

A
SERMON,
PREACHED AT *WINDHAM*,
A.D. 1721,
ON A DAY OF
THANKSGIVING,
SET APART BY THE
First CHURCH in that place,
OCCASIONED BY A
REMARABLE REVIVAL OF RELIGION,
WHEN, IN SIX MONTHS,
EIGHTY PERSONS WERE ADDED TO THE
CHURCH.



By SAMUEL WHITING,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN WINDHAM.

NEW-LONDON: PRINTED 1721
WINDHAM: RE-PRINTED BY JOHN BYRNE,
1800



A sketch of the Life of the **Rev. SAMUEL WHITING,** THE FIRST MINISTER IN WINDHAM.

The Rev. Samuel Whiting, was the son of the Rev. John Whiting, minister of Hartford, and grandson of Col. William Whiting, who came from England. He was born April 22, A.D. 1670. ¹

Under the instruction of his father, he received his early education. In 1689, being 19 years of age, his father died. He then pursued his studies in preparation for the ministry, under the direction of the Rev. James Fitch, of Norwich. With our ancestors, at this early period, no person could succeed as a minister of Christ, who did not unite with the marks of genuine piety, learning and abilities. The Elders and Churches considered that zeal without knowledge, could not be well directed to the support of the Redeemer's cause. Those persons who presented themselves for the work of the ministry, were examined in the learned languages, in the essential doctrines of theology, and as to their experience of divine truth in the heart, to ascertain whether they were qualified to withstand gainsayers, to protect religion against infidels and hereticks, and to feed the flock of Christ. It is since 1692, that nominal teachers in this State, have grown up like the gourd of Jonah in a night, imagining themselves possessed of all the qualifications to arraign and condemn every minister who was not as ignorant and noisy as themselves.

At the time Mr. Whiting pursued his studies, there was no college in Connecticut; yet, with his father, and the excellently learned Mr. Fitch, he had every advantage for improvement to qualify himself for an able and useful minister. At the first town-meeting in Windham, June 11, 1692, it was voted, to apply to Mr. Samuel Whiting, for the purpose of carrying on the work of the ministry.

Tradition says, and from the records, it appears it may say correctly, that the first sermon Mr. Whiting preached at Windham, was on the first day of the week, and the first day of the year, from the first chapter of the Bible, and the first verse.

In May, 1693, as an inducement to tarry with them four years, they offered him 50 pounds a year, an allotment thro all the division lots, and to build him an house two stories high and 18 feet square. The land was laid out to him, and for the first year, instead of the house they added £ 10 to his salary. In 1696, they built him an house - In 1697 they gave him a call to ordination - In 1699, it was repeated and 80 loads of wood added to his salary - On Dec. 4, 1700, he was ordained - On Dec. 10, 1700, the church was gathered, and he was gathered with it as Pastor. His salary was afterwards raised to £ 100 and his wood.

He was married to Miss Elizabeth Adams, sister of the Rev. Eliphalet Adams, of New-London, Sept. 14, 1696, by whom he had 13 children, eight sons and five daughters.

In 1725, while on a visit to his friends, he was suddenly seized with the pleurisy at Enfield, at the house of the Rev. Mr. Collins. He died in a few days, Sept. 27, 1725, in the 56th year of his age, and the 33d after he began preaching.

Under Mr. Whiting's ministration, "eighty persons were added to his church in one half year, A.D. 1721, without the extraordinary apparent occasion, but thro the secret operation of the Spirit of God upon their hearts."² In grateful acknowledgement of the goodness of God, the church set apart a day of thanksgiving; and Mr. Whiting's sermon, on that occasion, from 1 Thess. iii. 8, was printed at New-London, with a preface by the pious Mr. Adams. This sermon illustrated his piety, zeal and abilities, as a preacher of the truth, as it is in Jesus; and by this, tho dead, he still **speaketh** the necessity of regeneration and standing fast in the Lord. Among the people of his charge, he walked as a shining light, and was esteemed by the friends of religion, and honored as a useful minister. He was much devoted to prayer, and in its efficacy had strong faith. In his last sickness, after his life was despaired of it is said that he made two special prayers, one for his own family, and one for the prosperity and continuance of his Church.

He was a man in stature tall, and well proportioned. His abilities were highly useful in the civil transactions of the town of Windham; and he assisted in gathering many of the Churches in this county. But how soon those are forgotten whose labors, hardships and dangers have procured extensive blessings! In 100 years after he came to this town, his name was almost unknown. The facts above stated, were obtained after much enquiry of many persons and at different places. The only remaining printed copy of the sermon now republishing, was found in the family of Mrs. Tracy, of East-Haddam, a woman above 80 years of age, remarkable for her memory of ancient and curious facts, relative to persons and families.

Windham, Dec. 4, A.D. 1800

To the READER.

It seems to be something necessary that some account should be given of the occasion of the ensuing discourse, and it may (through the blessing of God) be useful unto many, when they shall hear of the grace of God unto others, and how he hath been mercifully pleased to visit his people.

Windham is a town of about some thirty years standing, where the Rev. Mr. Samuel Whiting hath been improved in the work of the ministry, even from their beginning. – God hath been pleased to make him a very rich blessing among them, and doubtless many will have reason to bless God forever in that their lot hath been cast to dwell under his ministry. Not only hath he seen the town flourishing to that degree in this short space of time, as that two other societies have already sprung out therefrom, but he hath had the comfort to observe that many living and serious Christians have been born there and that his labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.

But of later there has been a greater stirring than ordinary among the dry bones, many have been awakened to consider and enquire with a great deal of earnestness, what they should do to be saved? Persons of all ages and some of whom there was but little expectation, have come together weeping to seek the Lord their God, so that within the compass of about half a year, there have been four score persons joined to their communion and more are still dropping in, so mightily doth the word of God grow and prevail among them, and let us charitably hope that the Lord hath been adding to his church, such as shall be saved.

Could their reverend pastor have been prevailed upon so far to have gratified the Public, we might have been more curiously entertained with the knowledge of many particulars, which ought not to be forgotten, while the Holy Spirit, like the wind that **bloweth** where it **listeth**, hath been dividing to every one severally as it will, in this day of their visitation; but at present we must be content with this short and imperfect account.

In the mean time it is surprising to see what an happy alteration there is made when God is please to bless the dispensation of the gospel, and the institutions of his house, and confirm his word in the mouths of his servants. Now the eyes of the blind are opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the dumb are taught to speak and they that were spiritually dead are raised unto life.

To behold obstinate sinners that went on forwardly in the ways of their own hear, yielding themselves unto God, such as were careless and unconcerned about their own souls, now brought to the last distress and concern about what they shall do to escape from the wrath that is to come, and such as were fond of their several vicious courses, now quitting them with shame and indignation, that they may endeavour for the future to lead their lives, not according to the lusts of men, but the will of God, shall it not from this time be said, what hath God wrought? Surely it is the work of him that at first commanded the light to shine out of the darkness and called the things that were not as though they were.

Now the work grows easy and delightful in the hand of the Lord's servants, their former sighs occasioned by their unsuccessful endeavours are changed into praises, and

they almost forget their other sorrows and burdens that are upon the, for joy that people are born unto the Lord; now they that have happily escaped out of the snare of the fowler, admire the wonders of free grace which remembered and visited them in their low estate; they are brought forth in the light of life, and having their doubts and fears gradually dissipate, they go on rejoicing for the consolation. Their fellow Christians who were in Christ before the, receive them with open arms, and many thanksgivings are offered up unto the Lord; now things put on the same face of gladness and delight, as once they did at Samaria, when Christ was preached with success, Acts 8.8. And there was great joy in that city.

It was upon this occasion that a day of thanksgiving was appointed and observed by that distinguished people, when the following discourse was delivered, and is now by their pressing and repeated instances published to the world; if it may be any way serviceable to influence them to stand fast in the Lord or stir up any to mind the things that belong unto their peace there will be the less occasion to apologize for the defects and imperfections that may attend it.

But, Oh! That the same good spirit from on high were poured out upon the rest of the country, for what pity is it that this single fleece only should be wet with the dew of Heaven, while the rest of the ground round about remains (comparatively) dry. And may we not say with the Psalmist, It is time for thee, Lord, to work, when iniquity gets head and serious religion is so sadly decaying throughout the land, insomuch that there is scarce a sufficient number rising up to make good the ground of them that are dropping off the stage continually, especially when we consider also how much short they come of their good spirit, and we are almost at a loss to find christians among christians; it is true God is calling loudly to use by variety of Providences, the means of grace are yet in our hands, and the ordinances are among us, but where is God of the ordinances? And where are all the wonders which our fathers told us of, when the arm of the Lord was powerfully revealed, and people more generally believed the report of the gospel; may the Lord please to revive his own work and help us to remember, hold fast and repent and do our first works, may his good spirit be poured out more plentifully upon both ministers and people, that the one may preach more plainly, boldly and with an uncommon concern for the glory of God and the good of immortal souls, and the other may attend with more earnestness and care to the things that are spoken, left at any time they let them slip; and may that good spirit of piety and devotion which sometimes through the blessing of God and the influence of his grace begins to kindle in this or that place, spread like a flame throughout the land to purge away our dross and raise up a seed which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

For this let every one that is Godly pray unto him day and night, since with him is the residue of the spirit, and he delights to be stirred up by the prayers of his people; let us take with us words and cry in the language of the prophet, Isa. 51. 9. *Awake, awake, put on the strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.*

Who can tell but that as he that begun to pour out of his good spirit, so he may please to perfect the good work and cause the good favour of his knowledge to spread far and wide; let us, as they that wish well to the cause of serious and practical religion seeing the times are drawing nearer, wait upon the Lord, till he shall appear for our help, bringing

salvation, when all difficulties shall be removed, the mountains be levelled and made a plain and whatsoever **letteth** shall be for ever taken away; when he that hath laid the foundation shall bring forth the head-stone with shouting, while the standers by are prepared with joyful acclamations to cry, grace, grace unto it.

E. ADAMS

New-London,
Sept. 12, 1721

A SERMON,

Preached at Windham

1 THESSALONIANS 3. 8.

For now we live, if ye stand fast in the LORD.

The blessed apostle Paul, the author of this and many other excellent epistles, tho' he spent much of his time in persecuting and making havock of the church, and accordingly came late unto the Lord's vineyard: Yet being converted in an extraordinary manner, and having an happy turn given to his nature by the grace of God, he was very diligent to fetch up his lost time and do what service he could in propagating the gospel, and spreading the doctrine and faith of Christ from place to place; with what zeal doth he travel over the several countries of Europe and Asia! And wherever he comes he brings a blessing along with him, the Lord crowning his preaching for the most part with wonderful success, and favouring him with many seals of his ministry: for he laboured more abundantly than they all and came not whit behind the very chiefest Apostles: Among other places where he preached the gospel we read of his doing it at Thessalonica the capital of Macedonia, for three Sabbath days together he reasoned with the people out of the scriptures, opening and alledging that Christ must need have suffered and risen again from the dead and that his Jesus whom he preached was the Christ; and it is noted that some of the Jews believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, but of the devout Greeks a great multitude and of the chief women not a few, Acts 17.1. ff.

Such wonderful success was an eyesore to the unbelieving Jews, and they quickly stirred up a persecution that made the place too hot for him, so that he was necessitated to withdraw; however the good seed of the word which had been sown sprang up and flourished mightily, and the apostle who had been instrumental to convert them to the faith, bare them still upon his heart and visits them with letter upon letter to confirm and establish them in the faith.

The main design of this first epistle to the Thessalonians, seems to be, to keep them firm and steady in their profession and remove the offence they might take at his afflictions and sufferings that befell him for his faithful preaching of the gospel; and particularly in this chapter wherein is our text, this seems to be what lay very much upon his spirit. From Athens he dispatched Timothy his companion and presbyter, to establish and comfort them concerning their faith, and that they should not be moved from their steadfastness by the consideration of the afflictions which they saw him suffer, and which he had foretold and forewarned them of, *Ver. 1, 4.* The apostle seems to have his apprehensions left they should think the worse of religion because it was a doctrine discountenanced by the powers of this world, and the professors and publishers thereof were under persecution, foreseeing this difficulty he had guarded against it at the first and now again he reminds them of what he had said; he had staid some time without hearing

from his Christian friends at Thessalonica, and when he was weary with forbearing, he sent Timothy to them to be informed of their state, being exceeding solicitous about their welfare; Timothy having good tidings to bring with him, quickly returns and gives him a comfortable account, which was exceeding refreshing to him, *Ver. 5,6 7.*

Now come in the words of the text wherein the apostle **expresseth** how comfortable and satisfactory it was to him to hear of their stedfastness and it would as it were give him a new life if they continued stedfast to the end. Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord. It would have been grievous news, a killing consideration if he had heard the good works which was begun among them, had come to nothing again, he could not have told now to have born up under such heavy tidings; but now we live, we are refreshed and comforted with the account that we have had, and shall still be cheerful and easy if you continue stedfast in the faith. We regard not the difficulties and distresses that we meet with, we scarce feel the other sufferings that are inflicted upon us by the adversary, and have much less sense of the evils which happen to us from without, when we have so strong a consolation from within, If ye stand fast in the Lord. Hitherto he **acknowledgeth** to the praise of Divine Grace that they had done so, and tho' he would not be over jealous and suspicious of them, yet he gives them a needful caution to look well to their standing, that as they had been firm hitherto so they would not suffer themselves to be shaken by any temptations they might meet with for the future. The Apostle's joy on this occasion, **runneth** over, and (as it ought to do) breaks out in thanksgiving to God, as we see in the words following the test. *Ver.9. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.*

From the words, we may take up this Doctrine.

Doct. All godly persons, and especially they that have taken pains with people for their good, will be much refreshed and comforted, and it will help to balance the trouble they meet with, when they that have been bro't over to the acknowledgment of the truth, do stand fast in the Lord.

Others rejoice in other things; if the times be peaceable, if they are in health, if they thrive in the world, if their friends be multiplied and the like, now they can heartily rejoice, and indeed these things have their worth and they ought to be taken notice of with thankfulness, but godly persons rejoice principally because their names are written in heaven, when the kingdom of God comes, and his will is done upon earth as it is in heaven, when the mountain of the Lord's house is exalted above the tops of the mounts. When the interest of Christ prevails, when men are stirred up effectually to mind the concerns of their souls and are gathering home in considerable numbers into the bosom of the church, these are the things that rejoice their hearts, especially over the service of their Saviour, now that spirits are if they have been instrumental under God to gain them light and they scarce feel the burdens that are upon them which would otherwise be very heavy, *Phil.2.16, 17. Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain, yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.* And on the other hand when people are stubborn and refractory, do not believe the report of the gospel, nor yield them selves unto God, but seem resolved to go on still in their trespasses, nothing doth more grieve the hearts of godly persons and especially those that are appointed to labour with them for their good, now they sigh, now they complain and go with tears to

the throne of grace, as the Prophet Isa. 49.4. *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain.*

In speaking to this doctrine, I shall consider these three things.

First, That sometimes the gospel hath very great and remarkable success and many are bro't over by the preaching of it to the acknowledgement of the truth.

Secondly, They that have been wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel and bro't to comply with the terms propounded therein, have yet need to be cautioned that they stand fast in the Lord.

Thirdly, When they do so, and are not diverted, hindered and moved from their stedfastness, all godly persons that hear of it, and especially they who have taken pains with them for their good, will be much refreshed and comforted thereby and it will help to balance the troubles which they meet with in the world.

I. I shall consider, That sometimes the gospel hath very great and remarkable success and many are bro't over by the preaching of it to the acknowledgment of the truth. This was prophesied of in the Old Testament long before the coming of Christ, that the people should be willing in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, that he should have the dew of his youth. By which phrase among other things it is not obscurely intimated, that converts to the Christian faith, should be as numerous as the drops of the dew in the summer morning; Unto this doubtless the Prophet hath reference, when he saith, Isa. 6.8 *Who are these that flee as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?* And in many other places; accordingly we find when our Lord was actually come and had sent forth his disciples in the power of his spirit, to preach the gospel to every creature, what marvelous success they had, the hand, of the Lord was with them and many believed and turned unto the Lord. Three thousand were converted by one sermon, nations were born at once and kingdoms in a day, till within the compass of two or three ages, the world marveled to see itself become christian: the ambassadors of Christ, not assisted by the secular powers, not recommended by the grandeur or learning or figure or eloquence, but only telling a plain story, propagated the faith in the hearts of multitudes, while Satan as lightning fell from heaven, the nations were angry and the heathen powers were fretted to see their idolatrous worship neglected and their altars forsaken; since that day indeed religion hath much decayed in many places, yet God hath not left himself without witness at sundry times and diverse places, when the Spirit hath been poured out more plentifully from on high, then many have been wrought upon by the blessing of God upon the means of grace and bro't over to the acknowledgement of the truth.

II. I am to consider, That they who have been wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel and bro't to comply with the terms propounded therein, have need to cautioned that they stand fast in the Lord. Here I shall consider two things.

1. What is imply'd in this standing fast in the Lord.
2. Why they should be cautioned that they do thus stand fast in the Lord.

[1] I shall consider, What is imply'd in this standing fast in the Lord. Three or Four Particulars may here be mentioned.

- (1) That they hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering and do not suffer themselves to be led aside with the error of the wicked. The doctrines and principles of Christianity must be maintained by them that have professed it against all opposition, for it is a good religion, an excellent scheme and set of principles, and they must not suffer it to be wrested from them. Christians must not be ashamed of their Lord Jesus Christ nor any of his words, however an adulterous and sinful generation, may take it in their heads to ridicule and run them down; we must be stedfast and unmoveable in the religion and course that we have entered upon, whatever it may cost us, whatever we may suffer on that account, unto this many precepts and charged do oblige us; 2 Tim. 1.13. *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* Heb.10.23 *Let us hold soft the profession of our faith without wavering,* 2 Pet.3.17. *Ye therefore beloved, seeing, you know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*
- (2) Another thing implied in this standing fast in the Lord, may be, that they cleave to the Lord, with full purpose of heart, so that nothing may separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. They must see to it that having begun in the Spirit, they do not entertain any hope of being made perfect by the flesh, That having fixed upon Christ's righteousness as what should recommend them to the divine favour and acceptance, they do not afterwards go about to establish a righteousness of their own; they have made the Lord Jesus Christ their confidence and fled for refuge to lay hold of this hope set before them and they must not afterwards let go their hold, as if they could find a new way of salvation, if they would be thought to stand fast in the Lord, remembering the apostle's words, Heb. 3.14. *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.* So when many believed at Antioch upon the preaching of the gospel and great numbers were added to the Lord, Barnabas was sent to exhort them to stand fast, which he doth in these terms, Act. 11.28. *Who when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*
- (3) Another thing implied in this standing fast in the Lord, may be, That they walk worth of the calling wherewith they are called, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Christianity is a most holy religion and it requires holiness in all its professors, every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity: For he came to redeem us from all iniquity and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; accordingly Christians are frequently exhorted to let their conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, to walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called and adorn the doctrine of God their

Saviour in all things, without this they cannot be said to stand fast in the Lord. For a loose and irregular life will soon forfeit all the benefits they can expect by their religion, and render the profession of it of none effect.

- (4) Another thing implied in this standing fast in the Lord, may be, That they make progress in holiness and persevere to the end. Being entered on their religious course, Christians must make progress in holiness adding one grace to another and one degree of grace to another, till they all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Nothing must discourage or terrify them or shake their resolution and confidence, for no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Therefore the apostle gives this direction, in 1 Cor. 15.58. *Therefore my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

[2] I am to consider, Why they should be cautioned thus to stand fast in the Lord. There is good reason for it and great need of it, it may be done without any reflection upon them, and they ought not to take it amiss when such exhortations are given unto them.

- (1) For, There are but too many who make a shew and bid fair for a time who afterwards fall away, and make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; they begin in the Spirit but they end in the flesh. The morning is fair and smiling, but the evening cloudy and tempestuous: they seem to promise much for a time but their goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew, it **passeth** away; like Jehu they set out seriously, with a, come, see my zeal for the Lord, when by and by they faint, give out and turn aside to an impious course of life; how many have we know, who although they promised fair and there was much expectation from them, yet they soon turned into the devious paths of error, being deluded by the cunning craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive or else they fell into a lewd and profligate course of life; something happened that stumbled and offended them and then they easily turned from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. Thus they have discovered that their natures were never truly changed and all their pretences to religion were nothing but shew and appearance. 2 Pet. 2.22 *But it is happened unto them, according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.* For their sakes, Christians should be cautioned that they stand fast in the Lord, lest they become as one of these, so upon the occasion of diverse leaving of him, our Lord put it to the rest of the disciples, John 6.67. *Will ye also go away?*
- (2) They should be cautioned thus to do, because many eyes are now upon them, and it will redound much to the dishonour of religion, if they should behave themselves ill or entirely quit the good course which they have entered upon. It doth not hurt Religion so much, when many that never

made profession of it, do slight, despise and live in contradiction to its rules, because they never made trial and experiment thereof, and it may well be pre summed that they speak evil of the things which they understand not, tho' the poor people are to be pitied for their weakness, and we ought charitably to wish them more grace. But when they have entered upon a religious course do afterwards quit and turn aside to vicious practices, this doth a great deal of mischief, for this is the language of their management and they do in effect, tell the world aloud, that they have tried and they find that there is nothing in religion, it is a course that I is not worth the following , people need not trouble themselves about it, and there are multitudes that will easily allow them to be very competent judges in the matter, since it falls in so exactly with their unreasonable prejudices, and saves them a great deal of trouble which they have no mind to take, thus an ill report is bro't up, upon the most necessary and desirable course of life and men are made to cease from fearing the Lord, 2 Pet. 2.2. *And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* Since then thee are so many eyes upon them and others will be apt to govern themselves by their conduct, Christians had need be cautioned that they stand fast in the Lord.

- (3) They should be cautioned thus to do, in that they do as yet dwell in the midst of danger, in an evil world that is full of snares and temptations. We are not to think that all danger is over when once we are past the entrance of Christianity and are well set out in our Christian course, on the contrary we are now engaged in a continual warfare as long as life shall last, we shall walk amongst snares and temptations which have been fatal unto many, we are to live in the midst of enemies that are very subtle, restless and maliciously set against us, the world will ply us with its baits, charms and allurements, and the flesh will cry out from within master, spare thyself, what need of all this ado; if we be not careful we shall be circumvented, discouraged and driven back, upon this score especially, Christians should be cautioned that they be sure to stand fast in the Lord.
- (4) They should be cautioned thus to do, because it will be no advantage to them that have begun well, if afterwards they quit their profession and make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. Our good deeds will never be put in the balance against our bad ones. Let us have done ever so much or proceed ever so far, if at length we turn back, all shall be forgotten and we shall lose all that we have wrought, according to that phrase 2 John. 8. *Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.* The prophet is very plain and clear in this, Ezek. 18.24. *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. In his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hat sinned, in them shall he die.* Nay and it had been better for persons not to have set out at all in their Christian course than afterwards to turn back, 2 Pet. 2.21. *For it had*

been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

- (5) They should be cautioned thus to do, in that their persevering and growth in grace will be the best token that they were sincere, when they first gave themselves up unto the Lord. Hereby they may prove their own work, whether it be right and good and so have rejoicing in themselves and not in another; when people see that the work holds, that their graces thrive and that they are still on the gaining hand, they may take comfort that they were sincere at the first, and that they have not dealt falsely in their covenant, for these reasons Christians should be cautioned that they be sure to stand fast in the Lord.

III. I am to consider, that when such persons do stand fast in the Lord, all godly persons that hear of it and especially they that have taken pains with them for their good, will be much refreshed and comforted thereby and it will help to balance the troubles which they meet withal in the world. They were comforted over them upon the news of their first turning to the Lord, this caused joy both in heaven and in earth, but when they see them stedfast and unmoveable, holding on their way and not easily shaken by temptations, this **refresheth** them yet more; especially they that have been instrumental to gain them over to the acknowledgment of the truth, will mightily rejoice therein, so that they will scarce feel their burdens that are upon them, this **over-balanceth** all their troubles and is continual group of rejoicing and thanksgiving unto God. For,

1. *The more Christians there be and the more steadily and regularly they walk, the name of God will be so much the more magnify'd.* And this is a principal ground of joy to godly persons, when the Lord's name is glorified, when his kingdom comes and his will is done in earth as it is in heaven, they would fain have all mankind orderly and regular if it might be, it grieves them to see such numbers of people living in sin, without the knowledge of God, and destitute of his fear, whenever therefore, any are gained upon, especially if there be any considerable number of them, that they have their eyes opened, and are brought to submit to his will, and live according to the rules of his word. Now the Lord will have his tribute of praise from these persons, his name will be magnified by them and glorified by others upon that account, and this fills them with joy and satisfaction.
2. *The more Christians there be, and the more steadily and regularly they walk, the world will be so much the more desirable a place to live in, and we may hope the good times that we expect, are now nearer at hand.* When iniquity abounds, and people generally addict themselves to evil practices, it is bad living for sober people, there is no dwelling in any confidence or safety. Now they mourn and lament their hard fate. Psal. 120.5. *Wo is me, that I sojourn in Meseck, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.* Now they cast about in their minds for some solitude and

retirement, whither they may betake themselves. Jer. 9.2. *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.* But when people are bro't over the service of God in considerable numbers, this mends the times mightily, and it is more agreeable living among such religious persons; with them we may converse with freedom and openness, we need not stand so much upon our guard, and fear any treachery and circumvention from them, we may trust our selves more safely in their hands, for now the fear of God (seeing they are renewed in the spirit of their minds) will prevent their doing us any hurt, even when they have a fair opportunity, as Joseph of old, being a religious man, forbore to retaliate the injuries that his brethren had done him, and said to them, Gen. 42.18. *This do and live: for I fear God.* We may promise ourselves much comfort and edification from their good examples and Christian conversation; now we may hope that those times are drawing nigh when all people shall live together in an amicable manner, according to that prediction, Isa. 65.25. *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpents meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. Men that are servants of sin,* are as full of rage, fierceness and malignity against their brethren as wolves, **tygers** and lions; but Christianity sweetens their tempers, and **disposeth** them to live peaceably and happily with each other.

3. *The more Christians there be, and the more steadily and regularly they walk, the more company and encouragement we shall have in the way to the kingdom,* and this afford ground of rejoicing; it is melancholy, and not so convenient and safe being alone, as the wise man observes, Ecc.4.10. *Wo to him that is alone.* He may suffer much for want of help and assistance; it is true, tho we were alone, tho all men should forsake us, yet we should be faithful to our Lord, and stedfast in our way; but it is more desirable to have company. The life of religion may be compared to a long and tedious journey, we are traveling thro the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan. Now, as in a journey, agreeable companions do keep up each other's spirits, take off from the tediousness of the journey, and the satisfaction that we receive very much shortens the way: so it is here, many fellow Christians to bear us company, will make our travel less tedious, being ready, by their good offices, to help each other over their difficulties, and prevent their giving out by the way.
4. *They that have been happily instrumental to win them to the Lord Jesus Christ, will have the more honor and the greater reward.* All Godly persons will rejoice at their conversion when they hear of it, and those especially because they have happily been instrumental in the hand of God to bring them home to their heavenly father. Now they have not run in vain, and laboured and spent their strength for nought, as many of the faithful servants of Christ have very much done, but they see of the travel of their souls, God hath put honor upon them and they are like to have

many for their crown of rejoicing another day, when they shall be enabled to stand forth and say, Behold we and the children whom thou hast given us. The apostle speaks of this matter with great joy and satisfaction with reference to these Thessalonians whom he had been instrumental to convert. 1 Thes.2.19, 20. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*

I proceed to the Improvement.

1. If it be as we have heard, so great a refreshment to Godly persons, when great numbers are brought to the acknowledgment of the truth, and do stand fast in the Lord, then we may here see one reason of the jealousy, care and concern, and the many prayers that Godly people have put up for the success of the gospel. They would have His Name to be honoured; they would have many souls saved from death, and they want to be refreshed themselves. They want to be filled with this joy, and therefore it is that they give diligence to teach, instruct and warn poor sinners, wherever they come and can have access, the especially in the particular stations wherein they are set: for this end they pour out many prayers day and night to the God of all grace that he would please to give weight to their instances with poor sinners, confirm his work, in their mouths, and crown their endeavours with success. They are eager for this satisfaction, as ever the apostle Paul was to be comforted by the obedience of Philemon. Phil ver. 20. *Let me have joy of thee in the Lord, refresh my bowels in the Lord.* For this reason they are so jealous of every thing that may obstruct the progress of the gospel, and warn persons to take heed that their minds be not corrupted, and do not suffer themselves to be shaken. 2 Cor. 11.2, 3. *For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ: but I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve thro his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

2. If it be as we have heard, so great a refreshment to Godly persons, when great numbers are brought to the acknowledgment of the truth, and stand fast in the Lord, Then in proportion it must needs be a considerable grief of heart to Godly persons, and especially to them who are employed for the good of souls, when the dispensation of the gospel is very much without success. This drives the ambassadors of Christ back with tears to Him that sent them, to bewail their ill success; they break out into complaints and lamentations, when they have wrought no deliverance in the earth, and cannot tell how to bear up under it; their other trials and afflictions are light in comparison of this; might but this burden be removed, they would soon forget their other sorrows for joy, that there is some good number of christians born unto the Lord. When the gospel which they preach, is only a favour of death unto death to them that hear it, this fills them with continual sorrow of heart, but when it is a favour of life unto life unto any, now they thank God and take courage.

But I would now take leave to apply myself more particularly to the people in this place. A good work hath been a late wrought among you; many have been awakened, convinced, and (as we ought charitably to hope) effectually brought home to God, the neighborhood hath rung of it, and it hath been told for a memorial of Divine Grace; good

people every where have rejoiced upon the hearing of it, and glorified God in you; Satan hath been alarmed and enraged (as we may well think) to see such an encroachment made upon his kingdom, to behold such large waste and spoil made of his goods. This is doubtless, the finger of God. To Him the praise of it is entirely due, while the instruments stand by, content only with a secondary honour, and you have well done to set apart this time for your public, thankful acknowledgment of this and other mercies. Suffer me therefore to apply myself particularly,

First. To them who have happily been wrought upon in this day of grace and pouring out of the Spirit.

Secondly. To them who have been passed over and suffered to remain still in their former hardness and security.

Thirdly. To all the Godly and christian people in this place.

I. To them who have happily been wrought upon in this day of grace and pouring out of the Spirit. You have been highly favoured in what hath been done for you in this day of visitation. Blessed by ye of the Lord, who hath remembered you in your low estate, and having ransomed you from the bondage of Corruption, and the slavery of Satan, is bringing you to Zion with joy upon your heads; **methinks** you look something like the redeemed spoken of in the Revelations, who are said to come out of great tribulation, to have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Only it must be remembered that you are but still in the way and may have many trials to pass through before the day of reward comes. A few words of advice may be directed unto you.

1. *See that the root of the matter be in you. That you be well established and grounded in the faith, and have a care of resting in a deceitful work.* Be sure to attend the work of self-examination, which is a standing duty, and of perpetual obligation to christians. Bring your state and your actions to a frequent trial, as they that are afraid of being deceived in a matter of such importance, and beg of God to search you and try you, and see if there be any wicked way in you, and lead you in the way everlasting. Take it not so far for granted, that your state is good, and your condition safe, because you have had some powerful awakenings and strong workings upon your hearts, and because you have openly given up your names to Christ and been admitted into the society of his people, as to neglect all farther trial. For many that have past a longer probation and stricter scrutiny, have proved castaways as last. There was a great deal of hope of them for a time, but at length their iniquity and hypocrisy hath been discovered; yet brethren, We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, tho we thus speak. However, a matter of such consequence cannot be too carefully looked into, to see that all be right, and as it should be, and good satisfaction in this point will well reward you for all your pains; you ought indeed to be thankful unto God for what you have experienced, yet this should not supercede your care to prove your own work that you may have rejoicing in yourselves and not in another. This brings me to the second particular.
2. *Give God the glory of his mercy who hath been culling you out from the corrupt mass of mankind, and setting you apart for himself.* It is nothing but rich and

sovereign grace that hath done this, for who is it that hath made you differ from other persons who are yet in their sins, or from what you lately were yourselves, or what have you but what you have received? Therefore glory not as if you had not received it; you are now become a peculiar people, that you might shew forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. You might have been left, as many others be, to have gone on carelessly in the ways of your own hearts, without any serious thought of God, and Christ, and heaven and eternity and so have filled up the measure of your iniquity. The Lord had done you no wrong, if he had given you up to your own hearts' lusts and suffered you to walk in your own ways. His grace is free and he owes it to none, but the Lord hath had compassion on you and made you willing in the day of his power, ascribe all to the honor of sovereign grace, for it is not of him that **willeth** or of him that **runneth**, but of God that **sheweth** mercy. Although you have been made exceeding solicitous to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, yet it must be remembered that it is God who **worketh** in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

3. *Be very careful of your behaviour, and see that you go from strength to strength.* Many eyes will now be upon you, and much will be expected from you, wherefore now arise and shine, because the glory of the Lord is risen upon you; having received a new nature, let it from henceforth exert itself in new manners, that all who stand by may be indeed convinced that the spirit of life is entered into you of a truth. As obedient children, do not fashion yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance. It will be a shame if the grace which you have received should not enable you to live better than you were wont to do in time past. See that the grace of God which hath been imparted unto you, be not in vain; but endeavour to outstrip and outgo your fellow-servants, which is, not merely an allowable, but a worth strife and a noble emulation, labouring more abundantly than they all, as the apostle Paul did, for this reason among others, because he came late into his Lord's vineyard. As yet you have only made an happy entrance upon your christian course; you must now address yourselves to your work with the utmost zeal and diligence, remembering that the Lord hath not called and sent you into his vineyard to be idle. Go therefore from strength to strength, and let your path be as that of the just, which **shineth** more and more, until it be perfect day. Be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.
4. Having found mercy yourselves, endeavour in your places and as opportunity serves to bring home others. It is the nature of true grace that it is diffusive of itself, and will endeavour still to propagate its kind. So the woman of Samaria, when her heart was effectually touched and warmed with our Lord's discourse, immediately left her water pot, and goes her way into the city, and invites out her countrymen to come and see a man who had told her all things that Eve she did, - *Is not this the Christ?* John 4.28.29. Every one should lend an helping hand towards the good work of saving souls from death, private christians as well as the ministers of the gospel, each of them in their respective places; especially they who have themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, should use their best endeavour to allure others to partake of the same agreeable entertainment. You

may commend religion to others from your own happy experience, which is a much greater advantage than if you spake only by hearing. Have you no friends, relations and acquaintance that you may be free with, who, according to all appearance are still remaining in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? Use your best interest with them, lay at them day and night, and cease not to intreat and importune them till they also have given in their names to Jesus Christ. So we may observe in the gospel, that when a disciple was bro't into Christ's family, he was so pleased and satisfied with the change that he had experienced, that he was restless and uneasy until he had found some other of his friends unto whom he might communicate the joyful tidings, and bring him with him unto his master. John 1.41,42,45. *He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (Messiah), which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* It would look too envious and narrow spirited to confine the grace of God, and divide the spoil by yourselves alone. The good news should be imparted, that others may be drawn in, and share along with you; especially when you may consider that your own share will not be any thing the less, but much the more, the more you are instrumental to bring in others to partake of this grace along with you. You should do something as the four lepers did at the gate of Samaria, after they had been well refreshed, and carried forth much spoil out of the tents of the Syrians, the distressed café of their brethren at length came into their minds, and their consciences checked them for delaying so long to give information of what they knew, 2 Kings, 7.9. *Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.*

II. I shall direct my discourse, To them who have now been passed over and suffered to remain still in their former hardness and security. Probably there may be some numbers of such persons among you, over whose heads the arrows of convictions have flown without doing any manner of execution; others of your brethren have been made willing in the day of God's power, but you have remained stubborn, hard and obstinate as ever, you have seen perhaps those that sat under the same means, in the same feats, and that dwelt in the same houses, startled awakened and enquiring in earnest what they should do to be saved, while you have been little or nothing moved. It hath happened to you in this matter, something as it was foretold it would to them, in Mat.24.40,41, *Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left.* How is it now that you did not put in hard for a share, while these blessings of goodness were distributing, and mercy was to be had? There seems to have been a public dole of spiritual blessings among you, where were you out of the way, that you missed of your share? How is it that you were content to look on, and did not immediately stretch out your hands with your neighbors and brethren, to lay hold of offered benefits. Did not you need them as much as they? Or were you alone excepted out of the bountiful offer? No doubt the tender was universal, and you needed Christ, and grace and heaven as much as any other; but you were not sensible of your need; you had not the heart to lay hold of the gracious offer, or know the things that belonged unto your peace in this their day; O cry aloud unto God; that he would not remember against you, your sluggishness and stupidity, and the

slight which you put upon the offers of his grace, beg of him that you may also be remembered in your turn, and visited with his salvation. Lift up your voices, and cry as sometimes Esau did to his father Isaac, when his brother Jacob had subtly gotten away the blessing from him, *Hast thou but one blessing, O our Father, bless us, even us also.* In that case Isaac was stinted, and he could not bless both his sons with the same blessing. But here God is able to shew equal mercy to many as to one, and he hath not the fewer blessings left for his having bestowed so many upon others. Give the Lord no rest until he bless you, even you also. Here let two things be offered to your consideration.

1. *You have greater encouragements than many to put in for a share in these blessings of divine goodness.* You have not only heard of the riches of divine grace, but you see many instances of it before your eyes that mercy is to be had for poor perishing sinners, you have seen the master of the house rising up and actually doling out and distributing his spiritual gifts with a liberal hand, you were not excepted against, you were not thrust by, but some dullness, some want of preparation and attention of your own, is the cause that you have carried off nothing. You see it confirmed before your eyes, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and ready to receive penitent and returning sinners. The instances of this in many places, are more rare, and some hear thereof only by report; but your eyes even see it, so that you need no farther witnesses; now therefore you may go with the more heart and boldness to the throne of grace, and plead God hath done for your neighbors, relations and acquaintance, as an argument and inducement to him to bestow mercy upon you.
2. *If you continue stupid, careless and unconcerned now, you may possibly be more hardened, and it may be more difficult to work a work of grace upon your hearts.* When our Lord sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he ordered them, if any received them not, to *shake off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against them,* and declare to them, *Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come high unto you.* Luke 10.11. Intimating thereby that they stood in their own light, and were wanting to themselves in rejecting such gracious offers, and that as they could not reasonably expect such gracious offers and proposals should be made to them again in haste; so they might look for a severe punishment of that contempt. Much more when stubborn sinners stand it out now against repeated calls and offers, and when they are so many good examples of a ready compliance with the calls of the gospel before their eyes, this will be a farther aggravation of their fault. Now they had need to humble themselves and beg of God that he be not provoked to give them up to their own hearts' lusts; for when people harden their hearts, and blind their eyes, sinfully, it is to be feared that God will blind them judicially, and leave them to walk on in their own counsels. It may be next to impossible to make any saving impression, upon hearts that have been so sadly hardened. Now it may be feared that the curse of the barren fig-tree will be pronounced upon them, *Never fruit grow on thee more.* It behoves all such persons therefore, to see to their state, and look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God.

III. I shall direct my Discourse, To all the truly religious and Christian people in this place. I hope there are many such here, whose names are written in heaven, who are Christians in truth, as well as in name. Three or four particulars may be offered to you.

1. *Be the more confirmed in your way by all the great things which the Lord hath been doing among you of late.* I trust that you are already well rooted and established in the faith, so that nothing with easily move you from your stedfastness. Yet now thro the mercy of God, you have an abundant confirmation of your faith. You see what great virtue and efficacy there is in the Christian doctrine, that it must needs be the word of God, seeing it **produceth** such great and good marvelous effects. You have a sensible and convincing proof before your eyes, that there is something in religion, and no farther need of miracles to confirm it. When you see the doctrine of Christ triumphing remarkably, over the ignorance, the mistakes, the carelessness and the wickedness of men, you have reason to draw up that conclusion which sometimes Jacob did, *Surely the Lord is in this place.* Surely, *his word is good. The ways of the Lord are rights, and the just shall walk in them.* Let nothing for the future shake your stedfastness, and be not at all moved by the confidence of foolish men (if you should be assaulted by them) to divert you from that Christian course wherein you have been educated, and take that counsel in 1 Pet. 1. 13. *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
2. *Encourage the heart, and strengthen the hands of your pastor, by your Christian respect to him, your peaceableness, unanimity and good order, and prayers to God for him.* You have season to give thanks to the great Shepherd of the sheep, who hath made him so rich a blessing among you; let him have your daily prayers to God for him, that utterance may be given him, that he may open his mouth and speak boldly, that his endeavors may still be crowned with success. Thus, while he is engaging with Amelek in the valley, see that your hand be steadily lifted up in the Mount. Let him still be comforted over you, be seeing your faith and order, that you are **peaceable**, and of an amiable spirit, and are much more set for practicable godliness, than any things of doubtful disputation. Grieve not his heart by needless contentions and strife, about words or things, as empty and inconsiderable as meer words, encompass him round with your good wishes, prayers and offices of love, as sometimes Aaron and Hur did Moses, that his hands may be kept steady till your warfare shall be accomplished: and since he hath so just a title to your respect and esteem, let him not fear any want of that; this is according to the apostle's advice, 1 Thes.5.12.13. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves.
3. *Give countenance and all brotherly assistance to those beginners among you who are now setting out in their Christian course.* Your company in the way to heaven is now happily increased, and you should shew all kind and friendly

offices to them who have offered themselves so willingly to the Lord. Let them not fail of any assistance that you are capable of affording unto them. Let them be the better for your experience, which you should be ready to impart as occasion may require, and prudence directs. Despise them not because they are beginners. Every one must have a time to set out, and we may not expect so much fruit from them who have but newly entered upon the profession of religion, as we do from them who are of longer standing. If they should not be so ready in their apprehension of things; if they should be more fearful of little faith; nay, if they should betray more frequent infirmities, still you should remember the apostle's advice, Rom.15.1. *We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* They may well claim your pity and charitable help, and you should imitate the tenderness of our gracious LORD, who gathers the lambs in his arms, and gently **leadeth** those that are with young. Overlook them not because they are young or of inferior rank, or because you had but little opinion of them in times past; it is the more remarkable when God is pleased to reveal those things unto babes, which he is oftentimes wont to hide from the wise and prudent. Grace ennobles them that have it, **causeth** the face to shine, and lifts up the poor and needy from the dunghill to set them above princes. Besides, who can tell how eminently useful they may prove, who now set out under disadvantages, and of whom there is but small expectation. However it be, let them not want any brotherly encouragement and assistance from you, but receive them in the Lord as it **becometh** Saints.

4. *Pray for the success of the gospel in other places, and for the peace of Jerusalem.* We may well suppose that you are more than ordinarily overshadowed with the spirit of prayer and supplication in this day of your visitation, extend your good wishes and prayers all around, and let others have the benefit of those devout affections that have been raised in your hearts. When therefore, you are giving thanks for the good that hath been done among you, still remember how many things are amiss and wanting, how much to be done in other places. Lift up your eyes, and behold the fields that they are white already to the harvest.

There is a great deal of work to be done, which calls aloud for many hands to be employed, and the blessing of heaven to go along with them to make them successful. Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth laborers into his harvest; pray that the Lord would please to work with his servants, and confirm his word in their mouths, that so their labour may not be in vain. Pray that the Spirit may be poured out from on high, upon every part of the land, that the work of religion may not die among us, where it once so remarkably flourished; but the God may be with us, as he was with our fathers, and that he would not leave us nor forsake us.

To conclude, let us all give thanks unto him whose mercy **endureth** forever, who hath ridden forth prosperously upon the word of truth, and hath made so many people willing in the day of his power. May he still go on to subdue the people under him, that the hearts of fathers may be bro't down into the children, that we may still see the good of his chosen, and rejoice with the gladness of his inheritance. And Oh! That the Lord

would arise, and have mercy upon Zion, that the time to favour it, the set time may come that the whole earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

FINIS

¹ Mrs. Mary Woofter's Manuscripts.

² Rev. Mr. Clap's letter to the Rev. Mr. Prince, of Boston, March 29, 1729.