Private meeting on occasion of Messrs. Woodbridge’s and Hawley’s going into the Country of the Six Nations, May 1753


And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

{Here we have an account} how God had opened the door of faith to the gentiles.

1. A great event spoken of: opening the door of faith {to the gentiles}.

2. Who is here acknowledged as this event: God.

Two ways:

(1)Recommended.

(2) In its being ascribed to him after it was come to pass.

3. What manner of work is implied: remarkable and glorious and extraordinary.

A remarkable work of divine:

[(1)] Power.

[(2)] Grace.

DOCTRINE.

‘Tis a special and glorious work of God, to open the way for the propagation of the gospel among the heathen.
I. The way to the accomplishment of such an event is as it were shut up.

The heathen world is in a peculiar manner the kingdom of Satan.

[He] reigns visibly.

[He reigns] as prince of darkness.

[He reigns] as god of this world.

And as earthly princes are wont to take care to defend their kingdoms by a strong barrier, and to enclose their royal city with strong walls, with gates and bars, so Satan.

He is represented as a strong man armed [Luke 11:21].

And we may well suppose that Satan is the more careful, because of the designs that Christ is carrying on against him. This world is the seat and scene of a great warfare, carried on between {Christ and Satan}.

Especially since Christ’s ascension.

And so Satan has had experience of the power of Christ. His kingdom has suffered.

And he knows what Christ’s future designs are, what he aims at.

[Satan] doubtless is not ignorant of the things foretold, is alarmed by these things.

And [he] is, as we may suppose, in these latter times under better advantages to defend himself [He] understands more of the nature of Christ’s kingdom.

And we may suppose that, as to the remaining parts of his heathenish kingdom, he has been long fortifying them with utmost subtilty, {and} taking advantage of the knowledge he now has, and the experience he has had.
So that he has, with utmost subtilty, and to the utmost of his power, been shutting up the way.

The way is shut up, not only by those corruptions of heart which are naturally in the hearts of all mankind, but by those [principles] mightily confirmed and established by those opinions and customs which they have long lived in.

The understanding is the door by which the gospel finds entrance into the hearts of men. Satan has shut this door. Therefore we read, II Cor. 4:4, of “the god of this world” blinding “[the minds of them which believe not].”

The way is shut up by a heathenish, barbarous, brutish education.

[It is shut up] by opinions most contrary to the principles of Christianity, established by long possession, [by] universal tradition, and by being imbibed even from infancy.

[They have] grown up with them. These, coinciding with the natural corrupt inclination of the heart, hence the prejudices against Christianity must be exceeding great.

The principles and duties of religion [are] so contrary.

And commonly when Satan, as a vigilant warrior, when he is aware of danger, is careful to shut up the way by special temptation, {by} suggestions, {by} promoting false reports.

[He shuts up the way by] stirring [up] many instruments.

He shuts up the way not only by his operations with the heathen, but even with those that pretend to be Christians.

Any such as should assist [to] weaken instruments, by raising opposition. I Cor. 16:9, “there are many adversaries.”
He shuts up the way] by his operation on the hearts of instruments.

[He uses] many temptations to weaken their hearts.
begetting some uneasiness and dissensions among them.

II. How the door is opened.
This is done many ways:
[By] restraining and conquering enemies. Sometimes God remarkably restrains Satan {and his} instruments. If he don’t restrain, he conquers.

{Sometimes, God opens the door} by removing obstacles, {by} removing prejudices, [by] lending to consideration, assisting to the exercise of reason.

[Sometimes, God opens the door by] opening the hearts of the heathen. {So God} opened the heart of Lydia, Acts 16:14.

[So God opens the door by] assisting instruments, giving them prudence, opening their understanding, opening and enlarging their hearts.

[Sometimes by] opening a door of utterance, Col. 4:3.

[Sometimes by] conducting the affair mercifully in his providence, ordering all circumstances.

III. ‘Tis God’s work thus to open the door.

IV. ‘Tis a glorious work of God, thus to open the way.
‘Tis something that especially belongs to the greatest of all God’s works: the work of redemption.

This work consists of two parts: laying the foundation, and bringing it to effect.
Setting up Christ’s kingdom of grace in the world, this belongs to the heathen.

‘Tis a glorious manifestation of God’s power.

Ps. 110:2-3, “[The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth].”

‘Tis a great instance of the victory of Christ.

In this is verified what we read of, 45th Psalm.

[This is a] work of divine wisdom.

[It is a work] of grace.

[This is a] manifestation of God’s truth, [to] give the heathen for his [inheritance]. “[He shall] bring forth judgment to the gentiles” [Is. 42:1].

APPLICATION.

I. If the work be so great and glorious, instruments ought to manifest an answerable engagedness. Is. 9:7, “[The] zeal of the Lord of hosts [will perform this].”

Here is much to admire.

God has made glorious promises, answerable to the glory of the work.

II. Hence, all dependence ought to be on God.

III. Hence learn how becoming it is of all that are concerned in such a work as propagating the gospel among the heathen, to be much in prayer to God for his merciful interposition.
If it be a thing attended with so much difficulty; [if the] way is so shut up; [if it is] a work we are so insufficient for; [if it is] God’s work; [if it is] so glorious a work of God: then doubtlessly God expects [us to be much in prayer for his interposition].

And [it] is abundantly manifested by Scripture.

Those who are immediately employed as instruments especially.