fitness; not merely advanced age. Because in Rom. ix. 12, “the *elder* shall serve the younger,” is quite another word, (*mizon.*) We learn from Heb. v. 12-14; that many Christians of ripe years, had not acquired the experience in divine knowledge, that is essential to acting as *Elders* in the church of God. On the other hand, “he must not be a novice.” (1 Tim. iii. 7.

As Acts xx. 28, refers to these *Elders* as *overseers*, we refer to what has already been said in respect of these who are called upon to act in defence of God’s “little flock,” when they are assailed by false teachers, coming in as “grievous wolves.”

5. Now we come to the consideration of those who are referred to in Acts xiii. 1. etc., as TEACHERS, (Greek *didaskalos*) and spoken of in 1 Cor. xii. 28-29; Eph. iv. 11; Titus i. 11; Heb. v. 12.

To such, a seasonable exhortation is given in 1 Pet. iv. 10-11, “As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as *good stewards* of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him

speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability *which God giveth.*"

Christ Himself was addressed as "a Teacher sent from God;" and His testimony was, that God gave Him commandment what He should *speak*; and what He should *do*, and He could tell them, that "The Word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." What an example He is, for all of us to emulate! Well may we ponder His words; "Learn of Me." "One thing is needful"—to sit at Jesus feet, and hear His words." Then shall we have "The tongue of the learned," and "know how to *speak* a word in season, to him that is weary." (Isa. l. 4-5.)

Surely, this gift of TEACHER, is nothing less than power from God to communicate His truth to others, imparting to them "things new and old," as the Holy Spirit brings all to remembrance out of the Scripture, so that it shall "distill as the dew" upon the souls of the hearers, and be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." And where the *gift* is exercised "according to the *grace* given;" the spirits of the prophets, are subject to the prophets; "that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ."

6. This brings us to the consideration of the gift and work of PASTORS, whose employment is to *feed* the flock of God; and exercise *rule* amongst them. The Greek word used is *poimen*, and is found in John x. 11-12-14-16; Heb. xiii. 20; 1. Pet. ii. 25.

When reference is made to the *rulers* of the kingdoms of this world (see Rom. xiii. 3; Acts xxiii. 5,) those are called *arkon*, not *poimcen*; and the distinction suggests

the difference that should charactise the spirit of action amongst *shepherds* or *rulers* in the church, and the world. In the former, all ought to be aminated by the Spirit of Christ, the true “Shepherd and Bishop” of our souls ; and deal in divine tenderness and grace, with every redeemed soul in His “little flock.”

It is very sad to read Jehovah’s reference to “*the shepherds of Israel*” in Ezek. xxxiv. and note that His controversy with them was “they feed themselves : they eat the fat ; and clothe themselves with the wool ; but they *feed not* the flock.” Jehovah says, “the diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick : neither have ye bound up that which was broken : neither have ye sought that which was lost ; but with *force* and *cruelty* have ye ruled them,” words which ought to be solemnly weighed by all who would overdrive the flock. Then, there is a further lament of the prophet because God’s flock “were scattered, and none did search after them.” He then feretells how He will deal in restoring grace with His backsliding people, Israel, in the future : and “seek after that which is lost : and bring such back to the fold, and feed them in good pastures, and lead them by the rivers of refreshment. This *true shepherd spirit* is to be our pattern, in the exercise of pastoral work among the flock of God.

There is a touching reference also in Ezek. xxxiv. 31, “Ye my flock, the flock of my pastures are **MEN**, and I am your God, saith the Lord.” In John vi. 10, we read the Good Shepherd’s words, “Make the **MEN**, sit down. Now there was much grass in the place.” And further, John xxi. 15 gives us the Lord’s parting words to one of His *under-shepherds*.—“Feed my

lambs." "Tend my sheep."

When we see Christain men diligent in this holy business of "caring for the church of God" (1 Tim. iii. 5.) "warning the unruly; comforting the feeble-minded; supporting the weak: and being patient toward all men," according to the injunction in 1 Thes. v. 14; we shall not fail to recognise them, and the church will not fail to esteem such, as true pastors, men "after God's own heart," who will commend "the doctrine of God and our Saviour, in all things." And when "the chief Shepherd shall appear;" such, shall receive "The crown of glory, that fadeth not away."

7. Further, we are reminded in Rom. xii. 8 of the gift of EXHORTATION (Greek *paraklesis*, which signifies—*entreaty, comfort, consolation,*) and we cannot but feel, the need of this work in God's churches of our day.

Many can *teach*, and bring wondrous truths before the minds of fellow-saints; but how refreshing it is, when the Holy Spirit leads some fit brother to commend to us some familiar Scripture; and speak to our consciences, as to the claims of God upon us, in respect of fuller consecration and obedience, and lead us to cry for increased power "to be doers of the truth."

And now, in closing this address upon the work of Ministry and Rule in God's Churches; let us *each* be led to pray more earnestly, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do." Remember the Lord's words in Mark xiii. 34; "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to EVERY MAN HIS WORK; and commanded the porter to watch."

Let us each aim, that in all we do, we may "Study to

shew ourselves, APPROVED UNTO GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed ; rightly dividing the Word of truth."

The true servant's spirit, is well expressed in those words ;

"Content to fill a little space ;
If Thou be glorified."

And, we may rest assured, that the happiness, and prosperity of God's *Eccelesia*, will depend upon the spirit of self-abnegation, the absence of strife and vain-glory, the prevalence of "lowliness of mind, each esteeming other better than themselves," and those for the principles set forth in Phil. i. and ii, which have their root in "the love of Christ constraining us." Where there is this "submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of God," there will surely be "the comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and the church will have rest, and be multiplied.

None of us would deny, but that weakness and failure, has characterised our testimony, in carrying out these Divine principles ; but there is all the difference between this, and a deliberate *setting aside* of God's revealed mind ; and altering the plan of the Divine Architect, as set forth in the Epistles, to substitute forms of man's devising, and *his* system of ministry and rule instead. In the one case, there is an honest attempt mixed with failure, to carry out the will of God, while in the other, there is a deliberate ignoring of God's commandment, and of Christ's authority concerning the ministry, order, and rule of God's church on earth.

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