

**A SERMON, DELIVERED  
JANUARY 1, 1822, AT THE  
ORDINATION OF THE REV.  
JOSEPH BENNET TO THE  
PASTORAL CARE**

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A Sermon, Delivered January 1, 1822, at the Ordination of the Rev. Joseph Bennet to the pastoral care by Warren Fay

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**WARREN FAY**

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**SERMON,**

DELIVERED JANUARY 1, 1822,

AT THE

**ORDINATION**

OF THE

**REV. JOSEPH BENNET,**

TO THE

*PASTORAL CARE*

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN

WOBURN, MASS.

BY WARREN FAY, A. M.

Pastor of the First Church in Chateaufort, Mass.

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*Woburn, Mass.*

*Woburn, April 10, 1822.*

The Congregational Society in Woburn, beg leave to present their thanks to the Rev. Mr. Fay for his *excellent* sermon delivered at the Ordination of their pastor, and request a copy for the press.

JOSIAH WRIGHT,  
EBENEZER LAWRENCE, } *Committee.*  
BENJAMIN WYMAN,

Rev. WARREN FAY.

## SERMON.

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ACTS VI, 4.

*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

It was considered the duty of the primitive churches to minister to the necessities of the saints. The distribution of their charities had devolved upon the Apostles. When the number of the disciples was multiplied, and the labors of the Apostles greatly increased, the Grecians murmured against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. To prevent all ground of complaint without interrupting their ministry, the twelve Apostles called the multitude of the disciples together, and proposed, that they should select seven men from among themselves of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, whom they might appoint over this business. This the Apostles did, not that they might live in indolence, but that they might give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And they were in truth eminently and uniformly devout; and they actually gave themselves without reluctance, or indolence, or any disposition to forsake their work, to the ministry of the word. Nothing turned them from their holy

purpose; nothing restrained their devotions; nothing diverted them from this benevolent and sacred work.

But what was the duty of the Apostles in this respect is the duty of the ordinary ministers of Christ. They are engaged in the same work, and have the same duties to perform. And if they have not difficulties of the same kind to encounter, they have those which are equally dangerous, and which render vigilance and resolution equally necessary. If the civil arm is not stretched out to obstruct them in their labors, or silence their preaching, a worldly influence is in continual operation to chill their devotions, and a thousand temptations are presented to hinder their faithful ministration of the word of life. The world has always exerted a greater and more deleterious influence over the Church and her ministers by its flatteries, than by its frowns. All the ministers of the gospel then should adopt the resolution, and imitate the example of the Apostles, by giving themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

I am led by the text and the occasion to *explain* and *enforce* the duty of ministers to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.

This does not imply that ministers must be always praying or preaching. You will not understand, when they sacredly resolve to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word, that they are to have no time for relaxation, for journeying, for enjoying the society of their friends, for superintending their domestic concerns, for carrying forward the benevolent designs of the Church. Some of these



are necessary for the maintenance of health and mental vigor; others are demanded by providence; and others, while they make ministers more ardent and faithful pastors, concentrate their efforts with those of the Church in general in the noblest works of Christian benevolence.

Ministers may be said to give themselves continually to prayer and the duties of the sacred office, when they devote themselves with their whole hearts to this work; and consecrate to it the best of their time, their best talents, their best thoughts, their most vigorous efforts, and make all their other concerns subservient to their sacred profession.

But to be more particular;

Ministers must give themselves continually to *prayer*, by maintaining *statedly* devout intercourse with God in retirement. They are called by their office frequently to lead the devotions of others. And while they become so familiar with this service, and so often engage in it in the presence of others, there is danger of its becoming with them a heartless service. The form in such a case is almost imperceptibly substituted for the reality. The life and spirit of devotion gradually decline; and the warmth of the animal passions, the influence of sympathy, or a desire to lead the devotions of others with propriety,—kindle an unhal- lowed fire, which unsuspectingly passes in the mind of the minister for acceptable prayer.

It is admitted, that the frequency with which ministers are called to lead the devotions of others *should* render them eminently devout. But yet there is obvious danger, that the state of their own hearts, or the impression that prayer is in so many instances

regarded as a mere ceremony by those around them, or even the frequency of the service amidst so many temptations, will render their devotions formal and heartless. To avoid this evil and guard against this danger, ministers must maintain stated and devout intercourse with God in retirement. In the closet, where they will not pray, because men ask it, or expect it,—or because the service devolves upon them as ministers, they must bow the knee, and draw near to God in all the sincerity of their hearts. Here they must go to their heavenly Father, because their own souls desire it; and here they must enkindle at the throne of divine grace a heavenly spirit, which will glow in all their *social* and *public* devotions, and diffuse itself through all their duties. Every minister's study should be consecrated to *prayer*, as well as to the diligent investigation of divine truth. There "fast by the oracle of God" he should muse until the fire burns, and pour out his soul in fervent supplication, until he acquires a tone of piety, that is elevated and permanent. He must light the lamp of holy fervor in the study, if he would have it burn brightly in the sanctuary. He must kindle the fire of devotion in the closet, if he would have it animate all his other duties. No place on earth, save the altar and table of the Lord, should the minister of Christ consider more sacred, than his study. He should there maintain intercourse with God in the most intimate and spiritual manner. He should there come even to his seat, and converse with him, as a man converses with his friend.

Ministers should also maintain a devotional spirit *habitually*. This is what is more especially meant by giving themselves *continually* to prayer. They should

cultivate a devotional temper at all times and under all circumstances. Whatever may be thought of the world, or of professing Christians in general, it is expected of ministers, that they should be uniformly grave and devout. This comports with the sacredness of their office, the solemnity of their work, and the dignity of the ministerial character. This elevates them above the levity and sensuality of the world, and imposes a restraint upon vice, and an awe upon the minds of the ungodly. This erects a barrier against the rude assaults of the profane, and stays the approach of all indecent mirth. An habitually devotional temper, cherished by the faithful minister, imposes upon all with whom he associates a conviction of the presence of God, and makes them feel, that he is a man of prayer, "a legate of the skies."

But ministers must give themselves continually, not only to prayer, but to the ministry of the word.

They must do this,

1. By a diligent, critical, and prayerful study of the sacred scriptures. The scriptures are their directory; the source whence they are to draw all their instructions; the rule of faith according to which they are to form all their religious opinions; the statute book where they are to find all the laws to govern their own lives and the lives of others;—the charter on which they are to rest their title to eternal life. It is more important therefore, that they should understand the subjects contained in the scriptures, than any other subject, which the mind can contemplate.

But it should be remembered, that the Bible was written in two different languages, one of which for more than two thousand years has ceased to be a liv-