

The Duty of Ministers to Preach the Truth

By Jonathan Edwards, Jr.

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“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” John 18:37

These are the words of our blessed Savior. In them He informs us that one end of His incarnation and ministry was that, by bearing witness to the truth, He might communicate the knowledge of it. The same is doubtless the end of the ordinary ministry of the gospel and should be the object aimed at by every minister. From our text therefore I deduce this doctrine:

DOCTRINE: The great duty of the ministers of the gospel is to preach the truth.

Under this doctrine I purpose:

1. To show what truth ministers of the gospel ought to preach.
2. To mention some reasons in confirmation of the doctrine.

1. I am to show what truth a minister of the gospel ought to preach.

Truth is very extensive and of various kinds. There is truth in every science, in mathematics, philosophy, history, and so on. It will not be pretended that mathematical and philosophical truth is the proper subject of the evangelical ministry; nor is historical truth any further than it illustrates the gospel by exhibiting the facts of it, or other important facts relating to the works

and the character of God.

The truth then intended in the doctrine is primarily evangelical truth, and secondarily all other truth which relates to the gospel and tends to illustrate it: as all truth relating to God and His character, especially His moral perfections; all truth relating to His supreme, universal, and sovereign government; all truth relating to His law, its requirements and threatenings; all truth relating to sin, its nature and evil; all truth relating to ourselves, our present fallen state, and the ruin consequent on the fall; particularly our native and total depravity, our actual sins and the various aggravations of them; our demerit as sinners; our dependence on the mere mercy and sovereign grace of God; our own moral inability to bring ourselves to repentance and holiness of heart and life, and our absolute insufficiency to make satisfaction for our sins; the necessity of an atonement, and one of infinite value, correspondent to the demerit of our sin; the character of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, His divinity, His humanity, His office, His sufferings in our stead, and His readiness to save sinners of every description who come to Him for this purpose; the condition of His salvation, the privileges and rewards of it, and the inevitable consequences of a rejection of it.

This is a very brief summary of the truths which every minister of the gospel is obligated to preach and inculcate.

2. I am to mention some reasons in confirmation of this doctrine. The following reasons show that ministers of the gospel are obliged to preach the truth or the real doctrines of Scripture.

REASON 1. Because the truth was the subject of the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. He certainly is a proper example in this, as well as in His common conduct. He was a perfect preacher. Therefore He is to be imitated by all other preachers. And in our text, He informs us not only that He preached the truth, but that this was one great end of His incarnation and ministry.

REASON 2. The same was the subject of the preaching of