

Articles and Sermons :: The true minister goes on to announce a lively hope - Fletcher

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This is a part 3 of 4 of some chapters out of the book by John Fletcher "The Portrait of St. Paul"

Part 1 (https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id12012&forum34) Observations upon the repentance of worldly men

Part 2 (https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id12013&forum34) The second point of doctrine, insisted upon by the true minister, is a living faith.

Part 4 (https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id12015&post_id93302&order0&viewmodethread&pid0&forum34#93302) The second point of doctrine, insisted upon by the true minister, is a living faith

The true minister goes on to announce a lively hope.

“Godliness with contentment is great gain,” (1 Tim. Vi, 6). And the pastor, who is possessed of so invaluable a blessing, cannot be backward in soliciting all, within the circle of his acquaintance, to share it with him. Happy in the enjoyment of that precious secret, which enables him to rejoice without ceasing, he readily communicates it to the afflicted, by leading them to that lively hope which consoles and sustains the heart of every believer.

In a word, where the bitterness of evil is continually increasing; where we discover the scourges of God, who will not fail to chastise his rebellious creatures; where disappointment and death successively deprive us of our dearest comforts, and where the forerunners of death are continually weakening all our imperfect enjoyments; in such a world, it is evident that the most exalted pleasure we are capable of must spring from a well-grounded hope of those immortal joys which are reserved for the righteous. The language of mortality is too feeble to describe either the power or the sweetness of such a hope. Here we can only cry out with the psalmist, “O taste, and see how gracious the Lord is,” (Psalm xxxiv, 8), in providing so potent a cordial for those who are traveling through a vale of tears.

The lively hope which gives birth to a believer’s felicity is one of the most exhilarating fruits of his faith, and is inseparably connected with it, since “true faith is the substance of things hoped for.” In proportion as the truths and promises, upon which faith is founded, are evidenced and apprehended, such will be the hope with which that faith is accompanied. If Moses then, by the faith which he professed, was enabled to renounce the prospect of an earthly crown, with the hope of obtaining a more glorious inheritance; if he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect unto the recompense of reward,” (Heb. Xi, 26); what may not be expected from a hope founded upon those precious promises, which have been sealed with the blood of that condescending Savior, who “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel?” (2 Tim. I, 10). “The law,” saith the apostle, “made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God,” (Heb. Vii, 19). “Seeing then that we have such hope,” continues the same apostle, “we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory,” (2 Cor. lii, 12, 18).

We every day observe the men of the world exulting in the hope of some temporal advantage. The prospect of an honorable title, an augmentation of fortune, an advantageous marriage, or even a poor party of pleasure is sufficient to allure, to animate, to enrapture them. They will even acknowledge that the flattering hope of future pleasure is sweeter than enjoyment itself. Who then shall attempt to declare those transports which flow from the lively hope of a triumphing Christian? A hope which is founded upon the Rock of ages, and which has, for its multifarious object, riches, honors, and pleasures, as much superior to those of worldly men, as the soul is superior to the body, heaven to earth, and eternity to the present fleeting moment.

The true minister publicly announces this hope to the world, persuaded that, if mankind were once happy enough to possess it, they would exchange a load of misery for a prospect of blessedness. But since he knows that this hope can never be admitted into hearts replete with sin, his first concern is to overthrow the vain confidence of the impenitent, to undermine the presumption of the Pharisaical, and to point out the true distinction between a sinner’s groundless expectation, and the well-founded hope of a believer in Christ.

In every place there are many to be found, who, without “evangelical faith or hope,” are filled with a presumption as blind as that of the Pharisees, and as fatal as that of heathens hardened in their sin. To every such person, the true minister

er uniformly declares that he is "without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world," (Eph. ii, 12). These very men, it is probable, may offer to the Deity a formal worship, and indulge high expectations from the mercy of a Divine Mediator, though they are totally destitute of an unfeigned "repentance toward God, and a true faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," (Act xx, 21). Thus far the unconverted may proceed in a seemingly religious course. But the regenerate alone can truly say, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ," (Tit. ii, 11-13).

The hope of unrighteous men is founded upon pride, false notions of the Deity, ignorance of his law, and upon those prejudices which the irreligious communicate to one another. On the contrary, the hope of believers has, for its basis, the word of Him "who cannot lie," (Tit. i, 2). "Whatsoever things were written aforetime," saith the apostle, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," (Rom. xv, 4). It is founded not only upon the word, but equally upon the oath of God.

Men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," (Heb. vi, 16-19).

When the faithful minister has rooted up every false hope, he then announces Jesus Christ, who hath brought in a better hope than that of heathens or Jews. Observe here the reason why those pastors who preach not Christ are incapable of doing anything toward the furtherance of that living faith, of which Christ is the grand object, and that saith St. Paul, "is our hope," (1 Tim. i, 1): and we declare unto you "the mystery, which hath been hid from ages," and is still hidden from worldly men, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Thus the everlasting Son of the Father is made to his true followers the beginning and the consummation of hope, as well as "the author and finisher of faith," (Heb. xii, 2).

By the mercy of God, and through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, the believer has already received the promise of a free pardon for past offences; otherwise he deserves not to be termed a believer: at least, he is destitute of evangelical faith. Now, when the believer sincerely receives the glad tidings of redeeming grace, he then assuredly receives Jesus Christ, in whom "all the promises are yea and Amen," (2 Cor. i, 20); and he would conduct himself in a manner contrary to that which both reason and Scripture prescribe, if he should refuse to rejoice in God his Savior. By such a mode of acting, he would prove his want of gratitude for that which Christ hath already done and of hope for that which he hath promised still to perform. But when he gives himself up to a joy, as reasonable as it is refreshing, he then answers the gracious designs of his benevolent Lord. Continually taken up with more satisfactory enjoyments, he despises the seducing pleasures of sin. He carries in his own bosom a source of celestial pleasure, while the man of the world disquiets his heart in the vain pursuit of earthly joys. The difference between the enjoyments of these two characters is as great as between the rational pleasures of those who gather their wheat into the barn, and the puerile mirth of children, who are busied in collecting the scattered straws and thorns; the former are securing an inestimable treasure, while the latter have nothing more in view than to dance round a short-lived blaze, the truest emblem of a sinner's satisfaction.

In the Holy Scriptures very excellent things are spoken of the hope which produces this sacred joy. (1.) It is a Divine hope, since it has for its object the enjoyment of God, and because it draws supplies of strength from that Holy Spirit which discovers to believers the greatness and stability of Gospel promises. Thus St. Paul teacheth us that "the Father of glory giveth us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation: enlightening the eyes of our understanding, that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints," (Eph. i, 17, 18).

2. It gives honor to the faithfulness and power of God. Abraham, saith St. Paul, against all human probability, believing in "hope, staggered not at the promise; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform," (Rom. iv, 18-21). "Therefore, being justified," like Abraham, "in hope of the glory of God. And this hope maketh not ashamed," (Rom. v, 1-5). How unlike the fallacious hope of worldly men, who are frequently put to shame by their blasted expectations!

3. This hope is said to fill us with a holy joy. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith St. Peter, "who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Wherein ye greatly rejoice," (1 Pet. i, 3, 6). And on this account it was that the Apostle Paul prayed with so much ardor for an increase of hope among believers. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," (Rom. xv, 13).

4. It actually saves us, as St. Paul himself declares in the following words: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And," supported by this sweet persuasion, "we wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For," in this respect, "we are saved by hope," (Rom. viii, 18, 24).

5. It is equally sweet and solid; since it rests upon the right which the children of God may claim to the inheritance of their heavenly Father; a sacred right, which is confirmed to them with the utmost solemnity in the New Testament. Now every man who receives, with sincerity, the Lord of life and glory, receives with him a title to everlasting possessions, and ran

ks, from that moment, among "the sons of God," (John I, 12). So that to such the following passages may, with propriety, be applied: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved—in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession," (Eph. I, 6, 12, 14).

6. It purifies us. "Now are we," saith St. John, "the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," (1 John iii, 2, 3, 9). The truth of this assertion is clear to the eye of reason. We fall into sin, because we suffer ourselves to be seduced by the allurements of some transitory good, which presents itself either to our sense or imagination. But when we are once persuaded that infinite enjoyments await us, we can then look with contempt upon those deceitful appearances; and after our hearts are animated with a confident hope of possessing those invisible realities, the charm of sin is broken. In such a state, we break through temptations with as much resolution as a prince who is going to take possession of a kingdom, renounces the little amusements that occupied his thoughts before they were engrossed by a concern of so vast importance. "Who is he that overcometh the world," but the man who believes with that faith which affords him a lively representation of things hoped for? Compare 1 John v, 5, with Heb. xi, 1.

7. This lively hope produces charity in the soul. "We give thanks to God," saith the apostle, "praying always for you, since we heard of the love which ye have to all the saints; for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel," (Col. I, 3-5). Nay, of so prevailing an influence is this solid hope, that the apostle intimates, in the same chapter, that believers shall be presented before God, holy and unblamable, provided they be not "moved away from the hope of the Gospel," (Verses 22, 23). "For," continues he, "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," (Heb. iii, 14). "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," (Heb. vi, 11, 12).

8. This hope is full of consolation. "We who remain," saith the apostle, "shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words," (1 Thess. v, 17, 18). "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts," (2 Thess. ii, 16, 17). When we observe among us some who are disquieted and cast down, who want courage to support affliction without impatience, and to fill up their duties with cheerfulness, we then behold persons who never enjoyed, or who have unhappily lost, the lively hope of true Christians. If all ministers of the Gospel had experienced the sweetness and power of this hope, with what pleasure would they publish it to the afflicted! And with what perseverance would they join to their discourses the most ardent prayers, that all their hearers might come to the enjoyment of so invaluable a blessing!

When the true minister leads his flock to this lively and joyful hope, he treads in the footsteps of his Divine Master. Christ, it is true, began his ministry by preaching repentance, (Matt. iv, 17). But immediately after we find him placing before the believer's eye beatitudes and promises of the most consolatory nature, (verse 1). In a vast variety of affecting passages, he exhorts his followers to the exercise of a joyful hope in the severest trials, making that an indispensable duty, which is indeed a glorious privilege. "Fear not them," saith he, "which are not able to kill the soul. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven," (Matt. x, 28, 32). "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," (Luke xii, 31). "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands," (John x, 27, 28).

He appears anxious that his people should be partakers of his peace, his joy, and his hope, till they come to the possession of consummate blessedness. "These things have I spoken," saith he, "that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world," (John xvi, 33). "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there may ye be also," (xiv, 1-3). "Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man can take from you," (John xvi, 22). He exhorts them continually to expect his return, (Luke xii, 40), and even condescends to mention the very terms in which he will, at that time, salute every waiting believer.

The prayers of Christ, as well as his exhortations and promises, tend to produce and support the most exalted hope in the souls of believers. He has graciously interceded for them; he still continues to make intercession, and his prayer is always prevalent. Mark a few sentences of that memorable prayer, which he once offered up for all his followers, and which forms the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. "O Father! I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. Holy Father! Keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, and sanctify them through thy truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may all be one, even as we are one. Father! I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

A lively hope, founded upon these prayers and declarations of the blessed Jesus, enabled the primitive Christians to triumph over every affliction. In the midst of the most terrible persecutions they could congratulate one another on their co-

common blessedness, and say, "Our life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory," (Col. iii, 4). For "he shall yet come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," (2 Thess. i, 10).

The apostles, agreeable to the example of their Master, were unanimous in publishing this glorious hope; and St. Paul very frequently insists upon it, as a most important duty. "Let us," saith he, "who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," (1 Thess. V, 8). "I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God—rejoicing in hope," (Rom. xii, 1, 12). "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice," (Phil. iv, 4). This evangelical hope will ever be experienced, as a never failing source of consolation and thankfulness; and hence, wherever the hope of the Gospel is preached, there believers continue to be filled with unspeakable joy, (Acts xiii, 52). How truly happy would Christians be were such a hope to flourish among them! Far from disputing any longer for the trifles of time and sense, they would joyfully renounce them all, in expectation of an eternal inheritance; and instead of running to the frivolous amusements of the world for a momentary recreation, every passing day would appear too short for the exhilarating duties of praise and thanksgiving.

It is asserted by many that this Divine hope is usually insisted upon by every minister. That preachers in general are accustomed to exhort their hearers, in a cold and languid manner, to hope in the Divine mercy, will readily be granted. But that such do not publish the real, evangelical hope of Christians, may be easily proved beyond the possibility of a doubt. We have seen, in the preceding sections, that the minister of the present day is unacquainted with this hope; that he is even without any just ideas of that true repentance, and that living faith, from which alone this hope can flow. And hence it is impossible for him, in the nature of things, to publish it in the Church of God. In vain has Christ himself declared that the broad way will conduct multitudes to destruction, and that "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John iii, 5). In spite of these solemn declarations, the worldly pastor still imagines that this very way will conduct him to life, and that he shall be counted among the inhabitants of that kingdom without Scriptural regeneration. He supposes, at least, that he is sufficiently sanctified, though his righteousness exceeds not that of the Pharisees, nor his devotion that of the Laodicean Church. Thus, entertaining a vain hope in his own heart, and indulging a confidence which is repugnant to the concurrent testimonies of every sacred writer, he necessarily leads his hearers into the same dangerous delusions.

As in order solidly to found our hopes upon a benefactor, or a surety, it is necessary to have an acquaintance with the person who presents himself in either of these characters, so the lively hope of which we speak must flow from an experimental knowledge of God, by Jesus Christ. "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," (John xvii, 3). But the children of this world, whether they be laymen or ecclesiastics, are destitute of this knowledge. They know neither the Father nor the Son; and were it otherwise, the love of the world would not have dominion over them.

This lively hope can never dwell in an unregenerate heart. The child that is not born cannot possibly rejoice in hope of possessing the heritage of his father; since he is equally unacquainted with his parent, and the patrimony that is likely to be reserved for him. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to be born of God, before we can exercise this exhilarating hope. Now a man is thus born when he is regenerated by that spirit of adoption, which God hath promised to those who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ. But they who are conformable to the maxims of the world are not able to receive this vivifying spirit. "I will pray the Father," said Christ to the disciples, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," when you are fully born of the Spirit, (John xiv, 16, 17). It is not till after the accomplishment of this promise has been experienced, that the following expressions can be fully understood: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. vi, 19). "Now the God of hope filleth you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," (Rom. xv, 13).

Far from preaching this primitive hope, the worldly minister is alarmed at the bare mention of it. Let it here be observed again, that this celestial plant can flourish only in those hearts where the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, has cut down every unfruitful appearance of Pharisaical hope. Now when a true minister is engaged in performing this preparatory work, cutting away the mortified members of the old man, and plucking from pride its unprofitable supports, the inexperienced minister preposterously takes offence at his holy zeal, and censures this necessary severity, as leading souls into the horrors of despair. Slow of understanding in spiritual concerns, he comprehends not that they who recline upon a broken reed must give up all the confidence they foolishly place in so slender a prop, before they can effectually choose the Rock of ages for their support.

The true character of these false apostles is not generally known. Covering their impiety with the cloak of religion, they are supposed by many to act on the part of Christ, and are frequently esteemed as pillars in the Church. But there are occasions on which they unwittingly throw off the mask, and make an open discovery of their secret thoughts. Some few persons are found in the world, who, refusing to attend card assemblies, rejoice to be present in those less public assemblies which are formed for the purpose of prayer. Here it is usual for consenting neighbors to take sweet counsel together, and wrestle with ardor for the hope of the Gospel, in words like these: "Gracious Father! Forgive the sins of thy returnin

g children, and grant us an increase of spiritual strength. Sensible of our own unworthiness, assist us to place all our confidence in thy unbounded mercy, manifested through Jesus Christ. Increase our faith in the Son of thy love, and confirm our hope in thine unchangeable promises. O thou Divine Savior! Descend this day into our hearts, as thou didst once descend upon thy first disciples. Consecrate us thy living temples, fill us with thy graces, and, during the time of our earthly pilgrimage, vouchsafe to lead us with the right hand of thy power. Let not thy Spirit of illumination and holiness, thy Spirit of consolation and joy, abandon us for a moment, as we pass through this valley of tears. May its potent operations subdue in us the power of sin, and produce in our outward conversation the happy fruits of righteousness, peace, and joy. Permit us, at this time, to return to our houses with a consciousness of thy love, and an assurance of thy favor; and grant that, after having been the temples of thy Spirit upon earth, we may one day be received into the temple of thine eternal glory in the heavens.Â”

A worldly minister, on a certain time, entering into an assembly of this kind, heard the prayer of these humble believers; and, as much surprised to see the ardor with which they offered their petitions, as to observe the time and place in which they were presented, withdrew from their society, with as much indignation as a good pastor would retire from a company of jugglers. But having understood that one of his own parishioners was of the religious party, he took the earliest opportunity of testifying the utmost disapprobation of his conduct. Â”What was it,Â” said he, Â”that you was doing with those people the other day, in such a place? Conventicles of that kind are contrary to order, and unworthy of toleration. The church is the only proper place for the performance of Divine worship. Moreover, I heard you foolishly praying for I know not what consolation, light, and power, of the Holy Spirit. Receive in good part the advice I offer you. Look upon inspirations and illuminations of this sort as no other than the idle fancies of visionaries and enthusiasts. Renounce the imaginary assurance, with which you do but deceive yourself, and repose upon the hope which I have constantly preached to you; a hope with which you, and your neighbors, may very well rest contented.Â” Confounded with a discourse of this kind, a weak and inexperienced Christian might have been drawn aside from the narrow path of truth. But the person here alluded to, by citing Eph. I, 17, 18, was enabled to prove that the very same illumination and power, which were treated so contemptuously by his opponent, were nevertheless absolutely necessary, as the groundwork of a solid hope. Nay, he pushed the matter still farther; and asserted, that the prayer against which the zealous pastor had so angrily exclaimed, was used in exact conformity to those very petitions which he himself was incessantly heard to offer at the feast of Pentecost, and at other solemn seasons.

If this little relation faithfully describes the manner of thinking which is too common among the clergy of the day, is it not evident that they are more disposed to ridicule than to preach the Christian hope: and abundantly more earnest to obstruct than to farther their parishioners in the pursuit of everlasting blessedness?

When the dawn of this glorious hope first began to glimmer; when, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole company of disciples began to praise God with a loud voice, strewing the way by which their Lord was the pass with garments and branches of trees, and crying out before him, Â”Hosanna to the son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest!Â” Some of the Pharisees, who had mixed among the multitude, rudely exclaimed, Â”Master, rebuke thy disciples.Â” And when he had entered into the temple, Â”the chief priests and scribes seeing the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying Hosanna, were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say?Â” And Jesus answered them, Â”Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out,Â” (Matt. Xxi; Luke xix). There still exists the same opposition between those who cordially embrace the Gospel and those who ungratefully reject it. As often as the former are perceived to give a loose to the transports of their gratitude, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, the worldly minister, displeased to observe anything that appears to reproach his own lukewarmness is prepared to stifle the motions of that joyful hope, which he deems no better than the confidence of presumptuous fanatics. While the faithful minister, who imitates St. Paul, on observing such a scene, will cry out with that great apostle, Â”Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost,Â” (Rom. Xv, 13).

If penitents are not pointed to the blessedness of this hope, they will strive, like Cain, to stifle their remorse by passionately abandoning themselves to the business and enjoyments of the present world: or, like the Israelites, who found not sufficient pleasure in religion to banish the recollection of Egypt's vanities, they will indulge that spirit of trifling which the apostle thus describes: Â”The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play,Â” (1 Cor. X, 7). On the contrary, when the Christian is directed to the hope of his high calling, he finds it a source of unutterable consolation, and having discovered the treasure hidden in the Gospel field, Â”for joy thereof he selleth his all,Â” in order to purchase that field. He now renounces, without pain, what before had hindered him in running the heavenly race, counting nothing dear to himself, that he may finish his course with joy, and insure the crown of everlasting life. So powerfully were the first Christians supported by this Gospel hope, that they remained immovable amidst the sorest calamities of life, and suffered death itself with a courage that astonished the persecutors. But when they lost their confidence, like Demas, they began to indulge the fond hopes and foolish fears of the present world, becoming altogether weak, as other men. And such are the generality of Christians at this day. The love of many is waxing cold, while the Church of God is evidently falling into ruins. And how shall we assist to rekindle that love, or to repair that Church, but by zealously proclaiming abroad the Â”hope of the

Gospel?Â”