

## **Evangelization — A word to the Evangelist.**

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We trust it may not be deemed out of place if we venture to offer a word of counsel and encouragement to all who have been and are engaged in the blessed work of preaching *the gospel of the grace of God*. We are, in some measure, aware of the difficulties and discouragements which attend upon the path of every evangelist, whatever may be his sphere of labour or measure of gift; and it is our heart's desire to hold up the hands and cheer the hearts of all who may be in danger of falling under the depressing power of these things. We increasingly feel the immense importance of an earnest, fervent gospel testimony everywhere; and we dread exceedingly any falling off therein. We are imperatively called to "do the work of an evangelist," and not be moved from that work by any arguments or considerations whatsoever.

Let none imagine that, in writing thus, we mean to detract, in the smallest degree, from the value of teaching, lecturing, or exhortation. Nothing is further from our thoughts. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." We mean not to compare the work of the evangelist with that of the teacher, or to exalt the former at the expense of the latter. Each has its own proper place, its own distinctive interest and importance.

But is there not a danger, on the other hand, of the evangelist abandoning his own precious work in order to give himself to the work of teaching and lecturing? Is there not a danger of the evangelist becoming merged in the teacher? We fear there is; and it is under the influence of this very fear that we pen these few lines. We observe, with deep concern, some who were once known amongst us as earnest and eminently successful evangelists, now almost wholly abandoning their work and becoming teachers and lecturers.

This is most deplorable. *We really want evangelists*. A true evangelist is almost as great a rarity as a true pastor. Alas! how rare are both! The two are closely connected. The evangelist gathers the sheep; the pastor feeds and cares for them. The work of each lies very near the heart of Christ — the Divine Evangelist and Pastor; but it is with the former we have now more immediately to do — to encourage him in his work, and to warn him against the temptation to turn aside from it. We cannot afford to lose a single ambassador just now, or to have a single preacher silent.

We are perfectly aware of the fact that there is in some quarters a strong tendency to throw cold water upon the work of evangelization. There is a sad lack of sympathy with the preacher of the gospel; and, as a necessary consequence, of active co-operation with him in his work. Further, there is a mode of speaking of gospel preaching which argues but little sympathy with the heart of Him who wept over impenitent sinners, and who could say, at the very opening of His blessed ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Isa. 61; Luke 4). And again, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth" (Mark 1: 38).

Our blessed Lord was an indefatigable preacher of the gospel, and all who are filled with His mind and spirit will take a lively interest in the work of all those who are seeking in their feeble measure to do the same. This interest will be evinced, not only by earnest prayer for the divine blessing upon the work, but also by diligent and persevering efforts to get immortal souls under the sound of the gospel.

This is the way to help the evangelist, and this way lies open to every member of the Church of God — man, woman, or child. All can thus help forward the glorious work of evangelization. If each member of the assembly were to work diligently and prayerfully in this way, how different would it be with the Lord's dear servants who are seeking to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But, alas! how often is it otherwise. How often do we hear even those who are of some repute for intelligence and spirituality, when referring to meetings for gospel testimony, say, "Oh, I am not going there; it is only the gospel." Think of that! "Only the gospel." If they would put the idea into other words, they might say, "It is only the heart of God — only the precious blood of Christ — only the glorious record of the Holy Ghost."

This would be putting the thing plainly. Nothing is more sad than to hear professing Christians speak in this way. It proves too clearly that their souls are very far away from the heart of Jesus. We have invariably found that those who think and speak slightly of the work of the evangelist are persons of very little spirituality; and on the other hand, the most devoted, the most true hearted, the best taught saints of God, are always sure to take a profound interest in that work. How could it be otherwise? Does not the voice of Holy Scripture bear the clearest testimony to the fact of the interest of the Trinity in the work of the gospel? Most assuredly it does.

Who first preached the gospel? Who was the first herald of salvation? Who first announced the good news of the bruised Seed of the woman? The Lord God Himself, in the garden of Eden. This is a telling fact in connection with our theme. And further, let us ask, who was the most earnest, laborious, and faithful preacher that ever trod this earth? The Son of God. And who has been preaching the gospel for the last eighteen centuries? The Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Thus then we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all actually engaged in the work of evangelization; and if this be so, who are we to dare to speak slightly of such a work? Nay, rather may our whole moral being be stirred by the power of the Spirit of God so that we may be able to add our fervent and deep Amen to those precious words of inspiration, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Isa. 52: 7; Rom. 10: 15)

But it may be that these lines shall be scanned by some one who has been engaged in the work of preaching the gospel, and is beginning to feel rather discouraged. It may be that he has been called to preach in the same place for years, and he feels burdened by the thought of having to address the same audience, on the same subject, week after week, month after month, year after year. He may feel at a loss for something new, something fresh, some variety. He may sigh for some new sphere, where the subjects which are familiar to him will be new to the people. Or, if this cannot be, he may feel led to substitute lectures and expositions for the fervid, pointed, earnest preaching of the gospel.

If we have in any measure set forth the reader's feelings on this subject, we think it will greatly help him in his work to bear in mind that the one grand theme of the true evangelist is Christ. The power to handle that theme is the Holy Ghost. The one to whom that theme is to be unfolded is the poor lost sinner. Now, Christ is ever new; the power of the Holy Ghost is ever fresh; the soul's condition and destiny ever intensely interesting.

Furthermore, it is well for the evangelist to bear in mind, on every fresh occasion of rising to preach, that his unconverted hearers are totally ignorant of the gospel, and hence he should preach as though it were the first time they had ever heard the message, and the first time he had ever delivered it. For, be it remembered, the preaching of the gospel, in the divine acceptation of the phrase, is not a mere barren statement of evangelical doctrine — a certain form of words enunciated over and over again in wearisome routine. Far, very far from it. The gospel is really the large loving heart of God welling up

and flowing forth toward the poor lost sinner in streams of life and salvation. It is the presentation of the atoning death and glorious resurrection of the Son of God; and all this in the present energy, glow, and freshness of the Holy Ghost, from the exhaustless mine of Holy Scripture.

Moreover, the one absorbing object of the preacher is to win souls for Christ, to the glory of God. For this he labours and pleads; for this he prays, weeps, and agonises; for this he thunders, appeals, and grapples with the heart and conscience of his hearer. His object is not to teach doctrines, though doctrines may be taught; his object is not to expound Scripture, though Scripture may be expounded. These things lie within the range of the teacher or lecturer; but let it never be forgotten, the preacher's object is to bring the Saviour and the sinner together — to win souls to Christ. May God by His Spirit keep these things ever before our hearts, so that we may have a deeper interest in the glorious work of evangelization!

We would, in conclusion, merely add a word of exhortation in reference to the Lord's Day evening. We would, in all affection, say to our beloved and honoured fellow-labourers, Seek to give that one hour to the great business of the soul's salvation. There are 168 hours in the week, and, surely, it is the least we may devote one of these to this momentous work. It so happens that during that interesting hour we can get the ear of our fellow-sinner. Oh, let us use it to pour in the sweet story of God's free love and of Christ's full salvation.

#### A MOTTO FOR THE EVANGELIST.

2 Corinthians 10:16

"TO PREACH THE GOSPEL in the regions beyond you." These words, while they set forth the large-heartedness of the self-denying and devoted apostle, do also furnish a fine model for the evangelist, in every age. The gospel is a traveller; and the preacher of the gospel must be a traveller likewise. The divinely-qualified and divinely-sent evangelist will fix his eye upon "the world." He will embrace, in his benevolent design, the human family From house to house; from street to street from city to city; from province to province — from kingdom to kingdom; from continent to continent; from pole to pole. Such is the range of "the good news," and the publisher thereof. "The regions beyond" must ever be the grand gospel motto. No sooner has the gospel lamp cast its cheering beams over a district, than the bearer of that map must think of the regions beyond. Thus the work goes on. Thus the mighty tide of grace rolls, in enlightening and saving power, over a dark world which lies in "the region of the shadow of death." Waft, waft, ye winds, the story, And you, ye waters roll, Till, like a sea of glory, It spreads from pole to pole.

Christian reader, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? This expression may, in your case, mean the next house, the next street, the next village, the next city, the next kingdom, or the next continent. The application is for your own heart to ponder; but say, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? I do not want you to abandon your present post, at all; or, at least, not until you are fully persuaded that your work, at that post, is done. But, remember, the gospel plough should never stand still. "Onward" is the motto of every true evangelist. Let the shepherds abide by the flocks; but let the evangelists betake themselves hither and thither, to gather the sheep. Let them sound the gospel trump, far and wide, over the dark mountains of this world, to gather together the elect of God. This is the design of the gospel. This should be the object of the evangelist, as he sighs after "the regions beyond." When Caesar beheld, from the coast of Gaul, the white cliffs of Britain, he earnestly longed to carry his arms thither. The evangelist, on the other hand, whose heart beats in unison with the heart of Jesus, as he casts his eye over the map of the world, longs to carry the gospel of peace into regions which have heretofore been wrapped in midnight gloom, covered with the dark mantle of superstition, or blasted

beneath the withering influences of "a form of godliness without the power."

It would, I believe, be a profitable question for many of us to put to ourselves, how far we are discharging our holy responsibilities to "the regions beyond." I believe the Christian who is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit, is in a deplorable condition. I believe, too, that the assembly which is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit is in a dead state. One of the truest marks of spiritual growth and prosperity, whether in an individual, or in an assembly, is earnest anxiety after the conversion of souls. This anxiety will swell the bosom with most generous emotions; yea, it will break forth, in copious streams of benevolent exertion, ever flowing toward "the regions beyond." It is hard to believe that "the Word of Christ" is "dwelling richly" in any one who is not making some effort to impart that Word to his fellow sinners. It matters not what may be the amount of the effort; it may be to drop a few words in the ear of a friend, to give a tract, to pen a note, to breathe a prayer. But one thing is certain, namely, that a healthy vigorous Christian will be an evangelistic Christian — a teller of good news — one whose sympathies, desires, and energies, are ever going forth toward "the regions beyond." "I must preach the gospel to other cities also, therefore am I sent." Such was the language of the divine Evangelist.

It is very doubtful whether many of the servants of Christ have not erred in allowing themselves, through one influence or another, to become too much localised — too much tied to one place. They have dropped into routine work — into a round of stated preaching, in the same place, and, in many cases, have paralysed themselves and paralysed their hearers also. I speak not, now, of the labours of the pastor, the elder, or the teacher, which must, of course, be carried on in the midst of those who are the proper subjects of such labours. I refer more particularly to the evangelist. Such an one should never suffer himself to become localised. The world is his sphere — "the regions beyond," his motto — to gather out God's elect, his object — the current of the Spirit, his line of direction. If the reader should be one whom God has called and fitted to be an evangelist, let him remember these four things, the sphere, the motto, the object, and the line of direction which all must adopt, if they would prove fruitful labourers in the gospel field.

Finally, whether the reader be an evangelist or not, I would earnestly entreat him to examine how far he is seeking to further the gospel of Christ. We really must not stand idle. Time is short! Eternity is rapidly posting on! The Master is most worthy! Souls are most precious! The season for work will soon close! Let us, then, in the name of the Lord, be up and doing. And when we have done what we can, in the regions around, let us carry the precious gospel into "the regions beyond."

#### "THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST Acts 16: 8-31

We ventured to offer a word to the evangelist, which we now follow up with a paper on the evangelist's work; and we cannot do better than select, as the basis of our remarks, a page from the missionary record of one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived. The passage of Scripture that stands at the head of this article furnishes specimens of three distinct classes of hearers, and also the method in which they were met by the great apostle of the Gentiles, guided, most surely, by the Holy Ghost.

We have, first, *the earnest seeker*; secondly, *the false professor*; and thirdly, *the hardened sinner*. These three classes are to be met everywhere, and at all times, by the Lord's workman; and hence we may be thankful for an inspired account of the right mode of dealing with such. It is most desirable that those who go forth with the gospel should have skill in dealing with the various conditions of soul that come before them, from day to day; and there can be no more effectual way of attaining this skill than the careful study of the models given us by God the Holy Ghost.

Let us then, in the first place, look at the narrative of the earnest seeker.

The laborious apostle, in the course of his missionary journeyings, came to Troas, and there a vision appeared to him in the night, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16: 8-15).

Here, then, we have a touching picture — something well worth gazing at and pondering. It is a picture of one who, having through grace gotten a measure of light, was living up to it, and was earnestly seeking for more. Lydia, the seller of purple, belonged to the same interesting generation as the eunuch of Ethiopia, and the centurion of Caesarea. All three appear on the page of inspiration as quickened souls not emancipated — not at rest — not satisfied. The eunuch had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in search of something on which to rest his anxious soul. He had left that city still unsatisfied, and was devoutly and earnestly hanging over the precious page of inspiration. The eye of God was upon him, and He sent His servant Philip with the very message that was needed to solve his difficulties, answer his questions, and set his soul at rest.

God knows how to bring the Philips and the eunuchs together. He knows how to prepare the heart for the message and the message for the heart. The eunuch was a worshiper of God; but Philip is sent to teach him how to see God in the face of Jesus Christ. This was precisely what he wanted. It was a flood of fresh light breaking in upon his earnest spirit, setting his heart and conscience at rest, and sending him on his way rejoicing. He had honestly followed the light as it broke in upon his soul, and God sent him more.

Thus it is ever. "To him that hath shall more be given." There never was a soul who sincerely acted up to his light that did not get more light. This is most consolatory and encouraging to all anxious inquirers. If the reader belongs to this class, let him take courage. If he is one of those with whom God has begun to work, then let him rest assured of this, that He who hath begun a good work will perform the same until the day of Jesus Christ. He will, most surely, perfect that which concerneth His people.

But let no one fold his arms, settle upon his oars, and coolly say, "I must wait God's time for more light. I can do nothing — my efforts are useless. When God's time comes I shall be all right; till then, I must remain as I am." These were not the thoughts or feelings of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was one of the earnest seekers; and all earnest seekers are sure to be happy finders. It must be so, for "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11: 6).

So also with the centurion of Caesarea. He was a man of the same stamp. He lived up to his light. He fasted, he prayed, and gave alms. We are not told whether he had read the sermon on the mount: but it is remarkable that he exercised himself in the three grand branches of practical righteousness set forth by our Lord in the sixth chapter of Matthew. [The reader will notice that in Matthew 6: 1, the marginal reading is the correct one: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them." Then we have the three departments of this righteousness, namely, alms-giving (ver. 2); prayer

(ver. 3) fasting (ver. 16). These were the very things Cornelius was doing. In short, he feared God, and was working righteousness, according to his measure of light.] He was moulding his conduct and shaping his way according to the standard which God had set before him. His righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and therefore he entered the kingdom. He was, through grace a real man, earnestly following the light as it streamed in upon his soul, and he was led into the full blaze of the gospel of the grace of God. God sent a Peter to Cornelius, as he had sent a Philip to the eunuch. The prayers and alms had gone up as a memorial before God, and Peter was sent with a message of full salvation through a crucified and risen Saviour.

Now it is quite possible that there are persons who, having been rocked in the cradle of easy-going evangelical profession, and trained up in the flippant formalism of a self-indulgent, heaven-made-easy religion, are ready to condemn the pious conduct of Cornelius, and pronounce it the fruit of ignorance and legality. Such persons have never known what it was to deny themselves a single meal, or to spend an hour in real, earnest prayer, or to open their hand, in true benevolence, to meet the wants of the poor. They have heard and learnt, perchance, that salvation is not to be gained by such means — that we are justified by faith without works — that it is to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly.

All this is most true; but what right have we to imagine that Cornelius was praying, fasting, and giving alms in order to earn salvation? None whatever — at least if we are to be governed by the inspired narrative, and we have no other means of knowing aught about this truly excellent and interesting character. He was informed by the angel that his prayers and his alms had gone up as a memorial before God. Is not this a clear proof that these prayers and alms were not the trappings of self-righteousness, but the fruits of a righteousness based on the knowledge which he had of God? Surely the fruits of self-righteousness and legality could never have ascended as a memorial to the throne of God; nor could Peter ever have said concerning a mere legalist that he was one who feared God and worked righteousness.

Ah, no; Cornelius was a man thoroughly in earnest. He lived up to what he knew, and he would have been quite wrong to go further. To him the salvation of his immortal soul the service of God, and eternity, were grand and all-absorbing realities. He was none of your easy-going professors, full of flippant, vapid, worthless talk, but doing nothing. He belonged to another generation altogether. He belonged to the working, not the talking class. He was one on whom the eye of God rested with complacency, and in whom the mind of heaven was profoundly interested.

And so was our friend of Thyatira, Lydia, the seller of purple. She belonged to the same school — she occupied the same platform as the centurion and the eunuch. It is truly delightful to contemplate these three precious souls — to think of one in Ethiopia; another at Caesarea; and a third at Thyatira or Philippi. It is particularly refreshing to contrast such downright thorough-going, earnest souls, with many in this our day of boasted light and knowledge, who have got the plan of salvation, as it is termed, in their heads, the doctrines of grace on the tongue, but the world in the heart; whose absorbing object is self, self, self-miserable object!

We shall have occasion to refer more fully to these latter under our second head; but, for the present, we shall think of the earnest Lydia; and we must confess it is a far more grateful exercise. It is very plain that Lydia, like Cornelius and the eunuch, was a quickened soul; she was a worshiper of God; she was one who was right glad to lay aside her purple-selling, and betake herself to a prayer-meeting, or to any such like place where spiritual profit was to be had, and where there were good things going. "Birds of a feather flock together," and so Lydia soon found out where a few pious souls,

a few kindred spirits, were in the habit of meeting to wait on God in prayer.

All this is lovely. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with this deep-toned earnestness. Surely the Holy Ghost has penned this narrative, like all Holy Scripture, for our learning. It is a specimen case, and we do well to ponder it. Lydia was found diligently availing herself of any and every opportunity; indeed she exhibited the real fruits of divine life, the genuine instincts of the new nature. She found out where saints met for prayer, and took her place among them. She did not fold her arms and settle down on her lees, to wait, in antinomian indolence and culpable idleness, for some extraordinary indefinable thing to come upon her, or some mysterious change to come over her. No; she went to a prayer-meeting — the place of expressed need — the place of expected blessing: and there God met her, as He is sure to meet all who frequent such scenes in Lydia's spirit.

God never fails an expectant heart. He has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me"; and, like a bright and blessed sunbeam on the page of inspiration, shines that pregnant, weighty, soul-stirring sentence, "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." He sent a Philip to the eunuch in the desert of Gaza. He sent a Peter to the centurion, in the town of Caesarea. He sent a Paul to a seller of purple, in the suburbs of Philippi; and He will send a message to the reader of these lines, if he be a really earnest seeker after God's salvation.

It is ever a moment of deepest interest when a prepared soul is brought in contact with the full gospel of the grace of God. It may be that that soul has been under deep and painful exercise for many a long day, seeking rest but finding none. The Lord has been working by His Spirit, and preparing the ground for the good seed. He has been making deep the furrows so that the precious seed of His Word may take permanent root, and bring forth fruit to His praise. The Holy Ghost is never in haste. His work is deep, sure and solid. His plants are not like Jonah's gourd, springing up in a night and perishing in a night. All that He does will stand, blessed be His name. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever." When He convicts, converts, and liberates a soul, the stamp of His own eternal hand is upon the work, in all its stages.

Now, it must have been a moment of intense interest when one in Lydia's state of soul was brought in contact with that most glorious gospel which Paul carried (Acts 16: 14). She was thoroughly prepared for his message; and surely his message was thoroughly prepared for her. He carried with him truth which she had never heard and never thought of. As we have already remarked, she had been living up to her light; she was a worshiper of God; but we are bold to assert that she had no idea of the glorious truth which was lodged in the heart of that stranger who sat beside her at the prayer meeting. She had come thither — devout and earnest woman that she was — to pray and to worship, to get some little refreshment for her spirit, after the toils of the week. How little did she imagine that at the meeting she should hear the greatest preacher that ever lived, save One, and that she should hear the very highest order of truth that had ever fallen upon mortal ears.

Yet thus it was. And, oh, how important it was for Lydia to have been at that memorable prayer meeting! How well it was she had not acted as so many, nowadays, act, who after a week of toil in the shop, the warehouse, the factory, or the field, take the opportunity of lying in bed on Sunday! How many there are whom you will see at their post from Monday morning till Saturday night, working away with all diligence at their calling, but for whom you will look in vain at the meeting on the Lord's day. How is this? They will tell you, perhaps, that they are so worn out on Saturday night that they have no energy to rise on Sunday, and therefore they spend this day in sloth, lounging, and self-indulgence. They have no care for their souls, no care for eternity, no care for Christ. They care for themselves, for their families, for the world, for money-making; and hence you will find them up with the dawn of

Monday and off to their work.

Lydia did not belong to this class at all. No doubt she attended to her business, as every right-minded person will. We dare say — indeed, we are sure — she kept very excellent purple, and was a fair, honest trader, in every sense of the word. But she did not spend her Sabbath in bed, or lounging about her house, or nursing herself up, and making a great fuss about all she had to do during the week. Neither do we believe that Lydia was one of those self-occupied folk whom a shower of rain is sufficient to keep away from a meeting. No; Lydia was of a different stamp altogether. She was an earnest woman, who felt she had a soul to save, and an eternity before her, and a living God to serve and worship.

Would to God we had more Lydias in this our day! It would give a charm, and an interest, and a freshness to the work of an evangelist, for which many of the Lord's workmen have to sigh in vain. We seem to live in a day of terrible unreality as to divine and eternal things. Men, women, and children are real enough at their money-making, their pursuits, and their pleasures; but oh, when the things of God, the things of the soul, the things of eternity, are in question, the aspect of people is that of a yawning indifference. But the moment is rapidly approaching — every beat of the pulse, every tick of the watch, brings us nearer to it — when the yawning indifference shall be exchanged for “weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” If this were more deeply felt, we should have many more Lydias, prepared to lend an attentive ear to Paul's gospel.

What force and beauty in those words, “Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul.” Lydia was not one of those who go to meetings to think of anything and everything but the things that are spoken by the Lord's messengers. She was not thinking of her purple, or of the prices, or the probable gains or losses. How many of those who fill our preaching rooms and lecture halls follow the example of Lydia? Alas! we fear but very few indeed. The business, the state of the markets, the state of the funds, money, pleasure, dress, folly — a thousand and one things are thought of, and dwelt upon, and attended to, so that the poor vagrant, volatile heart is at the ends of the earth instead of “*attending*” to the things that are spoken.

All this is very solemn, and very awful. It really ought to be looked into and thought of. People seem to forget the responsibility involved in hearing the gospel preached. They do not seem to be in the smallest degree impressed with the weighty fact that the gospel never leaves any unconverted person where it finds him. He is either saved by receiving, or rendered more guilty by rejecting it. Hence it becomes a serious matter to hear the gospel. People may attend gospel meetings as a matter of custom, as a religious service, or because they have nothing else to do, and the time would hang heavy upon their hands; or they may go because they think that the mere act of going has a sort of merit attached to it. Thus thousands attend preachings at which Christ's servants, though not Paul's in gift, power, or intelligence, unfold the precious grace of God in sending His only begotten Son into the world to save us from everlasting torment and misery. The virtue and efficacy of the atoning death of the divine Saviour — the Lamb of God — the dread realities of eternity — the awful horrors of hell, and the unspeakable joys of Heaven — all these weighty matters are handled, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon the Lord's messengers, and yet how little impression is produced! They “reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” and yet how few are made even to “tremble!”

And why? Will anyone presume to excuse himself for rejecting the gospel message on the ground of his inability to believe it? Will he appeal to the very case before us, and say, “The Lord opened her heart; and if He would only do the same for me, I, too, should attend; but until He does, I can do nothing”? We reply, and with deep seriousness, Such an argument will not avail thee in the day of



judgment. Indeed we are most thoroughly convinced that thou wilt not dare to use it then. Thou art making a false use of Lydia's charming history. True it is, blessedly true, the Lord opened her heart; and He is ready to open thine also, if there were in thee but the hundredth part of Lydia's earnestness.

There are two sides to this great question, as there are to every question. It is all very well, and sounds very forcible, for thee to say, "I can do nothing." But who told thee this? Where hast thou learnt it? We solemnly challenge thee, in the presence of God, Canst thou look up to Him and say, "I can do nothing — I am not responsible"? Say, is the salvation of thy never-dying soul just the one thing in which thou canst do nothing? Thou canst do a lot of things in the service of the world, of self, and of Satan; but when it becomes a question of God, the soul, and eternity, you coolly say, "I can do nothing — I am not responsible."

Ah! it will never do. All this style of argument is the fruit of a one-sided theology. It is the result of the most pernicious reasoning of the human mind upon certain truths in Scripture which are turned the wrong way and sadly misapplied. But it will not stand. This is what we urge upon the reader. It is of no possible use arguing in this way. The sinner is responsible; and all the theology, and all the reasoning, and all the fallacious though plausible objections that can be scraped together, can never do away with this weighty and most serious fact.

Hence, therefore, we call upon the reader to be, like Lydia, in earnest about his soul's salvation — to let every other question, every other point, every other subject, sink into utter insignificance in comparison with this one momentous question — the salvation of his precious soul. Then, he may depend upon it, the One who sent Philip to the eunuch, and sent Peter to the centurion, and sent Paul to Lydia, will send some messenger and some message to him, and will also open his heart to attend. Of this there cannot possibly be a doubt, inasmuch as Scripture declares that "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." All who perish, after having heard the message of salvation — the sweet story of God's free love, of a Saviour's death and resurrection — shall perish without a shadow of an excuse, shall descend into hell with their blood upon their guilty heads. Their eyes shall then be open to see through all the flimsy arguments by which they have sought to prop themselves up in a false position, and lull themselves to sleep in sin and worldliness.

But let us dwell for a moment on "the things that were spoken of Paul." The Spirit of God hath not thought proper to give us even a brief outline of Paul's address at the prayer-meeting. We are therefore left to other passages of Holy Scripture to form an idea of what Lydia heard from his lips on that interesting occasion. Let us take, for example, that famous passage in which he reminds the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached to them. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 1-4).

Now we may safely conclude that the foregoing passage of Scripture contains a compendium of the things that were spoken of Paul at the prayer-meeting at Philippi. The grand theme of Paul's preaching was Christ — Christ for the sinner — Christ for the saint — Christ for the conscience — Christ for the heart. He never allowed himself to wander from this great centre, but made all his preachings and all his teachings circulate round it with admirable consistency. If he called on men, both Jews and Gentiles, to repent, the lever with which he worked was Christ. If he urged them to believe, the object which he held up for faith was Christ, on the authority of Holy Scripture. If he reasoned of

righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the One that gave cogency and moral power to his reasoning was Christ. In short, Christ was the very gist and marrow, the sum and substance, the foundation and top stone of Paul's preaching and teaching.

But, for our present purpose, there are three grand subjects, found in Paul's preaching, to which we desire to call the reader's attention. These are, first, the grace of God; secondly, the Person and work of Christ; and thirdly, the testimony of the Holy Ghost as given in the Holy Scriptures.

We do not attempt to go into these vast subjects here; we merely name them, and entreat the reader to ponder them, to muse over them, and seek to make them his own.

1. The grace of God — His free, sovereign favour — is the source from whence salvation flows — salvation in all the length, breadth, height, and depth of that most precious word — salvation which stretches, like a golden chain, from the bosom of God, down to the very deepest depths of the sinner's guilty and ruined condition, and back again to the throne of God — meets all the sinner's necessities, overlaps the whole of the saint's history, and glorifies God in the highest possible manner.

2. Then, in the second place, the Person of Christ and His finished work are the only channel through which salvation can possibly flow to the lost and guilty sinner. It is not the Church and her sacraments, religion and its rites and ceremonies — man or his doings in any shape or form. It is the death and resurrection of Christ. "He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day." This was the gospel which Paul preached, by which the Corinthians were saved, and the apostle declares, with solemn emphasis, "If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Tremendous words for our day!

3. But, thirdly, the authority on which we receive the salvation is the testimony of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. It is "according to the Scriptures." This is a most solid and comforting truth. It is not a question of feelings, or experiences, or evidences, it is a simple question of faith in God's Word wrought in the heart by God's Spirit.

It is a serious reflection for the evangelist, that wherever God's Spirit is at work, there Satan is sure to be busy. We must remember, and ever be prepared for this. The enemy of Christ and the enemy of souls is always on the watch, always hovering about to see what he can do, either to hinder or corrupt the work of the gospel. This need not terrify or even discourage the workman; but it is well to bear it in mind and be watchful. Satan will leave no stone unturned to mar or hinder the blessed work of God's Spirit. He has proved himself the ceaseless, vigilant enemy of that work, from the days of Eden down to the present moment.

Now, in tracing the history of Satan, we find him acting in two characters, namely, as a serpent, or as a lion — using craft or violence. He will try to deceive; and, if he cannot succeed, then he will use violence. Thus it is in this sixteenth chapter of the Acts. The apostle's heart had been cheered and refreshed by what we moderns should pronounce, "a beautiful case of conversion." Lydia's was a very real and decided case, in every respect. It was direct, positive, and unmistakable. She received Christ into her heart, and forthwith took Christian ground by submitting to the deeply significant ordinance of baptism. Nor was this all. She immediately opened her house to the Lord's messengers. Hers was no mere lip profession. It was not merely saying she believed. She proved her faith in Christ, not only by going down under the water of baptism, but also by identifying herself and her household with the name and cause of that blessed One whom she had received into her heart by faith.

All this was clear and satisfactory. But we must now look at something quite different. The serpent appears upon the scene in the person of the deceiver.

"It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" (vers. 16-18).

Here, then, was a case eminently calculated to test the spirituality and integrity of the evangelist. Most men would have hailed such words from the lips of this damsel as an encouraging testimony to the work. Why then was Paul grieved? Why did he not allow her to continue to bear witness to the object of his mission? Was she not saying the truth? Were they not the servants of the most high God? And were they not showing the way of salvation? Why be grieved with — why silence such a witness? Because it was of Satan; and, most assuredly, the apostle was not going to receive testimony from him. He could not allow Satan to help him in his work. True, he might have walked about the streets of Philippi owned and honoured as a servant of God, if only he had consented to let the devil have a hand in the work. But Paul could never consent to this. He could never suffer the enemy to mix himself up with the work of the Lord. Had he done so, it would have given the deathblow to the testimony at Philippi. To have permitted Satan to put his hand to the work, would have involved the total shipwreck of the mission to Macedonia.

It is deeply important for the Lord's workman to weigh this matter. We may rest assured that this narrative of the damsel has been written for our instruction. It is not only a statement of what has occurred, but a sample of what may and indeed what does occur every day.

Christendom is full of false profession. There are multitudes of false professors at this moment, throughout the wide domain of Christian profession. It is sad to have to say it, but so it is, and we must press the fact upon the attention of the reader. We are surrounded, on all sides, by those who give a merely nominal assent to the truths of the Christian religion. They go on, from week to week, and from year to year, professing to believe certain things which they do not in reality believe at all. There are thousands who, every Lord's Day, profess to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet, were such persons to be examined, it would be found that they either do not think about the matter at all, or, if they do think, they deem it the very height of presumption for any one to be sure that his sins are forgiven.

This is very serious. Only think of a person standing up in the presence of God and saying, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," and all the while he does not believe any such thing! Can anything be more hardening to the heart, or more deadening to the conscience than this? It is our firm persuasion that the forms and the formularies of professing Christianity are doing more to ruin precious souls than all the forms of moral pravity put together. It is perfectly appalling to contemplate the countless multitudes that are at this moment rushing along the well-trodden highway of religious profession, down to the eternal flames of hell. We feel bound to raise a warning note. We want the reader most solemnly to take heed as to this matter.

We have only instanced one special formulary, because it refers to a subject of very general interest and importance. How few, comparatively, are clear and settled as to the question of forgiveness of sins! How few are able, calmly, decidedly, and intelligently, to say, "I know that my sins are forgiven!" How few are in the real enjoyment of full forgiveness of sins, through faith in that precious blood that cleanseth from all sins! How solemn, therefore, to hear people giving utterance to such words as these, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," while, in fact, they do not believe their own very utterance!

Is the reader in the habit of using such a form of words? Does he believe it? Say, are thy sins forgiven? Art thou washed in the precious atoning blood of Christ? If not, why not? The way is open. There is no hindrance. Thou art perfectly welcome, this moment, to the free benefits of the atoning work of Christ. Though thy sins be as scarlet; though they be black as midnight, black as hell; though they rise like a dreadful mountain before the vision of thy troubled soul, and threaten to sink thee into eternal perdition; yet do these words shine with divine and heavenly lustre on the page of inspiration, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7).

But mark, friend, do not go on, week after week, mocking God, hardening thine own heart, and carrying out the schemes of the great enemy of Christ, by a false profession. This marks the damsel possessed by a spirit of divination, and here her history links itself with the present awful condition of Christendom. What was the burden of her song, during those "many days" in the which the apostle narrowly considered her case? "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." But she was not saved — she was not delivered — she was, all the while, under Satan's power And not only so, but Satan was seeking to use her for the purpose of marring and hindering the work of the gospel.

Thus it is with Christendom — thus it is with each false professor throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church. Every one who professes to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet does not believe in it — does not know that his sins are forgiven, does not think that anyone can know it until the day of judgment, every such person is, in principle, on the ground of the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination. What she said was true enough, but she was not true in saying it. This was the grievous point in the case. It is one thing to say, or assent to what is true, and another thing to be true in saying it. Of what possible use was it to go on from day to day, giving utterance to the formulary, "They show unto us the way of salvation", while she remained in the same unsaved unblest condition? None whatever, and we know of nothing, even in the deepest depths of moral evil, or in the darkest shades of heathenism, more truly awful than the state of careless, hardened, self-satisfied, fallow-ground professors, who on each successive Lord's Day give utterance, either in their prayers or their singing, to words which, so far as they are concerned, are wholly false.

The thought of this is, at times, almost overwhelming. We cannot dwell upon it. It is really too sorrowful. We shall therefore pass on, having once more solemnly warned the reader against every shade and degree of false profession. Let him not say or sing aught that he does not heartily believe. The devil is at the bottom of all false profession, and by means thereof he seeks to bring discredit on the work of the Lord.

But how truly refreshing to contemplate the actings of the faithful apostle in the case of the damsel. Had he been seeking his own ends, or had he been merely a minister of religion, he might have welcomed her words as a tributary stream to swell the tide of his popularity, or promote the interest of his cause. But Paul was not a mere minister of religion; he was a minister of Christ — a totally different thing. And we may notice that the damsel does not say a word about Christ. She breathes not the precious, peerless name of Jesus. There is total silence as to Him. This stamps the whole thing as of Satan. "No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." People may speak of God, and of religion; but Christ has no place in their hearts. The Pharisees, in John 9, could say to the poor man, "Give God the praise"; but in speaking of Jesus, they could say, "This man is a sinner."

Thus it is ever in the case of corrupt religion, or false profession. Thus it was with the damsel in Acts 16. There was not a syllable about Christ. There was no truth, no life, no reality. It was hollow and false. It was of Satan; and hence Paul would not and could not own it; he was grieved with it and

utterly rejected it.

Would that all were like him! Would that there were the singleness of eye to detect, and the integrity of heart to reject the work of Satan in much that is going on around us! We are thoroughly convinced that the Spirit of God has written the narrative of this damsel for our instruction. It may be said perhaps, that we have no such cases now. We reply, for what end did the Holy Ghost pen the record? Alas! there are thousands of cases at this moment, answering to this type of the damsel. We cannot but view it as a sample case, an illustration of Christendom's false profession, which exhibits far more of the craft and subtle wiles of the enemy than is to be found in ten thousand forms in which moral pravity clothes itself. Everyone can judge of drunkenness, theft, and such like, but it demands an eye anointed with heavenly eye salve to detect the wily workings of the serpent behind the fair profession of a baptised world.

Such an eye Paul, through grace, possessed. He was not to be deceived. He saw that the whole affair was an effort of Satan to mix himself up with the work, that thus he might spoil it altogether. "But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

This was true spiritual action. Paul was not in any haste to come into collision with the evil one, or even to pronounce upon the case at all; he waited many days; but the very moment that the enemy was detected he is resisted and repulsed with uncompromising decision. A less spiritual workman might have allowed the thing to pass, under the idea that it might turn to account and help forward the work. Paul thought differently; and he was right. He would take no help from Satan. He was not going to work by such an agency; and hence, in the name of Jesus Christ — that name which the enemy so sedulously excluded — he puts Satan to flight.

But no sooner was Satan repulsed as the serpent, than he assumed the character of a lion. Craft having failed, he tried violence. "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely" (Acts 16: 19-23).

Thus the enemy seemed to triumph; but be it remembered that Christ's warriors gain their most splendid victories by apparent defeat. The devil made a great mistake when he cast the apostle into prison. Indeed it is consolatory to reflect that he has never done anything else but make mistakes, from the moment that he left his first estate down to the present moment. His entire history, from beginning to end, is one tissue of errors.

And thus, as has been already remarked, the devil made a great mistake when he cast Paul into prison at Philippi. To nature's view it might have seemed otherwise; but in the judgment of faith, the servant of Christ was much more in his right place in prison for the truth's sake, than outside at his Master's expense. True, Paul might have saved himself. He might have been an honoured man, owned and acknowledged as "a servant of the most high God," if he had only accepted the damsel's testimony, and suffered the devil to help him in his work. But he could not do this, and hence he had to suffer. "And the multitude [ever fickle and easily swayed ] rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Who, having received such a charge,

*thrust* them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks” (ver. 22-24) .

Here, then, some might have said, was an end to the work of the evangelist in the city of Philippi. Here was an effectual stop to the preaching. Not so; the prison was the very place, at the moment, for the evangelist. His work was there. He was to find a congregation within the prison walls which he could not have found outside. But this leads us, in the third and last place, to the case of the hardened sinner.

It was very unlikely that the jailer would ever have found his way to the prayer meeting at the river side. He had little care for such things. He was neither an earnest seeker, nor a deceiver. He was a hardened sinner, pursuing a very hardening occupation. Jailers, from the occupation of their office, are, generally speaking, hard and stern men. No doubt there are exceptions. There are some tender-hearted men to be found in such situations; but, as a rule, jailers are not tender. It would hardly suit them to be so. They have to do with the very worst class of society. Much of the crime of the whole country comes under their notice; and many of the criminals come under their charge. Accustomed to the rough and the course, they are apt to become rough and coarse themselves.

Now, judging from the inspired narrative before us, we may well question if the Philippian jailer was an exception to the general rule with respect to men of his class. Certainly he does not seem to have shown much tenderness to Paul and Silas. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." He seems to have gone to the utmost extreme in making them uncomfortable.

But God had rich mercy in store for that poor, hardened, cruel jailer; and, as it was not at all likely that he would go to hear the gospel, the Lord sent the gospel to him; and, moreover, He made the devil the instrument of sending it. Little did the jailer know whom he was thrusting into the inner prison — little did he anticipate what was to happen ere another sun should rise. And we may add, little did the devil think of what he was doing when he sent the preachers of the gospel into jail, there to be the means of the jailer's conversion. But the Lord Jesus Christ knew what He was about to do, in the case of a poor hardened sinner. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him and restrain the remainder.

He everywhere hath sway  
And all things serve His might,  
His ev'ry act pure blessing is,  
His path unsullied light.  
When He makes bare His arm,  
Who shall His work withstand?  
When He His people's cause defends,  
Who then shall stay His hand?

It was His purpose to save the jailer; and so far from Satan's being able to frustrate that purpose, he was actually made the instrument of accomplishing it. "God's purpose shall stand; and He will do all His pleasure." And where He sets His love upon a poor, wretched, guilty sinner, He will have him in Heaven, spite of all the malice and rage of hell.

As to Paul and Silas, it is very evident that they were in their right place in the prison. They were there *for the truth's sake*, and therefore *the Lord was with them*. Hence they were perfectly happy. What, though they were confined within the gloomy walls of the prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, prison walls could not confine their spirits. Nothing can hinder the joy of one who has the Lord

with him. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were happy in the fiery furnace. Daniel was happy in the lions' den; and Paul and Silas were happy in the dungeon of Philippi: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them."

What sounds to issue from the inner prison! We may safely say that no such sounds had ever issued thence before. Curses and execrations and blasphemous words might have been heard; sighs, cries, and groans come forth from those walls. But to hear the accents of prayer and praise, ascending at the midnight hour, must have seemed strange indeed. Faith can sing as sweetly in a dungeon as at a prayer-meeting. It matters not where we are, provided always that we have God with us. His presence lights up the darkest cell, and turns a dungeon into the very gate of Heaven. He can make His servants happy anywhere, and give them victory over the most adverse circumstances, and cause them to shout for joy in scenes where nature would be overwhelmed with sorrow.

But the Lord had His eye upon the jailer. He had written his name in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world, and He was now about to lead him into the full joy of His salvation. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (ver. 26).

Now if Paul had not been in full communion with the mind and heart of Christ, he would assuredly have turned to Silas and said, "Now is the moment for us to make our escape. God has most manifestly appeared for us, and set before us an open door. If ever there was an opening of divine Providence surely this is one." But no; Paul knew better. He was in the full current of His blessed Master's thoughts, and in full sympathy with his Master's heart. Hence he made no attempt to escape. The claims of truth had brought him into prison; the activities of grace kept him there. Providence opened the door; but faith refused to walk out. People talk of being guided by Providence; but if Paul had been so guided, the jailer would never have been a jewel in his crown.

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled" (ver 27). This proves, very plainly, that the earthquake, with all its attendant circumstances, had not touched the heart of the jailer. He naturally supposed, when he saw the doors open, that the prisoners were all gone. He could not imagine a number of prisoners sitting quietly in jail when the doors lay open and their chains were loosed. And then what was to become of him if the prisoners were gone? How could he face the authorities? Impossible. Anything but that. Death, even by his own hand, was preferable to that.

Thus the devil had conducted this hardened sinner to the very brink of the precipice, and he was about to give him the final and fatal push over the edge, and down to the eternal flames of hell; when lo, a voice of love sounded in his ear. It was the voice of Jesus through the lips of His servant — a voice of tender and deep compassion — "Do thyself no harm."

This was irresistible. A hardened sinner could meet an earthquake; he could meet death itself; but he could not withstand the mighty melting power of love. The hardest heart must yield to the moral influence of love. "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Love can break the hardest heart. And surely there was love in those words, "Do thyself no harm," coming from the lips of one to whom he had done so much harm a few hours before.

And be it noted, there was not a single syllable of reproach, or even of reflection, uttered by Paul to the jailer. This was Christ-like. It was the way of divine grace. If we look through the Gospels, we never find the Lord casting reproach upon the sinner. He has tears of sorrow; He has touching words of grace and tenderness; but no reproaches — no reflections — no reproach to the poor distressed sinner.

We cannot attempt to furnish the many illustrations and proofs of this assertion; but the reader has only to turn to the gospel story to see its truth. Look at the prodigal; look at the thief. Not one reproving word to either.

Thus it is in every case; and thus it was with God's Spirit in Paul. Not a word about the harsh treatment — the thrusting into the inner prison — not a word about the stocks. "Do thyself no harm." And then, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Such is the rich and precious grace of God. It shines, in this scene, with uncommon lustre. It delights in taking up hardened sinners, melting and subduing their hard hearts, and leading them into the sunlight of a full salvation; and all this in a style peculiar to itself. Yes, God has His style of doing things, blessed be His name; and when He saves a wretched sinner, He does it after such a fashion as fully proves that His whole heart is in the work. It is His joy to save a sinner — even the very chief — and He does it in a way worthy of Himself.

And now, let us look at the fruit of all this. The jailer's conversion was most unmistakable. Saved from the very brink of hell, he was brought into the very atmosphere of heaven. Preserved from self-destruction, he was brought into the circle of God's salvation; and the evidences of this were as clear as could be desired. "And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptised he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

What a marvellous change! The ruthless jailer has become the generous host! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." How clearly we can now see that Paul was right in not being guided by providences! How much better and higher to be led by the "eye" of God! What an eternal loss it would have proved to him had he walked out at the open door! How much better to be conducted out by the very hand that had thrust him in — a hand once the instrument of cruelty and sin, now the instrument of righteousness and love! What a magnificent triumph! What a scene, altogether!

How little had the devil anticipated such a result from the imprisonment of the Lord's servants! He was thoroughly outwitted. The tables were completely turned upon him. He thought to hinder the gospel, and, behold! he was made to help it on. He had hoped to get rid of two of Christ's servants, and, lo! he lost one of his own. Christ is stronger than Satan; and all who put their trust in Him and move in the current of His thoughts shall most assuredly share in the triumphs of His grace now, and shine in the brightness of His glory forever.

Thus much, then, as to "the work of an evangelist." Such are the scenes through which he may have to pass — such the cases with which he may have to come in contact. We have seen the earnest seeker satisfied; the deceiver silenced; the hardened sinner saved. May all who go forth with the gospel of the grace of God know how to deal with the various types of character that may cross their path! May many be raised up to do the work of an evangelist!

## **LETTERS TO AN EVANGELIST**

### **Letter 1 Dearest A,**

I have been much interested and I trust profited, of late, by tracing through the Gospels and the Acts, the various notices of the work of evangelization; and it has occurred to me that it may not be amiss to present to you, as one much occupied in the blessed work, a few of the thoughts that have suggested themselves to my mind. I shall feel myself much more free in this way, than if I were writing



a formal treatise.

First of all, I have been greatly struck with the simplicity with which the work of evangelising was carried on in primitive times; so very unlike a great deal of what obtains among us. It seems to me that we moderns are quite too much hampered by conventional rules — too much fettered by the habits of Christendom. We are sadly deficient in what I may call spiritual elasticity. We are apt to think that in order to evangelise there must be a special gift; and even where there is this special gift, there must be a great deal of machinery and human arrangement. When we speak of doing the work of an evangelist, we, for the most part, have before our minds great public halls, and crowded audiences, for which there is a demand for considerable gift and power for speaking.

Now you and I thoroughly believe, that in order to preach the gospel publicly, there must be a special gift from the Head of the Church; and, moreover, we believe according to Eph. 4: 11, that Christ has given, and does still give, "evangelists." This is clear, if we are to be guided by Scripture. But I find in the Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles, that a quantity of most blessed evangelistic work was done by persons who were not specially gifted at all, but who had an earnest love for souls, and a deep sense of the preciousness of Christ and His salvation. And, what is more, I find in those who were specially gifted, called, and appointed by Christ to preach the gospel, a simplicity, freedom, and naturalness in their mode of working, which I greatly covet for myself and for all my brethren.

Let us look a little into Scripture. Take that lovely scene in John 1: 36-45. John pours out his heart in testimony to Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God!" His soul was absorbed with the glorious Object. What was the result? "Two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." What then? "One of the two which heard John speak, and Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." And what does he do? "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Again, "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me . . . Philip findeth Nathanael, 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 . . . Come and see."

Here then, is the style of thing for which I earnestly long: this individual work, this laying hold of the first man that comes in way, this finding one's own brother, and bringing him to Jesus. I do feel we are deficient in this. It is all right enough to gather congregations, and address them, as God gives ability and opportunity. I would not pen a single word to detract from the value of such a line of work. By all means hire rooms, halls, and theatres; put out bills inviting people to come; leave no lawful means untried to spread the gospel. Seek to get at souls as best you can. Far be it from me to cast a damp upon any who are seeking to carry on the work in this public way.

But does it not strike you that we want more of the individual work? more of the private, earnest, personal dealing with souls? Do you not think that if we had more "Philips" we should have more "Nathanaels"? If we had more "Andrews," we should have more "Simons"? I cannot but believe it. There is amazing power in an earnest personal appeal. Do you not often find that it is after the more formal public preaching is finished, and the close personal work begins, that souls are reached? How is it then that there is so little of this latter? Does it not often happen at our public preachings, that when the formal address is delivered, a hymn sung, and a word of prayer offered, all disperse without any attempt at individual work? I speak not now, mark you, of the preacher — who cannot possibly reach every case, but of the scores of Christians who have been listening to him. They have seen strangers enter the room, they have sat beside them; they have, it may be, noticed their interest, seen the tear stealing down the cheek; and yet they have let them pass away without a single loving effort to reach

them, or to follow up the good work.

No doubt it may be said, "It is much better to allow the Spirit of God to follow up His own Work. We may do more harm than good. And besides, people do not like to be spoken to: they will look upon it as an impertinent intrusion, and they will be driven away from the place altogether." There is considerable weight in all this. I fully appreciate it; and I am sure you do likewise dearest A. I fear great blunders are committed by injudicious persons intruding upon the sacred privacy of the soul's deep and holy exercises. It needs tact and judgment; in short, it needs direct spiritual guidance to be able to deal with souls; to know whom to speak to, and what to say.

But allowing all this, as we do in the fullest possible manner, there is, as a rule, something lacking in connection with our public preachings. Is there not a want of that deep, personal, loving interest in souls which will express itself in a thousand ways that act powerfully on the heart? I confess that I have often been pained by what has come under my own notice in our preaching-rooms. Strangers come in and are left to find a seat wherever they can. No one seems to think of them. Christians are there, and they will hardly move to make room for them. No one offers them a Bible or hymn-book. And when the preaching is over, they are allowed to go as they came; not a loving word of inquiry as to whether they enjoyed the truth preached; not even a kindly look which might win confidence and invite conversation. On the contrary, there is a chilling reserve, amounting almost to repulsiveness.

All this is very sorrowful; and perhaps my dear A. you will tell me that I am drawing too highly-coloured a picture. Alas! the picture is only too true. And what makes it all the more deplorable is, that one knows as a fact that many persons frequent our preaching-rooms and lecture-halls in the deepest exercise, and they are only longing to open their hearts to some one who could offer them a little spiritual counsel; but through timidity, reserve, or nervousness, they shrink from making any advance, and have but to retire to their homes and to their bedchambers, lonely and sad, there to weep in solitude because no man cares for their precious souls. Now I feel persuaded that much of this might be remedied if those Christians who attend the gospel preachings were more on the look out for souls: if they would attend, not so much for their own profit, as in order to be co-workers with God, in seeking to bring souls to Jesus.

No doubt it is very refreshing to Christians to hear the gospel fully and faithfully preached. But it would not be the less refreshing because they were intensely interested in the conversion of souls, and in earnest prayer to God in the matter. Besides, it could in no wise interfere with their personal enjoyment and profit to cultivate and manifest a lively and loving interest in those who surround them, and to seek at the close of the meeting to help any who may need and desire to be helped. It has a surprising effect upon the preacher, upon the preaching, upon the whole meeting, when the Christians who attend are really entering into, and discharging, their high and holy responsibilities to Christ and to souls. It imparts a certain tone and creates a certain atmosphere which must be felt in order to be understood; but when once felt it cannot easily be dispensed with.

But, alas, how often is it otherwise! How cold, how dull, how dispiriting is it at times to see the whole congregation clear out the moment the preaching is over! No loving, lingering groups gathering round young converts or anxious inquirers. Old experienced Christians have been present; but, instead of pausing with the fond hope that God would graciously use them to speak a word in season to him that is weary, they hasten away as though it were a matter of life and death that they should be home at a certain hour.

Do not suppose that I wish to lay down rules for my brethren. Far be the thought. I am merely, in

the freest possible manner, pouring out the thoughts of my heart to one with whom I have been linked in the work of the gospel for many years. I feel convinced there is a something lacking. It is my firm persuasion that no Christian is in a right condition, if he is not seeking in some way to bring souls to Christ. And, on the same principle, no assembly of Christians is in a right condition if it be not a thoroughly evangelistic assembly. We should all be on the lookout for souls; and then we may rest assured we should see soul-stirring results. But if we are satisfied to go on from week to week, month to month, and year to year, without a single leaf stirring, without a single conversion, our state must be truly lamentable.

But I think I hear you saying, "Where is all the Scripture we were to have had? where the many quotations from the Gospels and the Acts?" Well, I have gone on jotting down the thoughts which have for some considerable time occupied my mind. But if you so desire, I shall write you a second letter on the subject. Meanwhile, may the Lord, by His Spirit, make us more earnest in seeking the salvation of immortal souls, by every legitimate agency. May our hearts be filled with genuine love for precious souls, and then we shall be sure to find ways and means of getting at them!

Ever, believe me dearest A

Your deeply affectionate yokefellow.

## **Letter 2**

There is one point in connection with our subject which has much occupied my mind; and that is, the immense importance of cultivating an earnest faith in the presence and action of the Holy Ghost. We want to remember, at all times, that we can do nothing, and that God the Holy Ghost can do all. It holds good in the great work of evangelization, as in all beside, that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The abiding sense of this would keep us humble, and yet full of joyful confidence. Humble, because we can do nothing; full of joyful confidence, because God can do all. Moreover, it would have the effect of keeping us very sober and quiet in our work — not cold and indifferent, but calm and serious, which is a great matter just now. I was much struck with a remark lately made by an aged workman, in a letter to one who had just entered the field. "Excitement," says this writer, "is not power, but weakness. Earnestness and energy are of God."

This is most true and most valuable. But I like the two sentences taken together. If we were to take either apart, I think you and I would prefer the latter; and for this reason: there are many, I fear, who would regard as "excitement" what you and I might really consider to be "earnestness and energy." Now I do confess, I love a deep-toned earnestness in the work. I do not see how a man can be otherwise than deeply and thoroughly in earnest, who realises in any measure the awfulness of eternity, and the state of all those who die in their sins. How is it possible for any one to think of an immortal soul standing on the very brink of hell, and in danger at any moment of being dashed over, and not be serious and earnest?

But this is not excitement. What I understand by excitement is the working up of mere nature, and the putting forth of such efforts of nature as are designed to work on the natural feelings — all high pressure — all that is merely sensational. This is all worthless. It is evanescent. And not only so, but it superinduces weakness. We never find aught of this in the ministry of our blessed Lord or His apostles: and yet what earnestness! what untiring energy! what tenderness! We see an earnestness which wore the appearance of being beside oneself; an energy which hardly afforded a moment for rest or refreshment; and a tenderness which could weep over impenitent sinners. All this we see; but no excitement. In a word, all was the fruit of the Eternal Spirit; and all was to the glory of God. Moreover, there was ever that calmness and solemnity which becomes the presence of God, and yet that deep

earnestness which proves that man's serious condition was fully realized.

Now, dearest brother, this is precisely what we want, and what we ought diligently to cultivate. It is a signal mercy to be kept from all merely natural excitement; and, at the same time, to be duly impressed with the magnitude and solemnity of the work. Thus the mind will be kept properly balanced, and we shall be preserved from the tendency to be occupied with our work merely because it is ours. We shall rejoice that Christ is magnified, and souls are saved, whoever be the instrument used.

I have been thinking a good deal lately of that memorable time, now exactly ten years ago, when the Spirit of God wrought so marvellously in the province of Ulster. I think I gathered up some valuable instruction from what then came under my notice. That was a time never to be forgotten by those who were privileged to be eyewitnesses of the magnificent wave of blessing which rolled over the land. But I now refer to it in connection with the subject of the Spirit's action. I have no doubt whatever that the Holy Ghost was grieved and hindered in the year 1859, by man's interference. You remember dearest A. how that work began, you remember the little school-house by the road side, where two or three men met, week after week, to pour out their hearts in prayer to God, that He would be pleased to break in upon the death and darkness which reigned around: and that He revive His work, and send out His light and His truth in converting power. You know how these prayers were heard and answered. You and I were privileged to move through these soul stirring scenes in the province of Ulster; and I doubt not the memory of them is fresh with you, as it is with me, this day.

Well, what was the special character of that work in its earlier stages? Was it not most manifestly a work of God's Spirit? Did not He take up and use instruments the most unfit and unfurnished, according to human thinking, for the accomplishment of His gracious purpose? Do we not remember the style and character of the agents who were chiefly used in the conversion of souls? Were they not for the most part "unlearned and ignorant men?" Further, can we not distinctly recall the fact that there was a most decided setting aside of all human arrangement and official routine? Working men came from the field, the factory, and the workshop, to address crowded audiences; and we have seen hundreds hanging in breathless interest upon the lips of men who could not speak five words of good grammar. In short, the mighty tide of spiritual life and power rolled in upon us, and swept away for the time being a quantity of human machinery, and ignored all question of man's authority in the things of God and the service of Christ.

Now we can well remember, that just in so far as the Holy Ghost was owned and honoured, did the glorious work progress; and, on the other hand, in proportion as man intruded himself, in bustling self-importance, upon the domain of the Eternal Spirit, was the work hindered and quashed. I saw the truth of this illustrated in numberless cases. There was a vigorous effort made to cause the living water to flow in official and denominational channels, and this the Holy Ghost would not sanction. Moreover, there was a strong desire manifested, in many quarters, to make sectarian capital out of the blessed movement; and this the Holy Ghost resented.

Nor was this all. The work and the workman were lionised in all directions. Cases of conversion which were judged to be "striking" were blazed abroad and paraded in the public prints. Travellers and tourists from all parts visited these persons, took notes of their words and ways, and wafted the report of them to the ends of the earth. Many poor creatures, who had up to that time lived in obscurity, unknown and unnoticed, found themselves, all of a sudden, objects of interest to the wealthy, the noble, and the public at large. The pulpit and the press proclaimed their sayings and doings; and, as might be expected, they completely lost their balance. Knaves and hypocrites abounded on all hands. It became a grand point to have some strange and extravagant experience to tell; some remarkable dream or vision

to relate. And even where this ill-advised line of action did not issue in producing knavery and hypocrisy, the young converts became heady and high-minded, and looked with a measure of contempt upon old established Christians, or those who did not happen to be converted after their peculiar fashion — "stricken," as it was termed.

In addition to this, some very remarkable characters — men of desperate notoriety, who seemed to be converted, were conveyed from place to place and placarded about the various streets, and crowds gathered to see them and hear them recount their history; which history was very frequently a disgusting detail of immoralities and excesses which ought never to have been named. Several of these remarkable men afterwards broke down, and returned with increased ardour to their former practices.

These things dearest A. I witnessed in various places. I believe the Holy Ghost was grieved and hindered, and the work marred thereby. I am thoroughly convinced of this: and hence it is that I think we should earnestly seek to honour the blessed Spirit; to lean upon Him in all our work; to follow where He leads, not run before Him. His work will stand: "Whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever." "The works that are done upon the earth, He is the doer of them." The remembrance of this will ever keep the mind well balanced. There is great danger of young workmen getting so excited about their work, their preaching, their gifts, as to lose sight of the blessed Master Himself. Moreover, they are apt to make preaching the end instead of the means. This works badly in every way. It injures themselves, and it mars their work.

The moment I make preaching my end, I am out of the current of the mind of God, whose end is to glorify Christ; and I am out of the current of the heart of Christ, whose end is the salvation of souls, and the full blessing of His Church. But where the Holy Ghost gets His proper place, where He is duly owned and trusted, there all will be right. There will be no exaltation of man; no bustling self-importance; no parading of the fruits of our work; no excitement. All will be calm, quiet, real, and unpretending. There will be the simple, earnest, believing, patient waiting upon God. Self will be in the shade; Christ will be exalted.

I often recall a sentence of yours. I remember your once saying to me, "Heaven will be the best and safest place to hear the results of our work." This is a wholesome word for all workmen. I shudder when I see the names of Christ's servants paraded in the public journals, with flattering allusion to their work and its fruits. Surely those who pen such articles ought to reflect upon what they are doing: they should consider that they may be ministering to the very thing which they ought to desire to see mortified and subdued. I am most fully persuaded that the quiet, shady, retired path is the best and safest for the Christian workman. It will not make him less earnest but the contrary. It will not cramp his energy, but increase and intensify it. God forbid that you or I should pen a line or utter a sentence which might in the most remote way tend to discourage or hinder a single worker in all the vineyard of Christ. No, this is not the moment for aught of this kind. We want to see the Lord's labourers thoroughly in earnest; but we believe, most assuredly, that true earnestness will ever result from the most absolute dependence upon God the Holy Ghost.

But only see how I have run on! And yet I have not referred to those passages of Scriptures of which I spoke in my last. Well, dearly beloved in the Lord, I am addressing one who is happily familiar with the Gospels and Acts, and who therefore knows that the great Workman Himself, and all those who sought to tread in His blessed footsteps, owned and honoured the Eternal Spirit as the One by whom all their works were to be wrought.

I must now close for the present, my much loved brother and fellow-labourer; and I do so with a full heart, commending you, in spirit and soul and body, to Him who has loved us, and washed us from

our sins in His own blood, and called us to the honoured post of workers, in His gospel field. May He bless you and yours, most abundantly, and increase your usefulness a thousand fold!

As ever, and for ever

Your deeply affectionate fellow worker

### **Letter 3**

There is another point which stands intimately connected with the subject of my last letter, and that is, the place the Word of God occupies in the work of evangelization. In my last letter, as you will remember, I referred to the work of the Holy Ghost, and the immense importance of giving Him His proper place. How clearly the precious Word of God is connected with the action of the Holy Spirit, I need not say. Both are inseparably linked in those memorable words of our Lord to Nicodemus — words so little understood — so sadly misapplied: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3).

Now, you and I, fully believe that in the above passage the Word is presented under the figure of "water." Thank God, we are not disposed to give any credit to the ritualistic absurdity of baptismal regeneration. We are, I believe, most thoroughly convinced that no one ever did, ever will, or ever could, get life by water baptism. That all who believe in Christ ought to be baptised we fully admit; but this is a totally different thing from the fatal error that substitutes an ordinance for the atoning death of Christ, the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost, and the life-giving virtues of the Word of God. I shall not waste your time or my own in combating this error, but at once assume that you agree with me in thinking that when our Lord speaks of being "born of water and of the Spirit," He refers to the Word and the Holy Ghost.

Thus, then, the Word is the grand instrument to be used in the work of evangelization. Many passages of holy Scripture establish this point with such clearness and decision as to leave no room whatever for dispute. In James 1: 18, we read, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." Again, in 1 Peter 1: 23, we read, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." I must quote the whole passage because of its immense importance in connection with our subject: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

This last clause is of unspeakable value to the evangelist. It binds him, in the most distinct manner, to the Word of God as the instrument — the only instrument — the all sufficient instrument, to be used in his glorious work. He is to give the Word to the people; and the more simply he gives it the better. The pure water should be allowed to flow from the heart of God to the heart of the sinner, without receiving a tinge from the channel through which it flows. The evangelist is to preach the Word; and he is to preach it in simple dependence upon the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the true secret of success in preaching.

But dearest A. while I urge this great cardinal point in the work of preaching — and I believe it cannot be too strongly urged — I am very far indeed from thinking that the evangelist should give his hearers a quantity of truth. So far from this, I consider it a very great mistake. He ought to leave this to the teacher, lecturer, or pastor. I often fear that very much of our preaching shoots over the heads of the people, owing to the fact of our seeking rather to unfold truth than to reach souls. We rest satisfied, it may be, with having delivered a very clear forcible lecture, a very interesting and instructive exposition of Scripture, something very valuable for the people of God; but the unconverted hearer has sat

unmoved, unreached, unimpressed. There has been nothing for him. The lecturer has been more occupied with his lecture than with the sinner — more taken up with his subject than with the soul.

Now I am thoroughly convinced that this is a serious mistake, and one to which we all — at least I am — very apt to fall. I deplore it deeply and I earnestly desire to correct it. I question if this very mistake may not be viewed as the true secret of our lack of success. But I should not perhaps say "our lack" but my lack. I do not think — so far as I know aught of your ministry — that you are exactly chargeable with the defect to which I am now just referring. Of this, however, you will be the best judge yourself; but of one thing I am certain, namely, that the most successful evangelist is the one who keeps his eye fixed on the sinner, who has his heart bent on the salvation of souls, yea, the one with whom the love for precious souls amounts almost to a passion. It is not the man who unfolds the most truth, but the man who longs most after souls, that will have the most seals to his ministry.

I assert all this, mark you, in the full and clear recognition of the fact with which I commenced this letter, namely, that the Word is the grand instrument in the work of conversion. This fact must never be lost sight of, never weakened. It matters not what agency may be used to make the furrow, or in what form the Word may clothe itself, or by what vehicle it may be conveyed; it is only by "the Word of truth" that souls are begotten.

All this is divinely true, and we would ever bear it in mind. But do we not often find that persons who undertake to preach the gospel (particularly if they continue long in one place) are very apt to leave the domain of the evangelist — most blessed domain! — and travel into that of the teacher and lecturer? This is what I deprecate and deeply deplore. I know I have erred in this way myself, and I mourn over the error. I write in all loving freedom to you — the Lord has of late deepened immensely in my soul the sense of the vast importance of earnest gospel preaching. I do not — God forbid that I should — think the less of the work of a teacher or pastor. I believe that wherever there is a heart that loves Christ, it will delight to feed and tend the precious lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, that flock which He purchased with His own blood.

But the sheep must be gathered before they can be fed; and how are they to be gathered but by the earnest preaching of the gospel? It is the grand business of the evangelist to go forth upon the dark mountains of sin and error, to sound the gospel trumpet and gather the sheep; and I feel convinced that he will best accomplish this work, not by elaborate exposition of truth; not by lectures however clear valuable, and instructive; not by lovely unfoldings of prophetic, dispensational, doctrinal truth — most precious and important in the right place — but by fervid, pointed, earnest dealing with immortal souls; the warning voice, the solemn appeal, the faithful reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come — the awakening presentation of death and judgment, the dread realities of eternity, the lake of fire and the worm that never dies.

In short, it strikes me we want awakening preachers. I fully admit that there is such a thing as teaching the gospel, as well as preaching it. For example, I find teaching the gospel in Rom. 1 - 8, just as I find him preaching the gospel in Acts 13 or Acts 17. This is of the very last importance at all times, inasmuch as there are almost sure to be a number of what we call "exercised souls" at our public preachings, and these need an emancipating gospel — the full, clear, elevated, resurrection gospel.

But admitting all this, I still believe what is needed for successful evangelization is not so much a great quantity of truth as an intense love for souls. Look at that eminent evangelist George Whitefield. What think you was the secret of his success? No doubt you have looked into his printed sermons. Have you found any great breadth of truth in them? I question it. Indeed I must say I have been struck with the contrary. But oh! there was that in Whitefield which you and I may well covet and long to

cultivate. There was a burning love for souls — a thirst for their salvation — a mighty grappling with the conscience — a bold, earnest, face-to-face dealing with men about their past ways, their present state, their future destiny.

These were the things that God owned and blessed; and He will own and bless them still. I am persuaded — I write as under the very eye of God — that if our hearts are bent upon the salvation of souls, God will use us in that divine and glorious work. But on the other hand, if we abandon ourselves to the withering influences of a cold, heartless, godless fatalism; if we content ourselves with a formal and official statement of the gospel — a very cheerless sort of thing; if, to use a vulgar phrase, our preaching is on the principle of "take it or leave it," need we wonder if we do not see conversions? The wonder would be if there were any to see.

No; no, I believe we want to look seriously into this great practical subject. It demands the solemn and dispassionate consideration of all who are engaged in the work. There are dangers on all sides. There are conflicting opinions on all sides. But I cannot conceive how any Christian man can be satisfied to shirk the responsibility of looking after souls. A man may say, "I am not an evangelist; that is not my line; I am more of a teacher, or a pastor." Well, I understand this; but will any one tell me that a teacher or pastor may not go forth in earnest longing after souls? I cannot admit it for a moment.

Nay more; it does not matter in the least what a man's gift is, or even though he should not possess any prominent gift at all, he can and ought, nevertheless, to cultivate a longing desire for the salvation of souls. Would it be right to pass a house on fire, without giving warning, even though one were not a member of the fire brigade? Should we not seek to save a drowning man, even though we could not command the use of a patent life-boat? Who in his senses would maintain aught so monstrous? So, in reference to souls, it is not so much a gift or knowledge of truth that is needed, as a deep and earnest longing for souls — a keen sense of their danger, and a desire for their rescue.

Ever, dearest A.

Your deeply affectionate yoke fellow.

#### **Letter 4**

When I took up my pen to address you in my first letter, I had no idea that I should have occasion to extend the series to a fourth. However, the subject is one of intense interest to me; and there are just two or three points further on which I desire very briefly to touch.

In the first place I deeply feel our lack of a prayerful spirit in carrying on the work of evangelization. I have referred to the subject of the Spirit's work; and also to the place which God's Word ought ever to get; but it strikes me we are very deficient in reference to the matter of earnest, persevering, believing prayer. This is the true secret of power. "We," say the apostles, "will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

Here is the order: "Prayer, and the ministry of the Word." Prayer brings in the power of God; and this is what we want. It is not the power of eloquence, but the power of God; and this can only be had by waiting upon Him. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40: 29-31).

It seems to me that we are far too mechanical, if I may so express myself, in the work. There is too much of what I may call going through a service. I greatly fear that some of us are more on our legs



than on our knees; more in the railway carriage than in the closet; more on the road than in the sanctuary; more before men than before God. This will never do. It is impossible that our preaching can be marked by power and crowned with results, if we fail in waiting upon God. Look at the blessed Master Himself — that great Workman. See how often He was found in prayer. At His baptism; at His transfiguration; previous to the appointment and mission of the twelve. In short, again and again we find that blessed One in the attitude of prayer. At one time He rises up a great while before day, in order to give Himself to prayer. At another time He spends the whole night in prayer, because the day was given up to work.

What an example for us! May we follow it! May we know a little better what it is to agonise in prayer. How little we know of this! — I speak for myself. It sometimes appears to me as if we were so much taken up with preaching engagements that we have no time for prayer — no time for closet work — no time to be alone with God. We get into a sort of whirl of public work; we rush from place to place, from meeting to meeting, in a prayerless, barren condition of soul. Need we wonder at the little result? How could it be otherwise when we so fail in waiting upon God? We cannot convert souls — God alone can do this; and if we go on without waiting on Him, if we allow public preaching to displace private prayer, we may rest assured our preaching will prove barren and worthless. We really must "give ourselves to prayer" if we would succeed in the "ministry of the Word."

Nor is this all. It is not merely that we are lacking in the holy and blessed practice of private prayer. This is, alas! too true, as I have said. But there is more than this. We fail in our public meetings for prayer. The great work of evangelization is not sufficiently remembered in our prayer-meetings. It is not definitely, earnestly, and constantly kept before God in our public reunions. It may occasionally be introduced in a cursory, formal manner, and then dismissed. Indeed, I feel there is a great lack of earnestness and perseverance in our prayer-meetings generally, not merely as to the work of the gospel, but as to other things as well. There is frequently great formality and feebleness. We do not seem like men in earnest. We lack the spirit of the widow in Luke 18, who overcame the unjust judge by the bare force of her importunity. We seem to forget that God will be inquired of; and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

It is of no use for any one to say, "God can work without our earnest pleading; He will accomplish His purposes; He will gather out His own." We know all this; but we know also that He who has appointed the end has appointed the means; and if we fail in waiting on Him, He will get others to do His work. The work will be done, no doubt, but we shall lose the dignity, the privilege, and the reward of working. Is this nothing? Is it nothing to be deprived of the sweet privilege of being co-workers with God, of having fellowship with Him in the blessed work which He is carrying on? Alas! that we prize it so little. Still we do prize it; and perhaps there are few things in which we can more fully taste this privilege than in united earnest prayer. Here every saint can join. Here all can add their cordial Amen. All may not be preachers; but all can pray — all join in prayer; all can have fellowship.

And do you not find that there is always a stream of deep and real blessing where the assembly is drawn out in earnest prayer for the gospel, and for the salvation of souls? I have invariably seen it, and hence it is always a source of unspeakable comfort, joy, and encouragement to my heart when I see the assembly stirred up to pray, for then I am sure God is going to give copious showers of blessing.

Moreover, when this is the case, when this most excellent spirit pervades the whole assembly, you may be sure there will be no trouble as to what is called "the responsibility of the preaching." It will be all the same who does the work, provided it is done as well as it can be. If the assembly is waiting upon God, in earnest intercession for the progress of the work, it will not be a question as to the

one who is to take the preaching, provided Christ is preached and souls are blessed.

Then there is another thing which has of late occupied my mind a good deal; and that is our method of dealing with young converts. Most surely there is immense need of care and caution, lest we be found accrediting what is not the genuine work of God's Spirit at all. There is very great danger here. The enemy is ever seeking to introduce spurious materials into the assembly, in order that he may mar the testimony and bring discredit upon the truth of God.

All this is most true, and demands our serious consideration. But does it not seem to you that we often err on the other side? Do we not often, by a stiff and peculiar style, cast a chill upon young converts? Is there not frequently something repulsive in our spirit and deportment? We expect young Christians to come up to a standard of intelligence which has taken us years to attain. Nor this only. We sometimes put them through a process of examination which only tends to harass and perplex.

Now assuredly this is not right. The Spirit of God would never puzzle, perplex, or repulse a dear anxious inquirer — never, no never. It could never be according to the mind or heart of Christ to chill the spirit of the very feeblest lamb in all His blood-bought flock. He would have us seeking to lead them on gently and tenderly — to soothe, nourish, and cherish them, according to all the deep love of His heart. It is a great thing to lay ourselves out, and hold ourselves open to discern and appreciate the work of God in souls, and not to mar it by placing our own miserable crotchets as stumbling-blocks in their pathway. We need divine guidance and help in this as much as in any other department of our work. But, blessed be God, He is sufficient for this as for all beside. Let us only wait on Him: let us cling to Him, and draw upon His exhaustless treasury for each case as it arises, for exigence of every hour. He will never fail a trusting, expectant, dependent heart.

I must now close this series of letters. I think I have touched most, if not all, of the points which I had in my mind. You will, I trust, bear in mind that I have, in all these letters, simply jotted down my thoughts in the utmost possible freedom, and in all the intimacy of true brotherly friendship. I have not been writing a formal treatise, but pouring out my heart to a beloved friend and yoke-fellow. This must be borne in mind by all who may read these letters.

May God bless and keep you. May He crown your labours with His richest and best blessing! May He keep you from every evil work, and preserve you unto His own everlasting kingdom! Ever believe me my dearest A.

Your deeply affectionate  
Quick and powerful is the word,  
Sharper than a two edged sword;  
Wielded by the Spirits hand,  
Nothing can its force withstand.  
How its power was felt of old,  
They who felt its power have told;  
Many were the wonders wrought,  
Multitudes to Jesus brought  
Mighty God — who's word it is.  
Hear our prayer and grant us this;

What Thy power has done before

By Thy Spirit do once more.

### **Letter 5**

It seems as though I must once more take up my pen to address you on certain matters connected with the work of evangelisation, which have forced themselves upon my attention for some time past. There are three distinct branches of the work which I long to see occupying a far more definite and prominent place among us; and these are, the tract depot, the gospel preaching, and the Sunday-school.

It strikes me that the Lord is awakening attention to the importance of the tract depot as a valuable agency in the work of evangelization; but I question if we, on this side of the Atlantic, are thoroughly in earnest on the subject. How is this? Have books and tracts lost their interest and value in our eyes? Or does the fault lie in the mode of conducting our tract depots? To my mind there seems to be something lacking in reference to this matter.

I would fain see a well-conducted depot in every important town; by "well-conducted" I mean one taken up and carried on as a direct service to the Lord, in true love for souls, deep interest in the spread of the truth, and at the same time in a sound business way. I have known several depots fall to the ground through lack of business habits on the part of the conductors. They seemed very earnest, sincere persons, but quite unfit to conduct a business. In short, they were persons in whose hands any business would have fallen through. For example I have visited some places wherein the tract depot was managed, or rather mismanaged, by invalids. In one place, I found the business in the hands of a poor old bed-ridden woman. She was a most dear person, and it was quite delightful to spend an hour by her bedside, but how could she possibly manage a depot. I believe she had been confined to her bed for three years. One might pass her door for years, and never know that there was such a thing as a tract or a book to be had. There was no shop, no advertisements, no sort of exposure of the tracts in the window.

Nor is this an isolated instance. If it were, I should pass it over in silence. In many a large town, an obscure room in a backstreet a few tracts bundled together in dust and disgraceful confusion.

Now I should like to know who could be expected to purchase tracts under such circumstances. Most assuredly, the generality of persons would not do so. Then in many places there is the most deplorable failure as to the valuable and interesting work of conducting a depot. How can we best reach the people for whom the tracts and books are prepared? I believe by having the books and tracts exposed for sale in a shop window, where that is possible, so that people may see them as they pass, and step in and purchase what they want. Many a soul has been laid hold of in this way. Many, I doubt not, have been saved and blessed by means of tracts, seen for the first time in a shop window or arranged on a counter. But where there is no such opportunity, the assembly's meeting room is the tract depot's natural home.

There is, manifestly, a real want of a tract depot in every large town, conducted by some one of intelligence and sound business habits, who would be able to speak to persons about the tracts, and to recommend such as might prove helpful to anxious inquirers after truth. In this way, I feel persuaded, much good might be done. The Christians in the town would know where to go for tracts, not only for their own personal reading, but also for general distribution. Surely if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well; and if the tract depot be not worth attending to, we know not what is.

The tract depot must be taken up in direct service to Christ. I feel assured that where it is so taken up and so carried on, in energy, zeal, and integrity, the Lord will own it and He will make it a blessing.

Is there no one who will take up this valuable work for Christ's sake and not for the sake of remuneration? Is there no one who will enter upon it in simple faith, looking to the living God?

Here lies the root of the matter. For this branch of the work, as for every other branch, we need those who trust God and deny themselves. It seems to me that a grand point would be gained if the tract depot were placed on its proper footing, and viewed as an integral part of the evangelistic work, to be taken up in responsibility to the Lord and carried on in the energy of faith in the living God. Every branch of gospel work — the depot, the preaching, the Sunday-school — must be carried on in this way. It is all well and most valuable to have fellowship — full cordial fellowship, in all our service; but if we wait for fellowship and co-operation in the starting of work which comes within the range of personal, as well as collective, responsibility, we shall find ourselves very much behind — or the work may not be done at all.

I shall have occasion to refer more particularly to this point, when I come to treat of the preaching and the Sunday-school. All I want now, is to establish the fact that the tract depot is a branch, and a most important and efficient branch, of evangelistic work. If this be thoroughly grasped by our friends, a great point is gained. I must confess to you that my moral sense has often been grievously offended by the cold, commercial style in which the publishing and sale of books and tracts are spoken of — a style befitting perhaps a mere commercial business, but most offensive when adopted in reference to the precious work of God.

I admit in the fullest way — nay, I actually contend for it — that the proper management of the depot demands good sound business habits, and upright business principles. But at the same time I am persuaded that the tract depot will never occupy its true ground — never realize the true idea, never reach the desired end — until it is firmly fixed on its holy basis, and viewed as an integral part of that most glorious work to which we are called — even the work of active, earnest, persevering evangelization.

And this work must be taken up in the sense of responsibility to Christ, and in the energy of faith in the living God. It will not do for an assembly of Christians, or some wealthy individual, to take up an inefficient portage, and commit to such an one the management of the affair in order to afford a means of living. It is most blessed for all to have fellowship in the work; but I am thoroughly convinced that the work must be taken up in direct service to Christ, to be carried on in love for souls, and real interest in the spread of the truth.

## **Letter 6**

I have, in some of the earlier letters of this series, dwelt upon the unspeakable importance of keeping up with zeal and constancy, a faithful preaching of the gospel — a distinct work of evangelization, carried on in the energy of love to precious souls, and with direct reference to the glory of Christ — a work bearing entirely upon the unconverted, and therefore quite distinct from the work of teaching, lecturing, or exhorting, in the bosom of the assembly; which latter is, I need not say, of equal importance in the mind of our Lord Christ.

My object in referring again to this subject is to call your attention to a point in connection with it, respecting which, it seems to me, there is a great want of clearness amongst some of our friends. I question if we are, as a rule, thoroughly clear as to the question of individual responsibility in the work of the gospel. I admit, of course, that the teacher or lecturer is called to exercise his gift, to a very great extent, on the same principle as the evangelist; that is, on his own personal responsibility to Christ; and that the assembly is not responsible for his individual services; unless indeed he teach unsound doctrine, in which case the assembly is bound to take it up.

But my business is with the work of the evangelist; and he is to carry on his work outside of the assembly. His sphere of action is the wide, wide world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Here is the sphere and here the object of the evangelist — "All the world" — "Every creature." He may go forth from the bosom of the assembly, and return thither again laden with his golden sheaves; nevertheless he goes forth in the energy of personal faith in the living God, and on the ground of personal responsibility to Christ; nor is the assembly responsible for the peculiar mode in which he may carry on his work. No doubt the assembly is called into action when the evangelist introduces the fruit of his work in the shape of souls professing to be converted, and desiring to be received into fellowship at the Lord's table. But this is another thing altogether, and must be kept distinct. The evangelist must be left free: this is what I contend for. He must not be tied down to certain rules or regulations, nor cramped by special conventionalities. There are many things which a large-hearted evangelist will feel perfectly free to do which might not commend themselves to the spiritual judgment and feelings of some in the assembly; but, provided he does not traverse any vital or fundamental principle, such persons have no right to interfere with him.

And be it remembered dearest A, when I use the expression, "spiritual judgment and feelings," I am taking the very highest possible view of the case, and treating the objector with the highest respect. I feel this is but right and proper. Every true man has a right to have his feelings and judgment — not to speak of conscience — treated with all due respect. There are, alas! everywhere, men of narrow mind, who object to everything that does not square with their own notions — men who would fain tie the evangelist down to the exact line of things and mode of acting which according to their thinking would suit the assembly of God's people when gathered for worship at the table of the Lord.

All this is a thorough mistake. The evangelist should pursue the even tenor of his way, regardless of all such narrowness and meddling. Take, for example, the matter of singing hymns. The evangelist may feel perfectly free to use a class of hymns or gospel songs which would be wholly unsuitable for the assembly. The fact is, he sings the gospel for the same object that he preaches it, namely, to reach the sinner's heart. He is just as ready to sing "Come" as to preach it.

Such is the judgment which I have had on this subject for many years, though I am not quite sure if it will fully commend itself to your spiritual mind. It strikes me we are in danger of slipping into Christendom's false notion of "establishing a cause," and "organising a body." Hence it is that the four walls in which the assembly meets are regarded by many as a "chapel," and the evangelist who happens to preach there is looked upon as "the minister of the chapel."

All this has to be carefully guarded against: but my object in referring to it now is to clear up the point with respect to the gospel preaching. The true evangelist is not the minister of any chapel; or the organ of any congregation; or the representative of a body; or the paid agent of any society. No; he is the ambassador of Christ — the messenger of a God of love — the herald of glad tidings. His heart is filled with love to souls; his lips anointed by the Holy Ghost; his words clothed with heavenly power. Let him alone! Fetter him not by your rules and regulations! Leave him to his work and to his Master!

And further, bear in mind that the Church of God can afford a platform broad enough for all sorts of workmen and every possible style of work, provided only that foundation truth be not disturbed. It is a fatal mistake to seek to reduce every one and every thing to a dead level. Christianity is a living, a divine reality. Christ's servants are sent by Him, and to Him they are responsible. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14).

We may depend upon it these things demand our serious consideration, if we do not want to have the blessed work of evangelization marred in our hands.

I have just one other point that I would refer to before closing my letter, as it has been rather a vexed question in certain places — I allude to what has been termed "the responsibility of the preaching." How many of our friends have been and are harassed about this question! And why? I am persuaded that it is from not understanding the true nature, character, and sphere of the work of evangelization. Hence we have had some persons contending for it that the Sunday evening preaching should be left open. "Open to what?" That is the question. In too many cases it has proved to be "open" to a character of speaking altogether unsuited to many who had come there, or who had been brought by friends, expecting to hear a full, clear, earnest gospel. On such occasions our friends have been disappointed, and the unconverted perfectly unable to understand the meaning of the service. Surely such things ought not to be; nor would they be if men would only discern the simplest thing possible, namely, the distinction between all meetings in which Christ's servants exercise their ministry on their own personal responsibility, and all meetings which are purely reunions of the assembly, whether for the Lord's Supper, for prayer, or for any other purpose whatsoever.

Your deeply affectionate

### **LETTER 7**

Through want of space I was obliged to close my last letter without even touching upon the subject of the Sunday-school: I must, however, devote a page or two to a branch of work which has occupied a very large place in my heart for thirty years. I should deem my series incomplete were this subject left untouched.

Some may question how far the Sunday-school can be viewed as an integral part of the work of evangelization. I can only say it is mainly in this light I regard it. I look upon it as one great and most interesting branch of gospel work. The superintendent of the Sunday-school and the teacher of the Sunday-school class are workers in the wide gospel field, just as distinctly as the evangelist or preacher of the gospel.

I am fully aware that a Sunday-school differs materially from an ordinary gospel preaching. It is not convened in the same way, or conducted in the same manner. There is, if I may so express myself, a union of the parent, the teacher, and the evangelist, in the person of the Sunday-school worker. For the time being he takes the place of the parent: he seeks to do the duty of a teacher; but he aims at the object of the evangelist — that priceless object, the salvation of the souls of the precious little ones committed to his charge. As to the mode in which he gains his end — as to the details of his work — as to the varied agencies which he may bring to bear, he alone is responsible.

I am aware that exception is taken to the Sunday-school on the ground that its tendency is to interfere with parental or domestic training. Now I must confess that I cannot see any force whatever in this objection. The true object of the Sunday-school is not to supersede parental training, but to help it where it exists, or to supply its lack where it does not exist. There are, as you and I well know, hundreds of thousands of dear children who have no parental training at all. Thousands have no parents, and thousands more have parents who are far worse than none. Look at the multitudes that throng the lanes, alleys, and courtyards of our large cities and towns, who seem hardly a degree above mere animal existence — yea, many of them like little incarnate demons.

Who can think upon all these precious souls without wishing a hearty God-speed to all true Sunday-school workers, and earnestly longing for more thorough earnestness and energy in that most blessed work?

I say "true" Sunday-school workers, because I fear that many engage in the work who are not

true, not real, not fit. Many, I fear, take it up as a little bit of fashionable religious work, suited to the younger members of the religious communities. Many, too, view it as a kind of set-off to a week of self-indulgence, folly, and worldliness. All such persons are an actual hindrance rather than a help to this sacred service.

Then again, there are many who sincerely love Christ, and long to serve Him in the Sunday-school, but who are not really fitted for the work. They are deficient in tact, energy, order, and rule. They lack that power to adapt themselves to the children, and to engage their young hearts, which is so essential to the Sunday-school worker.

It is a great mistake to suppose that every one who stands idle in the market-place is fit to turn into this particular branch of Christian labour. On the contrary, it needs a person thoroughly fitted of God for it; and if it be asked, "How are we ever to be supplied with suited agents for this branch of evangelistic service?" I reply, Just in the same way as you are to be supplied in any other department — by earnest, persevering, believing prayer.

I am most thoroughly persuaded that if Christians were more stirred up by God's Spirit to feel the importance of the Sunday school — if they could only seize the idea that it is, like the tract depot and the preaching, part and parcel of that most glorious work to which we are called in these closing days of Christendom's history — if they were more permeated by the idea of the evangelistic nature and object of Sunday-school work, they would be more instant and earnest in prayer, both in the closet and in the public assembly, that the Lord would raise up in our midst a band of earnest, devoted, whole-hearted Sunday-school workers.

This is the lack; and may God, in His abounding mercy, supply it! He is able, and surely He is willing. But then He will be waited on and inquired of; and "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." I think we have much cause for thankfulness and praise for what has been done in the way of Sunday-schools during the last few years. I well remember the time when many of our friends seemed to overlook this branch of work altogether. Even now many treat it with indifference, thus weakening the hand and discouraging the hearts of those engaged in it.

But I shall not dwell upon this, inasmuch as my theme is the Sunday-school, and not those who neglect or oppose it. I bless God for what I see in the way of encouragement. I have often been exceedingly refreshed and delighted by seeing some of our very oldest friends rising from the table of their Lord, and proceeding to arrange the benches on which the dear little ones were soon to be ranged to hear the sweet story of a Saviour's love. And what could be more lovely, more touching, or more morally suited, than for those who had just been remembering the Saviour's dying love to seek, even by the arrangement of the benches, to carry out His living words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me"?

There is very much I should like to add as to the mode of working the Sunday-school; but perhaps it is just as well that each worker should be wholly cast upon the living God for counsel and help as to details. We must ever remember that the Sunday-school, like the tract depot and the preaching, is entirely a work of individual responsibility. This is a grand point; and where it is fully understood, and where there is real earnestness of heart and singleness of eye, I believe there will be no great difficulty as to the particular mode of working. A large heart, and a fixed purpose to carry on the great work and fulfil the glorious mission committed to us, will effectually deliver us from the withering influence of crotchets and prejudices — those miserable obstructions to all that is lovely and of good report.

May God pour out His blessing on all Sunday-schools, upon the pupils, the teachers, and the

superintendents! May He also bless all who are engaged, in any way, in the instruction of the young!  
May He cheer and refresh their spirits by giving them to reap many golden sheaves in their special  
corner of the one great and glorious gospel field!

Ever believe me dearest A

Your deeply affectionate C H M.