

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING GOSPEL MINISTERS.

1. How frequently do we hear this expression from the mouths of rich and poor, learned and unlearned! Many lament that they have not a Gospel Minister in their church, and therefore are constrained to seek one at the meeting. Many rejoice that they have a Gospel Minister, and that there are many such in their neighbourhood. Meantime, they generally speak with much displeasure, if not contempt, of those who they say are not Gospel Ministers.

2. But it is to be feared, few of these understand what they say. Few understand what that expression means. Most that use it have only crude, confused notions concerning Gospel Ministers. And hence many inconveniences arise; yea, much hurt to the souls of men. They contract prejudices in favour of very worthless men, who are indeed blind leaders of the blind; not knowing what the real gospel is, and therefore incapable of preaching it to others. Meantime, from the same cause, they contract prejudices against other Ministers, who, in reality, both live and preach the gospel; and therefore are well able to instruct them in all those truths that accompany salvation.

3. But what then is the meaning of the expression? Who is a Gospel Minister? Let us consider this important question calmly, in the fear and in the presence of God.

Not every one that preaches the eternal decrees; (although many suppose this is the very thing;) that talks much of the sovereignty of God, of free, distinguishing grace, of dear electing love, of irresistible grace, and of the infallible perseverance of the saints. A man may speak of all these by the hour together; yea, with all his heart, and with all his voice; and yet have no right at all to the title of a Gospel Minister.

Not every one that talks largely and earnestly on those precious subjects,—the righteousness and blood of Christ. Let a man descant upon these in ever so lively a manner, let

him describe his sufferings ever so pathetically ; if he stops there, if he does not show man's duty, as well as Christ's sufferings ; if he does not apply all to the consciences of the hearers ; he will never lead them to life, either here or hereafter, and therefore is no Gospel Minister.

Not every one who deals in the promises only, without ever showing the terrors of the law ; that slides over "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness," and endeavours to heal those that never were wounded. These promise-mongers are no Gospel Ministers.

Not every one (very nearly allied to the former) who bends all his strength to coax sinners to Christ. Such soft, tender expressions, as "My dear hearers, My dear lambs," though repeated a thousand times, do not prove a Gospel Minister.

Lastly. Not every one that preaches justification by faith ; he that goes no farther than this, that does not insist upon sanctification also, upon all the fruits of faith, upon universal holiness, does not declare the whole counsel of God, and consequently is not a Gospel Minister.

4. Who then is such ? Who is a Gospel Minister, in the full, scriptural sense of the word ? He, and he alone, of whatever denomination, that does declare the whole counsel of God ; that does preach the whole gospel, even justification and sanctification, preparatory to glory. He that does not put asunder what God has joined, but publishes alike, "Christ dying for us, and Christ living in us." He that constantly applies all this to the hearts of the hearers, being willing to spend and be spent for them ; having himself the mind which was in Christ, and steadily walking as Christ also walked ; he, and he alone, can with propriety be termed a Gospel Minister.

5. Let it be particularly observed, if the gospel be "glad tidings of great salvation which shall be unto all people," then those only are, in the full sense, Gospel Ministers who proclaim the "great salvation ;" that is, salvation from all (both inward and outward) sin, into "all the mind that was in Christ Jesus ;" and likewise proclaim offers of this salvation to every child of man. This honourable title is therefore vilely prostituted, when it is given to any but those who testify "that God willeth all men to be saved," and "to be perfect as their Father which is in heaven is perfect."