

2 *The manner of this oversight*

117

aged to teach than to learn, much more is it fitting to learn than to be ignorant.'

7. There must be a prudent mixture of severity and mildness both in our preaching and discipline; each must be predominant, according to the quality or character of the person, or matter, that we have in hand. If there be *no* severity, our reproofs will be despised. If *all* severity, we shall be taken as usurpers of dominion, rather than persuaders of the minds of men to the truth.

8. We must be serious, earnest, and zealous in every part of our work. Our work requireth greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and to deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of the Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plainly, that the most ignorant may understand us; and so seriously that the dearest hearts may feel us; and so convincingly, that the contradicting cavillers may be silenced. The weight of our matter condemneth coldness and sleepy dulness. We should see that we be well awakened ourselves, and our spirits in such a plight as may make us fit to awaken others. If our words be not sharpened, and pierce not as nails, they will hardly be felt by stony hearts. To speak slightly and coldly of heavenly things is nearly as bad as to say nothing of them at all.

9. The whole of our ministry must be carried on in tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that what doeth them good doth us good; and that nothing troubleth us more than their hurt. We must feel toward our people, as a father toward his children: yea, the tenderest love of a mother must not surpass ours. We must even travail in birth, till Christ be formed in them. They should see that we care for no outward thing, neither wealth, nor liberty, nor honour, nor life, in comparison of their salvation; but could even be content, with Moses, to have our names blotted out of the book of life, i.e. to be removed from the number of the living: rather than they should not be found in the Lamb's book of life. Thus should

we, as John saith, be ready to 'lay down our lives for the brethren,' and, with Paul, not count our lives dear to us, so we may but 'finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus.' When the people see that you unfeignedly love them, they will hear any thing and bear any thing from you; as Augustine saith, 'Love God, and do what you please.' We ourselves will take all things well from one that we know doth entirely love us. We will put up with a blow that is given us in love, sooner than with a foul word that is spoken to us in malice or in anger. Most men judge of the counsel, as they judge of the affection of him that gives it: at least, so far as to give it a fair hearing. Oh, therefore, see that you feel a tender love to your people in your breasts, and let them perceive it in your speeches, and see it in your conduct. Let them see that you spend, and are spent, for their sakes; and that all you do is for them, and not for any private ends of your own. To this end the works of charity are necessary, as far as your estate will reach; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love to them. But, if you are not able to give, show that you are willing to give if you had it, and do that sort of good you can. But see that your love be not carnal, flowing from pride, as one that is a suitor for himself rather than for Christ, and, therefore, doth love because he is loved, or that he may be loved. Take heed, therefore, that you do not connive at the sins of your people, under pretence of love, for that were to cross the nature and end of love. Friendship must be cemented by piety. A wicked man cannot be a true friend; and, if you befriend their wickedness, you show that you are wicked yourselves. Pretend not to love them, if you favour their sins, and seek not their salvation. By favouring their sins, you will show your enmity to God; and then how can you love your brother? If you be their best friends, help them against their worst enemies. And think not all sharpness inconsistent with love: parents correct their children, and God himself 'chastens every son whom he receiveth.' Augustine saith, 'Better it is to love even with the accompaniment of severity, than to mislead by (excess of) lenity.'