

The Great Commission

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"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24: 44-49).

This splendid passage of Holy Scripture sets before us the great commission which the risen Lord entrusted to His apostles just as He was about to ascend into the heavens, having gloriously accomplished all His blessed work upon earth. It is truly a most wonderful commission, and opens up a very wide field of truth, through which we may range with much spiritual delight and profit. Whether we ponder *the commission itself*, its *basis*, its *authority*, its *power*, or its *sphere*, we shall find it all full of most precious instruction. May the blessed Spirit guide our thoughts, while we meditate, first of all, upon *the commission itself*.

The apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ were specially charged to preach "repentance and remission of sins." Let us all remember this. We are prone to forget it, to the serious damaging of our preaching, and of the souls of our hearers. Some of us are apt to overlook the first part of the commission, in our eagerness, it may be, to get to the second. This is a most serious mistake. We may rest assured that it is our truest wisdom to keep close to the veritable terms in which our blessed Lord delivered His charge to His earliest heralds. We cannot omit a single point, not to say a leading branch of the commission, without serious loss in every way. Our Lord is infinitely wiser and more gracious than we are, and we need not fear to preach with all possible plainness what He told His apostles to preach, namely, "repentance and remission of sins."

Now the question is, are we all careful to maintain this very important connection? Do we give sufficient prominence to the first part of the great commission? Do we preach "repentance?"

We are not now inquiring what repentance is; that we shall do, if God permit. But, whatever it is, do we preach it? That our Lord commanded His apostles to preach it is plain; and not only so, but He preached it Himself, as we read it in Mark 1: 14-15: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel."

Let us carefully note this record. Let all preachers note it. Our divine Master called upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel. Some would have us to believe that it is a mistake to call upon persons dead in trespasses and sins to do anything. "How," it is argued, "can those who are dead repent? They are incapable of any spiritual movement. They must first get the power ere they can either repent or believe."

What is our reply to all this? A very simple one indeed — Our Lord knows better than all the theologians in the world what ought to be preached. He knows all about man's, condition — his guilt, his misery, his spiritual death, his utter helplessness, his total inability to think a single right thought, to

utter a single right word, to do a single right act; and yet He called upon men to repent. This is quite enough for us. It is no part of our business to seek to reconcile seeming differences. It may seem to us difficult to reconcile man's utter powerlessness with his responsibility; but "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." It is our happy privilege, and our bounden duty, to believe what He says, and do what He tells us. This is true wisdom, and it yields solid peace.

Our Lord preached repentance, and He commanded His apostles to preach it; and they did so constantly. Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And again, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Harken to Paul also, as he stood on Mars' Hill, at Athens: "But now *God commandeth all men everywhere* to repent; because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

So also, in his touching address to the elders of Ephesus, he says, "I kept back nothing that was profitable [blessed servant!] but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also the Greeks, *repentance toward God*, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, in his address to king Agrippa, he says, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that *they should repent*, and turn to God, and *do works meet for repentance*."

Now, in the face of this body of evidence — with the example of our Lord and His apostles so fully and clearly before us — may we not very lawfully inquire whether there is not a serious defect in much of our modern preaching? Do we preach repentance as we ought? Do we assign to it the place which it gets in the preaching of our Lord, and of His early heralds? It is vanity and folly, or worse, to talk about its being legal to preach repentance, to say that it tarnishes the lustre of the gospel of the grace of God to call upon men dead in trespasses and sins to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Was Paul legal in his preaching? Did he not preach a clear, full, rich, and divine gospel? Have we got in advance of Paul? Do we preach a clearer gospel than he? How utterly preposterous the notion! Well, but he preached repentance. He told his hearers that "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Does this mar the gospel of the grace of God? Does it detract from its heavenly fullness and freeness? As well might you tell a farmer that it lowered the quality of his grain to plough the fallow ground before sowing.

No doubt it is of the very last possible importance to preach the gospel of the grace of God, or, if you please, the gospel of the glory, in all its fullness, clearness, and power. We are to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ — to declare the whole counsel of God, to present the righteousness of God and His salvation, without limit, condition, or hindrance of any kind — to publish the good news to every creature under heaven.

We should, in the very strongest possible manner, insist upon this. But at the same time we must jealously keep to the terms of "the great commission." We cannot depart the breadth of a hair from these without serious damage to our testimony, and to the souls of our hearers. If we fail to preach repentance, we are "keeping back" something profitable." What should we say to a husbandman, if we saw him scattering his precious grain along the beaten highway? We should justly pronounce him out of his mind. The plough-share must do its work. The fallow ground must be broken up ere the seed is

sown; and we may rest assured that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace, the ploughing must precede the sowing. The ground must be duly prepared for the seed, else the operation will prove altogether defective. Let the gospel be preached as God has given it to us in His Word. Let it not be shorn of one of its moral glories; let it flow forth as it comes from the deep fountain of the heart of God, through the channel of Christ's finished work, on the authority of the Holy Ghost.

All this is not only most fully admitted but peremptorily insisted upon; but at the same time we must never forget that our Lord and Master called upon men to "repent and believe the gospel"; that He strictly enjoined it upon His holy apostles to preach repentance; and that the blessed apostle Paul, the chief of apostles, the profoundest teacher the Church has ever known, did preach repentance, calling upon men everywhere to repent and do works meet for repentance.

And here it may be well for us to inquire what this repentance is which occupies such a prominent place in "the great commission," and in the preaching of our Lord and of His apostles. If it be — as it most surely is — an abiding and universal necessity for man — if God commands all men everywhere to repent — if repentance is inseparably linked with remission of sins — how needful it is that we should seek to understand its true nature!

What, then, is repentance? May the Spirit Himself instruct us by the Word of God! He alone can. We are all liable to err — some of us have erred — in our thoughts on this most weighty subject. We are in danger, while seeking to avoid error on one side, of falling into error on the other. We are poor, feeble, ignorant, erring creatures, whose only security is in our being kept continually at the feet of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can teach us what repentance is, as well as what it is not. We feel most fully assured that the enemy of souls and of the truth has succeeded in giving repentance a false place in the creeds, and confessions, and public teachings of Christendom; and the conviction of this makes it all the more needful for us to keep close to the living teachings of Holy Scripture.

We are not aware of any formal definition of the subject furnished by the Holy Ghost. He does not tell us in so many words what repentance is; but the more we study the Word in reference to the great question, the more deeply we feel convinced that true repentance involves the solemn judgment of ourselves, our condition, and our ways, in the presence of God; and, further, that this judgment is not a transient feeling, but an abiding condition — not a certain exercise to be gone through as a sort of title to the remission of sins, but the deep and settled habit of the soul, giving seriousness, gravity, tenderness, brokenness, and profound humility, which shall overlap, underlie, and characterise our entire course.

We seriously question if this aspect of the subject is sufficiently understood. Let not the reader mistake us. We do not mean for a moment to teach that the soul should be always bowed down under the sense of unforgiven sin. Far be the thought! But we greatly fear that some of us, in running away from legality on the question of repentance, have fallen into levity. This is a serious error. We may depend upon it that levity is no remedy for legality: were it proposed as such, we should have no hesitation in pronouncing the remedy much worse than the disease. Thank God we have His own sovereign remedy for levity, on the one hand, and legality on the other. "*Truth*" — insisting upon "repentance," is the remedy for the former. "*Grace*" — publishing "remission of sins," is the remedy for the latter. And we cannot but believe that the more profound our repentance, the fuller will be our enjoyment of remission.

We are inclined to judge that there is a sad lack of depth and seriousness in much of our modern preaching. In our anxiety to make the gospel simple, and salvation easy, we fail to press on the consciences of our hearers the holy claims of truth. If a preacher now-a-days were to call upon his

hearers to "repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance," he would, in certain circles, be pronounced legal, ignorant, below the mark, and such like. And yet this was precisely what the blessed apostle Paul did, as he himself tells us. Will any of our modern evangelists have the temerity to say that Paul was a legal or an ignorant preacher? We trust not. Paul carried with him the full, clear, precious gospel of God — the gospel of the grace, and the gospel of the glory. He preached the kingdom of God — He unfolded the glorious mystery of the Church — yea, that mystery was specially committed to him.

But let all preachers remember that Paul preached repentance. He called upon sinners to judge themselves — to repent in dust and ashes, as was meet and right they should. He himself had learnt the true meaning of repentance. He had not only judged himself once in a way, but he *lived* in the spirit of self-judgment. It was the habit of his soul, the attitude of his heart, and it gave a depth, solidity, seriousness and solemnity to his preaching of which we modern preachers know but little. We do not believe that Paul's repentance ended with the three days and three nights of blindness after his conversion. He was a self-judged man all his life long. Did this hinder his enjoyment of the grace of God or of the preciousness of Christ? Nay, it gave depth and intensity to his enjoyment.

All this, we feel persuaded, demands our most serious consideration. We greatly dread the light, airy, superficial style of much of our modern preaching. It sometimes seems to us as if the gospel were brought into utter contempt and the sinner led to suppose that he is really conferring a very great favour upon God in accepting salvation at His hands. Now we most solemnly protest against this. It is dishonouring to God, and lowering His gospel; and, as might be expected, its moral effect on those who profess to be converted is most deplorable. It superinduces levity, self-indulgence, worldliness, vanity, and folly. Sin is not felt to be the dreadful thing it is in the sight of God. Self is not judged. The world is not given up. The gospel that is preached is what may be called "salvation made easy" to the flesh — the most terrible thing we can possibly conceive — terrible in its effect upon the soul — terrible in its results in the life. God's sentence upon the flesh and the world gets no place in the preaching to which we refer. People are offered a salvation which leaves self and the world practically unjudged, and the consequence is, those who profess to be converted by this gospel exhibit a lightness and unsubduedness perfectly shocking to people of serious piety.

Man must take his true place before God, and that is the place of self-judgment, contrition of heart, real sorrow for sin, and true confession. It is here the gospel meets him. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel, and a truly repentant soul is the empty vessel into which all the fullness and grace of God can flow in saving power. The Holy Ghost will make the sinner feel and own his real condition. It is He alone who can do so: but He uses preaching to this end. He brings the Word of God to bear on man's conscience. The Word is His hammer, wherewith He breaks the rock in pieces — His plowshare, wherewith He breaks up the fallow ground. He makes the furrow, and then casts in the incorruptible seed, to germinate and fructify to the glory of God. True, the furrow, how deep soever it may be, can produce no fruit. It is the seed, and not the furrow; but there must be the furrow for all that.

It is not, need we say, that there is anything meritorious in the sinner's repentance. To say so could only be regarded as audacious falsehood. Repentance is not a good work whereby the sinner merits the favour of God. All this view of the subject is utterly and fatally false. True repentance is the discovery and hearty confession of our utter ruin and guilt. It is the finding out that my whole life has been a lie, and that I myself am a liar. This is serious work. There is no flippancy or levity when a soul is brought to this. A penitent soul in the presence of God is a solemn reality; and we cannot but feel that were we more governed by the terms of "the great commission," we should more solemnly, earnestly and constantly call upon men "to repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance" — we

should preach "repentance" as well as "remission of sins."

Part 2

Since writing our last paper, we have been much interested in the way in which repentance is presented in those inimitable parables in Luke 15. There we learn, in a manner the most touching and convincing, not only the abiding and universal necessity the moral fitness in every case of true repentance — but also that it is grateful to the heart of God. Our Lord, in His marvellous reply to the scribes and Pharisees, declares that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." And again, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Now this gives us a very elevated view of the subject. It is one thing to see that repentance is binding upon man, and another and very much higher thing to see that it is grateful to God. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." A broken heart, a contrite spirit, a repentant mind, gives joy to God.

Let us ponder this fact. The scribes and Pharisees murmured because Jesus received sinners. How little they understood Him! How little they knew of the object that brought Him down into this dark and sinful world! How little they knew of themselves! It was the "lost" that Jesus came to seek. But scribes and Pharisees did not think themselves lost. They thought they were all right. They did not want a Saviour. They were thoroughly unbroken, unrepentant, self-confident: and hence they had never afforded one atom of joy in Heaven. All the learning of the scribes, and all the righteousness of the Pharisees, could not waken up a single note of joy in the presence of the angels of God. They were like the elder son in the parable who said, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

Here we have a true specimen of an unbroken heart and an unrepentant spirit a man thoroughly satisfied with himself. Miserable object! He had never touched a chord in the Father's heart — never drawn out the Father's love — never felt the Father's embrace — never received the Father's welcome. How could he? He had never felt himself lost. He was full of himself, and therefore had no room for the Father's love. He did not feel that he owed anything, and hence he had nothing to be forgiven. It rather seemed to him that his father was his debtor. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee; and yet thou never gavest me a kid." He had not received his wages.

What egregious folly! And yet it is just the same with every unrepentant soul — every one who is building upon his own righteousness. He really makes God his debtor. "I have served Thee; but I have never gotten what I earned." Miserable notion! The man who talks of his duties, his doings, his sayings, his givings, is really insulting God. But on the other hand, the man who comes with a broken heart, a contrite spirit, repentant, self-judged — that is the man who gives joy to the heart of God.

And why? Simply because such a one feels his need of God. Here lies the grand moral secret of the whole matter. To apprehend this is to grasp the full truth on the great question of repentance. A God of love desires to make His way to the sinner's heart, but there is no room for Him so long as that heart is hard and impenitent. But when the sinner is brought to the end of himself, when he sees himself a helpless, hopeless wreck, when he sees the utter emptiness, hollowness and vanity of all earthly things; when like the prodigal he comes to himself and feels the depth and reality of his need, then there is room in his heart for God, and — marvellous truth! — God delights to come and fill it. "To this man will I look." To whom? To the man who does his duty, keeps the law, does his best, lives up to his light?

Nay; but "to him who is of a contrite spirit."

It will perhaps be said that the words just quoted apply to Israel. Primarily, they do; but morally they apply to every contrite heart on the face of the earth. And, further, it cannot be said that Luke 15 applies specially to Israel. It applies to all. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that" — What? Does his duty? Nay, it does not even say, "that believeth." No doubt believing is essential in every case; but the interesting point here is that a truly repentant sinner causes joy in Heaven. A person may say, "I fear I do not believe." Well, but do you repent? Have your eyes been opened to see your true condition before God? Have you taken your true place before God as utterly lost? If so, you are one of those over whom there is joy in Heaven.

What gave joy to the shepherd's heart? Was it the ninety and nine sheep that went not astray? Nay, it was finding the lost sheep. What gave joy to the woman's heart? Was it the nine pieces in her possession? Nay, it was finding the one lost piece. What gave joy to the father's heart? Was it the service and the obedience of the elder son? Nay, it was getting back his lost son. A repentant, broken-hearted, returning sinner wakens up Heaven's joy. "Let us eat and be merry." Why? Because the elder son has been working in the fields and doing his duty? No; but "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

All this is perfectly wonderful. Indeed, it is so wonderful that if we had it not from the lips of Him who is the Truth, and on the eternal page of divine inspiration, we could not believe it. But, blessed be God, there it stands, and none can gainsay it. There shines the glorious truth that a poor, self-convicted, broken-hearted, penitent, though hell-deserving sinner, gives joy to the heart of God. Let people talk as they will about keeping the law and doing their duty: it may go for what it is worth; but be it remembered there is no such clause within the covers of the volume of God — no such sentence ever dropped from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ as "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that does his duty."

A sinner's duty! What is it? "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." What is it that can really define our duty? Surely the divine command. Well, here it is, and there is no getting over it. God's command to all men, in every place, is to repent. His commandment binds them to do it; His goodness leads them to it; His judgment warns them to it; and, above all, and most marvellous of all, He assures us that our repentance gives joy to His heart. A penitent heart is an object of profoundest interest to the mind of God, because that heart is morally prepared to receive what God delights to bestow, namely, "remission of sins" — yea, all the fullness of divine love. A man might spend millions in the cause of religion and philanthropy, and not afford one atom of joy in Heaven. What are millions of money to God? A single penitential tear is more precious to Him than all the wealth of the universe. All the offerings of an unbroken heart are a positive insult to God; but a single sigh from the depths of a contrite spirit goes up as a fragrant incense to His throne and to His heart.

No man can meet God on the ground of duty; but God can meet any man — the very chief of sinners — on the ground of repentance, for that is man's true place; and we may say with all possible confidence that when the sinner, as he is, meets God as He is, the whole question is settled once and forever. "I said, *I will confess* my transgressions unto the Lord, and *Thou forgavest* the iniquity of my sin." The moment man takes his true place — the place of repentance — God meets him with a full forgiveness, a divine and everlasting righteousness. It is His joy to do so. It gratifies His heart and it glorifies His name to pardon, justify and accept a penitent soul that simply believes in Jesus. The very moment the prophet cried, "Woe is me; for I am undone" — "Then flew one of the seraphim with a live coal from off the altar" to touch his lips, and to purge his sins (Isa. 6: 5-7).

Thus it is always. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel. If I am full of myself, full of my own fancied goodness, my own morality, my own righteousness, I have no room for God, no room for Christ. "He filleth the *hungry* with good things; but the rich He hath sent empty away." A self-emptied soul can be filled with the fullness of God; but if God sends a man empty away, whither can he go to be filled? All Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, goes to prove the deep blessedness as well as the moral necessity of repentance. It is the grand turning-point in the soul's history — a great moral epoch which sheds its influence over the whole of one's after life. It is not, we repeat, a transient exercise, but an abiding moral condition. We are not now speaking of how repentance is produced; we are speaking of what it is according to Scripture, and of the absolute need of it for every creature under Heaven. It is the sinner's true place; and when through grace he takes it, he is met by the fullness of God's salvation.

Here we see the lovely connection between the first and second clauses of "the great commission," namely, "repentance and remission of sins." They are inseparably linked together. It is not that the most profound and genuine repentance forms the meritorious ground of remission of sins. To say or to think so would be to set aside the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in that, and in that alone, have we the divine ground on which God can righteously forgive us our sins. This we shall see more fully when we come to consider the "basis" of "the great commission."

We are now occupied with the commission itself; and in it we see those two divinely settled facts, repentance and remission of sins. The holy apostles of our Lord and Saviour were charged to preach among all nations — to declare in the ears of every creature under heaven "repentance and remission of sins." Every man, be he Jew or Gentile, is absolutely commanded by God to repent; and every repentant soul is privileged to receive, on the spot, the full and everlasting remission of sins. And we may add, the deeper and more abiding the work of repentance, the deeper and more abiding will be the enjoyment of remission of sins. The contrite soul lives in the very atmosphere of divine forgiveness; and as it inhales that atmosphere, it shrinks with ever — increasing horror from sin in every shape and form.

Let us turn for a moment to the Acts of the Apostles, and see how Christ's ambassadors carried out the second part of His blessed commission. Hear the apostle of the circumcision addressing the Jews on the day of Pentecost. We cannot attempt to quote the whole of his address; we merely give the few words of application at the close. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ."

Here the preacher bears down upon the consciences of his hearers with the solemn fact that they had proved themselves to be at issue with God Himself about His Christ. What a tremendous fact! It was not merely that they had broken the law, rejected the prophets, refused the testimony of John the Baptist; but they had actually crucified the Lord of glory, the eternal Son of God. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men, brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for *the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 36-38).

Here are the two parts of the great commission brought out in all their distinctness and power. The people are charged with the most awful sin that could be committed, namely, the murder of the Son of God; they are called upon to repent, and assured of full remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. What wondrous grace shines forth in all this! The very people that had mocked and insulted the Son of God, and crucified Him, even these, if truly repentant, were assured of the complete pardon of

all their sins, and of this crowning sin amongst the rest. Such is the wondrous grace of God — such the mighty efficacy of the blood of Christ — such the clear and authoritative testimony of the Holy Ghost — such the glorious terms of "the great commission."

But let us turn for a moment to Acts 3. Here the preacher, after charging his hearers with this awful act of wickedness against God, even the rejection and murder of His Son, adds these remarkable words: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*"

It is not possible to conceive anything higher or fuller than the grace that shines out here. It is a part of the divine response to the prayer of Christ on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This surely is royal grace. It is victorious grace — grace reigning through righteousness. It was impossible that such a prayer should fall to the ground. It was answered in part on the day of Pentecost. It will be answered in full at a future day, for "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Mark particularly the words "Those things which God before had showed . . . He hath so fulfilled." Here the preacher brings in God's side of the matter: and this is salvation. To see only man's part in the cross would be eternal judgment. To see God's part, and to rest in it is eternal life, full remission of sins, divine righteousness, everlasting glory.

The reader will doubtless be reminded here of the touching scene between Joseph and his brethren. There is a striking analogy between Acts 3 and Genesis 14. "Now therefore," says Joseph, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*"

But when were these words uttered? Not until the guilty brethren had felt and owned their guilt. Repentance preceded the remission. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Joseph "spake roughly" to his brethren at the first. He brought them through deep waters, and made them feel and confess their guilt. But the very moment they took the ground of repentance, he took the ground of forgiveness. The penitent brethren were met by a pardoning Joseph, and the whole house of Pharaoh was made to ring with the joy which filled the heart of Joseph on getting back to his bosom the very men that had flung him into the pit.

What an illustration of "repentance and remission of sins!" It is ever thus. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins. He delights in causing the full tide of His pardoning love to flow into the broken and contrite heart.

Yes, if you have been brought to feel the burden of your guilt, then be assured it is your privilege this very moment to receive a divine and everlasting remission of all your sins. The blood of Jesus Christ has perfectly settled the question of your guilt, and you are now invited to rejoice in the

God of your salvation.

Part 3

We shall now turn for a few moments to the ministry of the apostle of the Gentiles, and see how he fulfilled the great commission. We have already heard him on the subject of "repentance." Let us hear him also on the great question of "remission of sins."

Paul was not of the twelve. He did not receive his commission from Christ on earth, but, as he himself distinctly and repeatedly tells us, from Christ in heavenly glory. Some have spent not a little time and pains in labouring to prove that he was of the twelve, and that the election of Matthias in Acts 1 was a mistake. But it is labour sadly wasted, and only proves an entire misunderstanding of Paul's position and ministry. He was raised up for a special object, and made the depository of a special truth which had never been made known to any one before, namely, the truth of the Church — the one body composed of Jew and Gentile, incorporated by the Holy Ghost, and linked, by His personal indwelling, to the risen and glorified Head in Heaven.

Paul received his own special commission, of which he gives a very beautiful statement in his address to Agrippa, in Acts 26, "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests" — what a different "commission" he received ere he entered Damascus! — "at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Here the glorious truth of the intimate union of believers with the glorified Man in Heaven, though not stated, is beautifully and forcibly implied.

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins" (the same word as in the commission to the twelve in Luke 24) "and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in Me."

["By faith" is connected with remission of sins and inheritance among the sanctified.]

What depth and fullness in these words! What a comprehensive statement of man's condition! What a blessed presentation of the resources of divine grace! There is a very remarkable harmony between this commission to Paul and that to the twelve in Luke 24. It will perhaps be said there is nothing about repentance. True, the word does not occur; but we have the moral reality, and that with singular force and fullness. What mean the words, "*To open their eyes*"? Do they not most certainly involve the discovery of our condition? Assuredly. A man who has his eyes opened is brought to the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of his condition, the knowledge of his ways; and this is true repentance. It is a wonderful moment in a man's history when his eyes are opened. It is the grand crisis, the momentous epoch, the one turning-point. Till then he is blind — morally and spiritually blind. He cannot see a single divine object. He has no perception of anything pertaining to God, to Christ, to Heaven.

This is truly humbling to proud human nature. Think of a clear-headed, highly educated, deeply learned, intellectual man, a profound thinker, a powerful reasoner, a thorough philosopher, who has won the honours, the medals, the degrees, that this world's universities can bestow; and yet he is blind to everything spiritual, heavenly, divine. He gropes in moral darkness. He thinks he sees, assumes the right to judge and pronounce upon things, even upon Scripture and upon God Himself. He undertakes to decide what is fitting for God to say and to do. He sets up his own mind as the measure in the things of God. He reasons upon immortality, upon eternal life, and eternal punishment. He deems himself perfectly competent to give judgment in reference to all these solemn and weighty matters; and all the while his eyes have never been opened. How much is his judgment worth? Nothing! Who would take

the opinion of a man who, if his eyes were only opened, would reverse that opinion in reference to everything heavenly and divine? Who would think for a moment of being guided by a blind man?

But how do we know that every man in his natural, unconverted state is blind? Because, according to Paul's commission, the very first thing which the gospel is to do for him is "to open his eyes." This proves, beyond all question, that he must be blind. Paul was sent to the people and to the Gentiles — that is, to the whole human family — to open their eyes. This proves, to a divine demonstration, that all are by nature blind.

But there is more than this. Man is not only blind, but he is in "darkness." Supposing for a moment that a person has his eyesight, of what use is it to him if he is in the dark? It is the double statement as to man's state and position. As to his state, he is blind. As to his position, he is in darkness; and when his eyes are opened, and divine light streams in upon his soul, he then judges himself and his ways according to God. He sees his folly, his guilt, his rebellion, his wild, infidel reasonings, his foolish notions, the vanity of his mind, his pride and ambition, his selfishness and worldliness — all these things are judged and abhorred. He repents, and turns right round to the One who has opened his eyes and poured in a flood of living light upon his heart and conscience.

Further, not only is man — every man — Jew and Gentile, blind and in darkness, but, as if to give the climax of all, he is under the power of Satan. This gives a terrible idea of man's condition. He is the slave of the devil. He does not believe this. He imagines himself free — thinks he is his own master — fancies he can go where he pleases, do what he likes, think for himself, speak and act as an independent being. But he is the bondsman of another, he is sold under sin, Satan is his lord and master. Thus Scripture speaks, and it cannot be broken. Man may refuse to believe, but that cannot in the least change the fact. A condemned criminal at the bar may refuse to believe the testimony from the witness table, the verdict from the jury-box, the sentence from the bench; but that in nowise alters his terrible condition. He is a condemned criminal all the same.

So with man as a sinner; he may refuse the plain testimony of Scripture, but that testimony remains notwithstanding. Even if the thousand millions that people this globe were to deny the truth of God's Word, that Word would still stand unmoved. Scripture does not depend for its truth upon man's belief. It is true whether he believes it or not. Blessed forever is the man who believes; doomed forever is the man who refuses to believe; but the Word of God is settled forever in Heaven, and it is to be received on its own authority, apart from all human thoughts for or against it.

This is a grand fact, and one demanding the profound attention of every soul. Everything depends upon it. The Word of God claims our belief because it is His Word. If we want any authority to confirm the truth of God's Word, we are in reality rejecting God's Word altogether, and resting on man's word. A man may say, "How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God?" We reply, It carries its own divine credentials with it; and if these credentials do not convince, all the human authority under the sun is perfectly worthless. If the whole population of the earth were to stand before me, and assure me of the truth of God's Word, and that I were to believe on their authority, it would not be saving faith at all. It would be faith in men, and not faith in God; but the faith that saves is the faith that believes what God says because God says it.

It is not that we undervalue human testimony, or reject what are called the external evidences of the truth of the Holy Scripture. All these things must go for what they are worth; they are by no means essential in laying the foundation of saving faith. We are perfectly sure that all genuine history, all true science, all sound human evidence, must go to establish the divine authenticity of the Bible; but we do not rest our faith upon them, but upon the Scriptures to which they bear witness; for if all human

evidence, all science, and every page of history, were to speak against Scripture, we should utterly and absolutely reject them; reverently and implicitly believe it. Is this narrow? Be it so. It is the blessed narrowness in which we gladly find our peace and our portion forever. It is the narrowness that refuses to admit the weight of a feather as an addition to the Word of God. If this be narrowness — we repeat it with emphasis, and from the very centre of our ransomed being — let it be ours forever.

If to be broad we must look to man to confirm the truth of God's Word, then away with such broadness; it is the broad way that leadeth straight down to hell. No, your life, your salvation, your everlasting peace, blessedness and glory, depend upon your taking God at His Word, and believing what He says because He says it. This is faith — living, saving, precious faith. May you possess it!

God's Word, then, most distinctly declares that man in his natural, unrenewed, unconverted state is Satan's bondsman. It speaks of Satan as "the god of this world," as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It speaks of man as "led captive by the devil at his will." Hence, in Paul's commission, the third thing which the gospel is to do is to turn man from "the power of Satan to God." Thus his eyes are opened; divine light comes streaming in; the power of Satan is broken, and the delivered one finds himself, peacefully and happily, in the presence of God. Like the demoniac in Mark 5, he is delivered from his ruthless tyrant, his cruel master; his chains are broken and gone; he is clothed and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What a glorious deliverance! It is worthy of God in every aspect of it, and in all its results. The poor blind slave, led captive by the devil, is set free; and not only so, but he is brought to God, pardoned, accepted, and endowed with an eternal inheritance among the sanctified. And all this is by faith, through grace. It is proclaimed in the gospel of God to every creature under heaven — not one is excluded. The great commission, whether we read it in Luke 24 or in Acts 26, assures us that this most precious, most glorious salvation is unto all.

Let us listen for a moment to our apostle as he discharges his blessed commission in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Most gladly would we transcribe the whole of his precious discourse, but our limited space compels us to confine ourselves to the powerful appeal at the end. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through *this Man*" (Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and glorified) "is preached" — not promised in the future, but preached *now*, announced as a present reality — is preached "unto you the remission of sins. And by Him all who believe *are* justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

From these words we learn, in the clearest possible manner, that every soul in that synagogue was called upon, there and then, to receive into his heart the blessed message which fell from the preacher's lips. Not one was excluded. "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." If any one had asked the apostle if the message was intended for him, what would have been the reply? "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." Was there no preliminary question to be settled? Not one. All the preliminaries had been settled at the cross. Was there no question as to election or predestination? Not a syllable about either in the whole range of this magnificent and comprehensive discourse.

Is there no such question? Not in that "great commission" whereof we speak. No doubt the grand truth of election shines in its proper place on the page of inspiration. But what is its proper and divinely appointed place? Most assuredly not in the preaching of the evangelist, but in the ministry of the teacher or pastor. When the apostle sits down to instruct believers, we hear such words as these: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did *predestinate* . ." And again: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your *election* of God."

Let it never be lost sight of, when he stands up as an ambassador of Christ, the herald of

salvation, he proclaims in the most absolute and unqualified manner a present, a personal, a perfect salvation to every creature under heaven; and every one who heard him was responsible there and then to believe. And every one who reads him now is equally so. If any one had presumed to tell the preacher that his hearers were not responsible, that they were powerless, and could not believe — that it was only deceiving them to call upon them to believe — what would have been his reply? We think we are warranted in saying that a full and overwhelming reply to this, and every such preposterous objection, is wrapped up in the solemn appeal with which the apostle closes his address, "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you."

Part 4

Having in the former papers dwelt a little upon the terms of "the great commission," we shall now, in dependence upon divine teaching, seek to unfold the truth as to the basis.

It is of the greatest importance to have a clear understanding of the solid ground on which "repentance and remission of sins" are announced to every creature under heaven. This we have distinctly laid down in our Lord's own words, "*It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*"

Here lies, in its impregnable strength, the foundation of the glorious commission whereof we speak. God — blessed forever be His holy name — has been pleased to set before us with all possible clearness the moral ground on which He commands all men everywhere to repent, and the righteous ground on which He can proclaim to every repentant soul the perfect remission of sins.

We have already had occasion to guard the reader against the false notion that any amount of repentance on the part of the sinner could possibly form the meritorious ground of forgiveness. But inasmuch as we write for those who may be ignorant of the foundations of the gospel, we feel bound to put things in the very simplest possible form, so that all may understand. We know how prone the human heart is to build upon something of our own — if not upon good works, at least upon our penitential exercises. Hence, it becomes our bounden duty to set forth the precious truth of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ as the only righteous ground of the forgiveness of sins.

True, all men are commanded to repent. It is meet and right that they should. How could it be otherwise? How can we look at that accursed tree on which the Son of God bore the judgment of sin and not see the absolute necessity of repentance? How can we harken to that solemn cry breaking forth from amid the shadows of Calvary, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and not own, from the deepest depths of our moral being, the moral fitness of repentance?

If indeed sin is so terrible, so absolutely hateful to God, so perfectly intolerable to His holy nature, that He had to bruise His well beloved and only begotten Son on the cross in order to put it away, does it not well become the sinner to judge himself, and repent in dust and ashes? Had the blessed Lord to endure the hiding of God's countenance because of our sins, and we not be broken, self-judged and subdued on account of these sins? Shall we with impenitent heart hear the glad tidings of full and free forgiveness of sins — a forgiveness which cost nothing less than the unutterable horrors and agonies of the cross? Shall we, with flippant tongue, profess to have peace — a peace purchased by the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God? If it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer for our sins, is it not morally fitting that we should repent of them?

Nor is this all. It is not merely that it becomes us, once in a way, to repent. There is far more than

this. The spirit of self-judgment, genuine contrition and true humility must characterise every one who enters at all into the profound mystery of the sufferings of Christ. Indeed, it is only as we contemplate and deeply ponder those sufferings that we can form anything approaching to a just estimate of the hatefulfulness of sin on the one hand, and the divine fullness and perfectness of remission on the other. Such was the hatefulfulness of sin, that it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer; but — all praise to redeeming love! — such were the sufferings of Christ, that God can forgive us our sins according to the infinite value which He attaches to those sufferings. Both go together; and both, we may add, exert a formative influence, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, on the Christian character from first to last. Our sins are all forgiven; but "it behoved Christ to suffer"; and hence, while our peace flows like a river, we must never forget the soul-subduing fact that the basis of our peace was laid in the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God.

This is most needful, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts. We are ready enough to receive the truth of the remission of sins, and then go on in an easy, self-indulgent, world-loving spirit, thus proving how feebly we enter into the sufferings of our blessed Lord, or into the real nature of sin. All this is truly deplorable, and calls for the deepest exercise of soul.

There is a sad lack amongst us of that real brokenness of spirit which ought to characterise those who owe their present peace and everlasting felicity and glory to the sufferings of Christ. We are light, frivolous, and self-willed. We avail ourselves of the death of Christ to save us from the consequences of our sins, but our ways do not exhibit the practical effect of that death in its application to ourselves. We do not walk as those who are dead with Christ — who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts — who are delivered from this present evil world. In a word, our Christianity is sadly deficient in depth of tone; it is shallow, feeble, and stunted. We profess to know a great deal of truth; but it is to be feared it is too much in theory — therefore not turned to practical account as it should be.

It may, perhaps, be asked, What has all this to do with "the great commission"? It has to do with it in a very intimate way. We are deeply impressed with a sense of the superficial way in which the work of evangelization is carried on at the present day. Not only are the *terms* of the great commission overlooked, but the *basis* seems to be little understood. The sufferings of Christ are not duly dwelt upon and unfolded. The atoning work of Christ is presented in its sufficiency for the sinner's need — and no doubt this is a signal mercy. We have to be profoundly thankful when preachers and writers hold up the precious blood of Christ as the sinner's only plea, instead of preaching up rites, ceremonies, sacraments good works (falsely so-called), creeds, churches, religious ordinances, and such-like delusions.

All this is most fully admitted. But at the same time we must give expression to our deep and solemn conviction that much of our modern evangelical preaching is extremely shallow and bald; and the result of that preaching is seen in the light, airy, flippant style of many of our so-called converts. Some of us seem so intensely anxious to make everything so easy and simple for the sinner that the preaching becomes extremely one-sided.

Thanks be to God, He has indeed made all easy and simple for the needy, broken-hearted, penitent sinner. He has left him nothing to do, nothing to give. It is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." It is not possible for any evangelist to go too far in stating this side of the question. No one can go beyond Rom. 4: 5 in setting forth salvation by free grace, through faith, without works of any sort or description.

But then, we must remember that the blessed apostle Paul — the greatest evangelist that ever lived, except his divine Master — did not confine himself to this one side; and neither should we. He pressed the claims of divine holiness. He called upon sinners to judge themselves, and he called upon

believers to subdue and deny themselves. He did not preach a gospel that left people at ease in the world, satisfied with themselves, and occupied with earthly things. He did not tell people that they were saved from the flames of hell and were therefore free to enjoy the follies of earth.

This was not Paul's gospel. He preached a gospel which, while it fully met the sinner's deepest need, did also most fully maintain God's glory — a gospel which, while it came down to the very lowest point of the sinner's condition, did not leave him there. Paul's gospel not only set forth a full, clear unqualified, unconditional, present *forgiveness of sins*, but also, just as fully and clearly, the *condemnation of sin*, and the believer's entire deliverance from this present evil world. The death of Christ, in Paul's gospel not only assured the soul of complete deliverance from the just consequences of sins, as seen in the judgment of God in the lake of fire, but it also set forth, with magnificent fullness and clearness, the complete snapping of every link with the world, and entire deliverance from the present power and rule of sin.

Now, here is precisely where the lamentable deficiency and culpable one-sidedness of our modern preaching are so painfully manifest. The gospel which one often hears nowadays is, if we may be allowed to use of such a term, a carnal, earthly, worldly gospel. It offers a kind of ease, but it is fleshly, worldly ease. It gives confidence, but it is rather a carnal confidence than the confidence of faith. It is not a delivering gospel. It leaves people in the world, instead of bringing them to God.

What must be the result of all this? We can hardly bear to contemplate it. We greatly fear that, should our Lord tarry, the fruit of much of what is going on around us will be a terrible combination of the very highest profession with the very lowest practice. It cannot be otherwise. High truth taken up in a light, carnal spirit tends to lull the conscience and quash all godly exercise of soul as to our habits and ways in daily life. In this way people escape from legality only to plunge into levity, and truly the last state is worse than the first.

We earnestly hope that the Christian reader may not feel unduly depressed by the perusal of these lines. God knows we would not pen a line to discourage the feeblest lamb in all the precious flock of Christ. We desire to write in the divine presence. We have entreated the Lord that every line of this paper, and of all our papers, should come directly from Himself to the reader.

Hence, therefore, we must ask the reader — and we do so most faithfully and affectionately — to ponder what is here put before him. We cannot hide from him the fact that we are most seriously impressed with the condition of things around us. We feel that the tone and aspect of much of the so-called Christianity of this our day are such as to awaken the gravest apprehension in the mind of every thoughtful observer. We perceive a terribly rapid development of the features of the last days, as detailed by the pen of inspiration. "This know also that, in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3: 1-5).

What an appalling picture! How solemn to find the same evils that characterise the heathen, as recorded in Rom. 1, reproduced in connection with the profession of Christianity! Should not the thought of this awaken the most serious apprehensions in the mind of every Christian? Should it not lead all who are engaged in the holy service of preaching and teaching amongst us to examine themselves closely as to the tone and character of their ministry, and as to their own private walk and ways? We want a more searching style of ministry on the part of evangelists and teachers. There is a lack of hortatory and prophetic ministry. By prophetic ministry mean that which brings the conscience

into the immediate presence of God. (See 1 Cor. 14: 1-3, 23-26.)

In this we are lamentably deficient. There is a vast amount of objective truth in circulation amongst us — more, perhaps, than ever since the days of the apostles. Books and periodicals by hundreds and thousands, tracts by thousands and millions, are sent forth annually.

Do we object to this? Nay; we bless God for it. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that by far the largest proportion of this vast mass of literature is addressed to the intelligence, and not enough to the heart and conscience. Now, while it is quite right to enlighten the understanding, it is quite wrong to neglect the heart and conscience. We feel it to be a most serious thing to allow the intelligence to outstrip the conscience — to have more truth in the head than in the heart — to profess principles which do not govern the practice. Nothing can be more dangerous. It tends to place us directly in the hands of Satan. If the conscience be not kept tender, if the heart be not governed by the fear of God, if a broken and contrite spirit be not cultivated, there is no telling what depths we may plunge into. When the conscience is kept in a sound condition, and the heart is humble and true, then every fresh ray of light that shines in upon the understanding ministers strength to the soul and tends to elevate and sanctify our whole moral being.

This is what every earnest spirit must crave. All true-hearted Christians must long for increased personal holiness, more likeness to Christ, more genuine devotedness of heart, a deepening, strengthening and expanding of the kingdom of God in the soul — that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

May we all have grace to seek after these divine realities! May we diligently cultivate them in our own private life, and seek in every possible way to promote them in all those with whom we come in contact! Thus shall we in some measure stem the tide of hollow profession around us, and be a living testimony against the powerless form of godliness so sadly dominant in this our day.

Christian reader! art thou one with us in this current of thought and feeling? If so, then let us most earnestly entreat thee to join us in earnest prayer to God that He will graciously raise our spiritual tone by drawing us closer to Himself, and filling our hearts with love to Him and earnest desire for the promotion of His glory, the progress of His cause, and the prosperity of His people.

Part 5

In handling our subject, we have yet to consider the *authority* and the *sphere* of "the great commission;" but ere proceeding to treat of these we must dwell a little longer on the basis. The commission is truly a great one, and would need a solid foundation on which to rest it; and such it has, blessed be God, in the atoning death of His Son. Nothing less than this could sustain such a magnificent fabric; but the grace that planned the commission has also laid the foundation; so that a full remission of sins can be preached among all nations, inasmuch as God has been glorified, in the death of Christ, as to the entire question of sin.

This is a grand point for the reader to seize. It lies at the very foundation of the Christian system. It is the keystone of the arch of divine revelation. God has been glorified as to sin. His judgment has been executed upon it. The claims of His throne have been vindicated as to it. The insult offered to His divine majesty has been flung back in the enemy's face. If the sweet story of remission of sins had never fallen upon a human ear or entered a human heart, the divine glory would none the less have been most perfectly maintained.

The Lord Jesus Christ did, by His most precious death, wipe off the stain which the enemy sought to cast upon the eternal glory of God. A testimony has been given in the cross, to all created

intelligence, as to God's thoughts about sin. It can there be seen, with all possible clearness, that a single trace of sin can never enter the precincts of the divine presence. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Sin, wherever found, must be met by divine judgment.

Where does all this come most fully and forcibly out? Assuredly in the cross. Harken to that solemn and most mysterious cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What means this wondrous inquiry? Who is the speaker? Is he one of Adam's fallen posterity? Is he a sinner? Surely not; for were he such, there would be no moral force whatever in the question. There never was a sinner on the face of this earth who, so far as he was personally concerned, did not richly deserve to be forsaken of a holy, sin-hating God. This must never be forgotten. Some people entertain most foolish notions as to this point. They have, in their own vain imagination, invented a god to suit themselves — one who will not punish sin — one who is so tender, so kind, so benevolent, that he will connive at evil and pass it over as though it were nothing.

Now, nothing is more certain than that this god of the human imagination is a false one, just as false as any of the idols of the heathen. The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, the God whom we see at the cross, is not like this. Men may reason as they will; but sin must be condemned — it must be met by the just and inflexible judgment of a sin-hating God.

We repeat the question, Who uttered those words at the opening of Ps. 22? If He was not a sinner, who was he? Wonderful to declare, He was the only spotless, perfectly holy, pure and sinless Man that ever trod this earth. He was more. He was the eternal Son of the Father, the object of God's ineffable delight, who had dwelt in His bosom from all eternity, "the brightness of His glory and the exact expression of His substance."

Yet He was forsaken of God! yes, that holy and perfect One, who knew no sin, whose human nature was absolutely free from every taint, who never had a single thought, never uttered a single word, never did a single act that was not in the most perfect harmony with the mind of God; whose whole life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, was a perfect sacrifice of sweetest odour presented to the heart of God. Again and again we see Heaven opening upon Him, and the voice of the Father is heard giving expression to His infinite complacency in the Son of His bosom. And yet, He it is whose voice is heard in that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Marvellous question! It stands alone in the annals of eternity. No such question had ever been asked before; no such question has ever been asked since; and no such question can ever be asked again. Whether we consider the One who asked the question, or the One of whom it was asked, or the answer, we must admit that it is perfectly unique. That God should forsake such an One is the most profound and marvellous mystery that could possibly engage the attention of men or angels. Human reason cannot fathom its depths. No created intelligence can comprehend its mighty compass.

Yet there it stands, a stupendous fact before the eye of faith. Our blessed Lord Himself assures us that it was absolutely necessary. "Thus it is written, and thus it *behooved* Christ to suffer." But why was it necessary? Why should the only perfect, sinless, spotless Man have to suffer? Why should He be forsaken of God? The glory of God, the eternal counsels of redeeming love, man's guilty, ruined, helpless condition — all these things rendered it indispensable that Christ should suffer. There was no other way in which the divine glory could be maintained; no other way in which the claims of the throne of God could be answered; no other way in which Heaven's majesty could be vindicated; no other way in which the eternal purposes of love could be made good; no other way in which sin could be fully atoned for, and finally taken away out of God's creation; no other way in which sins could be forgiven; no other way in which Satan and all the powers of darkness could be thoroughly vanquished;

no other way in which God could be just, and yet the Justifier of any poor ungodly sinner; no other way in which death could be deprived of its sting, or the grave of its victory; no other way in which any or all of these grand results could be reached save by the sufferings and death of our adorable Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, blessed forever be His holy name, He went through it all. He went down under the heavy billows and waves of God's righteous wrath against sin. He took the sinner's place, stood in his stead, sustained the judgment, paid the penalty, died the death, answered every question, met every demand, vanquished every foe; and having done all, He ascended into the heavens and took His seat on the throne of God, where He is now crowned with glory and honour as the divine and all-glorious Accomplisher of the entire work of man's redemption.

Such, then, is the *basis* of "the great commission" whereof we speak. Need we wonder at the *terms*, when we contemplate the basis? Can there be anything too good, anything too great, anything too glorious, for the God of all grace to bestow upon us poor sinners of the Gentiles, seeing He has been so fully glorified in the death of Christ? That most precious death furnishes a divinely righteous ground on which our God can indulge the deep and everlasting love of His heart in the perfect remission of our sins. It has removed out of the way every barrier to the full flood-tide of redeeming love which can now flow through a perfectly righteous channel, to the very vilest sinner that repents and believes in Jesus.

A Saviour-God can now publish a full and immediate remission of sins to every creature under heaven. There is positively no hindrance. God has been glorified as to the question of sin; and the time is coming when every trace of sin shall be forever obliterated from His fair creation, and those words of John the Baptist shall have their full accomplishment, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Meanwhile, the heralds of salvation are commanded to go forth to the ends of the earth and publish, without let or limitation perfect remission of sins to every soul that believes. It is the joy of God's heart to pardon sins; and it is due to the One who bore the judgment of sin on the cross that in His name forgiveness of sins should be thus freely published, fully received, and abidingly enjoyed.

But what of those who reject this glorious message — who shut their ears against it and turn away their hearts from it? This is the solemn question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to set forth the eternal destiny of those who die in their sins, as all must who refuse God's only basis of remission? Men may reason and argue as they will; but all the reasoning and argument in the world cannot set aside the Word of God, which assures us in manifold places, and in terms so plain as to leave no possible ground for questioning, that all who die in their sins — all who die out of Christ — must inevitably perish eternally must bear the consequences of their sins, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

To quote the passages in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment would require a small volume. We cannot attempt it here; nor is it necessary, inasmuch as we have gone into the subject again and again in other places.

We would here put a question which arises naturally out of our present thesis. It is this: Was Christ judged, bruised, and forsaken on the cross — did God visit His only begotten and well beloved Son with the full weight of His righteous wrath against sin — and shall impenitent sinners escape? We solemnly press this question on all whom it may concern. Men talk of its being inconsistent with the idea of divine goodness, tenderness and compassion that God should send any of His creatures to hell. We reply, Who is to be the judge? Is man competent to decide as to what is morally fitting for God to

do? And further, we ask, What is to be the standard of judgment? Anything that human reason can grasp? Assuredly not. What then? *The cross on which the Son of God died, the Just for the unjust* — this, and this only, is the great standard by which to judge the question as to sin's desert.

Who can harken to that bitter cry emanating from the broken heart of the Son of God, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and question the eternal punishment of all who die in their sins? Talk of tenderness, goodness, and compassion! Where do these shine out most brightly and blessedly? Surely in "the great commission" which publishes full and free forgiveness of sins to every creature under heaven. But would it be just, or good, or compassionate, to suffer the rejecter of Christ to escape? If we would see the goodness, kindness, mercy and deep compassion of God, we must look at the cross. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief." "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

If men reject all this, and go on in their sins, in their rebellion, in their infidel reasonings and impious speculations — what then? If men maintain that suffering for sin is not necessary, and that there is another and a better way of disposing of the matter — what then? Our Lord declared in the ears of His apostles that "it was necessary that Christ should suffer" — that there was no other way possible by which the great question could be settled. Whom are we to believe? Was the death of Christ gratuitous? Was His heart broken for nothing? Was the cross a work of supererogation? Did Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief for an end which might be gained some other way?

How monstrous are the reasonings, or rather the ravings, of infidelity! Infidel doctors begin by throwing overboard the Word of God — that peerless and perfect revelation; and then, when they have deprived us of our divine guide, with singular audacity, they present themselves before us, and undertake to point out for us a more excellent way; and when we inquire what that way is, we are met by a thousand and one fine-spun theories, no two of which agree in anything save in shutting out God and His Word.

True, they talk plausibly about a God; but it is a God of their own imagination — one who will connive at sin — who will allow them to indulge in their lusts, and passions, and pleasures, and then take them to a heaven of which they really know nothing. They talk of mercy, and kindness, and goodness; but they reject the only channel through which these can flow, namely, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. They speak not of righteousness, holiness, truth, and judgment to come. They would fain have us to believe that God put Himself to needless cost in delivering up His Son. They would ignore that marvellous transaction which stands alone in the entire history of the ways of God — the atoning death of His Son. In one word, the grand object of the devil, in all the sceptical, rationalistic and infidel theories that have ever been propounded in this world, is to shut out completely the Word of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself.

We solemnly call upon all our readers, specially our young friends, to ponder this. It is our deep and thorough conviction that the harbouring of a single infidel suggestion is the first step on that inclined plane which leads straight down to the dark and terrible abyss of atheism — down to the blackness of darkness forever.

We shall have occasion to recur to the foregoing line of thought when we come to consider the authority on which "the great commission" comes to us. We have been drawn into it by the sad fact that in every direction, and on every subject, we are assailed by the contemptible reasonings of infidelity; and we feel imperatively called upon to warn all with whom we come in contact against infidel books, infidel lectures, infidel theories in every shape and form. *May the inspired Word of God be more and*

more precious to our hearts! May we walk in its light, feel its sacred power, bow to its divine authority, hide it in our hearts, feed upon its treasures, own its absolute supremacy, confess its all-sufficiency, and utterly reject ad teaching which dares to touch the integrity of the Holy Scriptures.

Part 6

We have seen that the *basis* of "the great commission" is the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This must never be lost sight of. "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." It is a risen Christ that sends forth His heralds to preach "repentance and remission of sins." The incarnation and the crucifixion are great cardinal truths of Christianity; but it is only in resurrection they are made available for us in any way. Incarnation — precious and priceless mystery though it be — could not form the groundwork of remission of sins, for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22). We are justified by the *blood*, and reconciled by the *death* of Christ.

But it is in resurrection that all this is made good unto us. Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4: 25; Rom. 5: 9-10). "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: 3-4).

Hence, therefore, it is of the very last possible importance, for all who would carry out our Lord's commission, to know in their own souls, and to set forth in their preaching, the grand truth of resurrection. The most cursory glance at the preaching of the earliest heralds of the gospel will suffice to show the prominent place which they gave to this glorious fact.

Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost, or rather to the Holy Ghost, just come down from the risen, ascended and glorified Saviour. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.... *This Jesus hath God raised up*, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2).

So also in Acts 3: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, *whom God hath raised from the dead*; whereof we are witnesses.... Unto you first *God, having raised up His Son Jesus*, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.... And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and *preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*"

Their preaching was characterised by the prominent place which it assigned to the glorious, powerful and telling fact of resurrection. True, there was the full and clear statement of incarnation and crucifixion, with the great moral bearings of these facts. How could it be otherwise? The Son of God had to become a man to die, in order that by death He might glorify God as to the entire question of sin; destroy the power of Satan; rob death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; put away forever the sins of His people, and associate them with Himself in the power of eternal life in the new creation, where all things are of God, and where a single trace of sin or sorrow can never enter. Eternal and universal

homage and adoration to His peerless name!

Let all preachers remember the place which resurrection holds in apostolic preaching and teaching. "With great power gave the apostles witness." Of what? Incarnation or crucifixion merely? Nay; but "of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." This was the stupendous fact that glorified God and His Son Jesus Christ. It was this that attested, in the view of all created intelligences, the divine complacency in the work of redemption. It was this that demonstrated, in the most marvellous way, the complete and eternal overthrow of the kingdom of Satan and all the powers of darkness. It was this that declared the full and everlasting deliverance of all who believe in Jesus — their deliverance, not only from all the consequences of their sins, but from this present evil world, and from every link that bound them to that old creation which lies under the power of evil.

No marvel, therefore, if the apostles, filled as they were with the Holy Ghost, persistently and powerfully presented the magnificent truth of resurrection. Hear them again before the council — a council composed of the great religious leaders and guides of the people. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree." They were at issue with God on the all-important question as to His Son. They had slain Him, but God raised Him from the dead. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

So also in Peter's address to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius, speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, he says, "whom they slew, and hanged on a tree, *Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly*: not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."

The Holy Ghost is careful to set forth the weighty and, to us, profoundly interesting fact that "God raised up His Son Jesus." This fact has a double bearing. It proves that God is at issue with the world, seeing He has raised, exalted and glorified the very One whom they slew and hanged on a tree. But, blessed throughout all ages be His holy name, it proves that He has found eternal rest and satisfaction as to us, and all that was or could be against us, seeing He has raised up the very One who took our place and stood charged with all our sin and guilt.

But all this will come more fully out as we proceed with our proofs.

Let us now listen for a moment to Paul's address in the synagogue at Antioch. "Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre.

"But God raised Him from the dead. And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. And as concerning that *He raised Him up from the dead*, no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but *He whom God raised again* saw no corruption."

Then follows the powerful appeal which, though not bearing upon our present line of argument, we cannot omit in this place. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and *by Him* all that believe are *justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. *Beware* therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13: 26-41) .

We shall close our series of proofs from the Acts of the Apostles by a brief quotation from Paul's address at Athens. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that *He hath raised Him from the dead*" (Acts 17).

This is a very remarkable and deeply solemn passage. The proof that God is going to judge the world in righteousness — a proof offered to all — is that He has raised His ordained Man from the dead. He does not here name the Man; but at verse 18 we are told that some of the Athenians deemed the apostle a setter forth of strange gods, "because he preached unto them *Jesus and the resurrection.*"

From all this it is perfectly plain that the blessed Apostle Paul gave a most prominent place in all his preachings to the glorious truth of resurrection. Whether he addresses a congregation of Jews in the synagogue at Antioch, or an assembly of Gentiles on Mars Hill at Athens, he presents a risen Christ. In a word, he was characterised by the fact that he preached not merely the incarnation and the crucifixion, but the resurrection; and this, too, in all its mighty moral bearings — its bearing upon man in his individual state and destiny; its bearing upon the world as a whole, in its history in the past, its moral condition in the present, and its certain doom in the future; in its bearing upon the believer, proving his absolute, complete and eternal justification before God, and his thorough deliverance from this present evil world.

We have to bear in mind that in apostolic preaching the resurrection was not presented as a mere doctrine, but as a living, telling, mighty moral fact — a fact, the magnitude of which is beyond all power of human utterance or thought. The apostles, in carrying out "the great commission" of their Lord, pressed the stupendous fact that God had raised Jesus from the dead — had raised the Man who was nailed to the cross and buried in the grave. In short, they preached a resurrection gospel. Their preaching was governed by these words, "It was necessary that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day."

We shall now turn for a moment to the Epistles, and see the wondrous way in which the Holy Ghost unfolds and applies the fact of resurrection. But ere doing so we would call the reader's attention to a passage which is sadly misunderstood and misapplied. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "We preach Christ crucified." These words are continually quoted for the purpose of casting a damper on those who earnestly desire to advance in the knowledge of divine things. But a moment's serious attention to the context would be sufficient to show the true meaning of the apostle. Did he confine himself to the fact of the crucifixion? The bare idea, in the face of the body of Scripture which we have quoted, is simply absurd. The fact is, the glorious truth of resurrection shines out in all his discourses.

What, then, does the apostle mean when he declares, "We preach Christ crucified"? Simply this,

that the Christ whom he preached was the One whom the world crucified. He was a rejected, outcast Christ — one assigned by the world to a malefactor's gibbet. What a fact for the poor Corinthians, so full of vanity and love for this world's wisdom! A crucified Christ was the one whom Paul preached, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Remarkable words! words divinely suited to people prone to boast themselves in the so-called wisdom and greatness of this world — the vain reasonings and imaginations of the poor human mind, which all perish in a moment. All the wisdom of God, all His power, all: His greatness, all His glory, all that He is, in short, comes out in a crucified Christ. The cross confounds the world, vanquishes Satan and all the powers of darkness, saves all who believe, and forms the solid foundation of the everlasting and universal glory of God.

We shall now turn for a moment to a very beautiful passage in Rom. 4, in which the inspired writer sets forth the subject of resurrection in a most edifying way for us. Speaking of Abraham, he says, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; *he staggered not* at the promise of God through unbelief," — which is always sure to stagger, — "but was *strong in faith, giving glory to God*" — as faith always does; "and being *fully persuaded* that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

And then, lest any should say that all this applied only to Abraham, who was such a devoted, holy, remarkable man, the inspiring Spirit adds, with singular grace and sweetness, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that" — what? Gave His Son? Bruised His Son on the cross? Not merely this, but "*that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*"

Here lies the grand point of the apostle's blessed and powerful argument. We must, if we would have settled peace, believe in God as the One who raised up Jesus from the dead, and who in so doing proved Himself friendly to us, and proved too His infinite satisfaction in the work of the cross. Jesus having been "delivered for our offences," could not be where He now is if a single one of these offences remained unatoned for. But blessed forever be the God of all grace, He raised from among the dead the One who had been delivered for our offences; and to all who believe in Him righteousness shall be reckoned. "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." See how this glorious theme, the *basis* of the great commission, expands under our gaze as we pursue our study of it!

One more brief quotation shall close this paper. In Heb. 13 we read, "*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*"

This is uncommonly fine. The God of judgment met the Sin-bearer at the cross, and there, with Him, entered thoroughly into and definitively settled the question of sin. Then, in glorious proof that all was done — sin atoned for — guilt put away — Satan silenced — God glorified — all divinely accomplished — "the God of peace" entered the scene, and raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, that "great Shepherd of the sheep."

Beloved reader, how glorious is all this! How enfranchising to all who simply believe! Jesus is risen. His sufferings are over forever. God has exalted Him. Eternal Justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory; and, wondrous fact, that very diadem is the eternal demonstration that all

who believe are justified from all things, and accepted in a risen and glorified Christ. Eternal and universal hallelujahs to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

Part 7

We are now called to consider the deeply important subject of the authority on which the great commission proceeds. This we have presented to us in that one commanding and most comprehensive sentence, "It is written" — a sentence which ought to be engraved in characters deep and broad on the tablet of every Christian's heart.

Nothing can possibly be more interesting or edifying than to note the way in which our blessed Lord on all occasions and under all circumstances exalts the Holy Scriptures. He, though God over all, blessed forever, and as such the Author of all Scripture, yet, having taken His place as man on the earth, He plainly sets forth what is the bounden duty of every man, and that is to be absolutely, completely and abidingly governed by the authority of Scripture. See Him in conflict with Satan! How does He meet him? Simply as each one of us should meet him — by the written Word. It could be no example to us had our Lord vanquished him by the putting forth of divine power. Of course He could, there and then, have consigned him to the bottomless pit or the lake of fire, but that would have been no example for us, inasmuch as we could not so overcome. But on the other hand, when we find the blessed One referring to Holy Scripture, when we find Him appealing again and again to that divine authority, when we find Him putting the adversary to flight simply by the written Word, we learn in the most impressive manner the place, the value and the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Is it not of the very last possible importance to have this great lesson impressed upon us at the present moment? Unquestionably it is. If ever there was a moment in the history of the Church of God when it behoved Christians to bow down their whole moral being to this very lesson, it is the moment through which we are just now passing. On all hands the divine authority, integrity, plenary inspiration and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture are called in question. The Word of God is openly insulted and flung aside. Its integrity is called in question, and that too in quarters where we should least expect it. At our colleges and universities our young men are continually assailed by infidel attacks upon the blessed Word of God. Men who are in total spiritual blindness, and who therefore cannot possibly know anything whatever about divine things, and are utterly incompetent to give an opinion on the subject of Holy Scripture, have the cool audacity to insult the sacred volume, to pronounce the five books of Moses an imposture, to assert that Moses never wrote them at all!

What is the opinion of such men worth? Not worth the weight of a feather. Who would think of going to a man who was born in a coal mine, and had never see the sun, to get his judgment as to the properties of light, or the effect of the sun's beams upon the human constitution? Who would think of going to one who was born blind to get his opinion upon colours, or the effect of light and shade? Surely no one in his senses. Well, then, with how much more moral force, may we not ask, who would think of going to an unconverted man — a man dead in trespasses and sins — a man spiritually blind, wholly ignorant of things divine, spiritual, and heavenly — who would think for a moment of going to such a one for a judgment on the weighty question of Holy Scripture? And if such a one were audacious enough, in ignorant self-confidence, to offer an opinion on such a subject, what man in his sober senses would think of giving the slightest heed?

It will perhaps be said, "The illustration does not apply." Why not? We admit it fails in force, but most certainly not in its moral application. Is it not a commonly received axiom amongst us that no man has any right to give an opinion on a subject of which he is totally ignorant? No doubt. Well, what does the blessed apostle say as to the unconverted man? We quote the whole context for the reader. It is

morally grand, and its interest and value just now are unspeakable.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that *your faith*" — mark these words, — "*should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*"

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. *But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit*", — otherwise they could not possibly be known — "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so *the things of God knoweth no man,*

but the Spirit of God. Now we" — all true believers, all God's children — "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" — or, communicating spiritual things through a spiritual medium. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them" — be he ever so wise and learned — "because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2: 1-16).

We dare not offer an apology for giving so lengthened an extract from the Word of God. We deem it invaluable, not only because it proves that it is only by divine teaching that divine things can be understood, but also because it completely withers up all man's pretensions to give judgment as to Scripture. If the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, then it is perfectly plain that all infidel attacks upon the Word of God are absolutely unworthy of the very smallest attention. In fact, all infidel writers, be they ever so clever, ever so wise, ever so learned, are put out of court; they are not to be listened to for a moment. The judgment of an unconverted man in reference to the Holy Scriptures is more worthless than the judgment of an uneducated plowman as to the use of the differential calculus, or the truth of the Copernican system. As to each, we have only to say, he knows nothing whatever about the matter. His thoughts are absolutely good for nothing.

But how truly delightful and refreshing to turn from man's worthless notions, and see the way in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ prized and used the Holy Scriptures! In His conflict with Satan, He appeals three times over to the book of Deuteronomy. "*It is written*" is His one simple and unanswerable reply to the suggestions of the enemy. He does not reason. He does not argue or explain. He does not refer to His own personal feelings, evidences, or experiences. He does not argue from the great facts of the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the voice of the Father — precious and real as all these things were. He simply takes His stand upon the divine and eternal authority of the Holy Scriptures, and of that portion of the Scriptures in particular which modern infidels have audaciously attacked. He uses as His authority that which they are not afraid to pronounce an imposture! How dreadful for them! What will be their end, unless they repent?

Not only did the Son of God — Himself, as God, the Author of every line of Holy Scripture — use the Word of God as His only weapon against the enemy, but He made it also the basis and the material of His public ministry. When His conflict in the wilderness was over, "He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, *as His custom was*, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, *and stood up for to read*" — *His custom was to read the Scriptures publicly*.

"And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias." Here He puts His seal upon the prophet Isaiah, as before upon the law of Moses. "And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4).

Let us turn now to that most solemn parable of the rich man and Lazarus, at the close of Luke 16, in which we have a solemn testimony from the Master's own lips to the integrity, value and surpassing importance of "Moses and the Prophets" — the very portions of the divine Word which infidels impiously assail. The rich man in torment — alas, no longer rich, but miserably and eternally poor! — entreats Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, lest they also should come into that place of torment. Mark the reply! Mark it, all ye infidels, rationalists, and sceptics! Mark it, all ye who are in danger of being deluded and turned aside by the impudent and blasphemous suggestions of infidelity!

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; *let them hear them*." Yes; "hear them" — hear those very writings which infidels tell us are not divinely inspired at all, but documents palmed upon us by impostors pretending to inspiration. Assuredly the rich man knew better; indeed, the devil himself knows better. There is no thought of calling in question the genuineness of "Moses and the Prophets;" but perhaps "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Hear the weighty rejoinder! "And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now we must confess we rejoice exceedingly in the grandeur of this testimony. Nothing can be clearer, nothing higher, nothing more thoroughly confirmatory as to the supreme authority and divine integrity of "Moses and the Prophets." We have the blessed Lord Himself setting His seal to the two grand divisions of Old Testament Scripture; and hence we may with all possible confidence commit our souls to the authority of these holy writings; and not only to Moses and the Prophets, but to the whole canon of inspiration, inasmuch as Moses and the Prophets are so largely and so constantly quoted everywhere, are so intimately, yea, indissolubly, bound up with every part of the New Testament, that all must stand or fall together.

We must pass on, and turn for a moment to the last chapter of Luke — that precious section which contains "the great commission" whereof we speak. We might refer with profit and blessing to those occasions in which our blessed Lord, in His interviews with Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, ever and only appeals to the Holy Scriptures. In short, whether in conflict with men or devils, whether speaking in private or in public, whether for His public ministry or for His private walk, we find the perfect Man, the Lord from Heaven, always putting the very highest honour upon the writings of Moses and the Prophets, thus commending them to us in all their divine integrity, and giving us the very fullest and most blessed encouragement to commit our souls, for time and eternity, with absolute confidence, to those peerless writings.

We turn to Luke 24, and listen to the glowing words uttered in the ears of the two bewildered travellers to Emmaus — words which are the sure and blessed remedy for all bewilderment — the perfect solution of every honest difficulty — the divine and all-satisfying answer to every upright inquiry. We do not quote the words of the perplexed disciples; but here is the Master's reply. "Then said He unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken!*"

Alas! nowadays a man is counted a fool if he does believe all that the prophets have spoken. In many learned circles, yea, and in not a few religious circles likewise, the man who avows — as every true man ought — his hearty belief in every line of Holy Scripture, is almost sure — to be met with a sneer of contempt. It is deemed clever to doubt the genuineness of Scripture — fatal, detestable cleverness, from which may the good Lord deliver us! — cleverness which is sure to lead the soul that is ensnared by it down into the dark and dreary abyss of atheism, and the darker and more dreary abyss of hell. From all such cleverness, we again say, from the profoundest depths of our moral being, may God, in His mercy, deliver us and all our young people!

Have we not much cause to bless the Lord for these words of His addressed to His poor perplexed ones on their way to Emmaus? They may seem severe; but it is the necessary severity of a pure, a perfect, and a divinely wise love. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And" — mark these words! — "beginning at *Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." He Himself — all homage to His glorious Person! — is the divine centre of all the things contained in the Scriptures from cover to cover. He is the golden chain that binds into one marvellous and magnificent whole every part of the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation.

Hence the man that touches a single section of the sacred canon is guilty of the heinous sin of seeking to overthrow the Word of God; and of such a man even charity itself must say he knows neither the Christ of God nor God Himself. The man who dares to tamper in any way with the Word of God has taken the first step on that inclined plane that leads inevitably down to eternal perdition. Let men beware, then, how they speak against the Scriptures; and if some will speak, let others beware how they listen.

If there were no infidel listeners, there would be few infidel lecturers. How awful to think that there should be either the one or the other in this our highly favoured land! May God have mercy upon them, and open their eyes ere it be too late! Five minutes in hell will quash forever all the infidel theories that ever were propounded in this world. Oh, the egregious folly of infidelity!

We return to our chapter, which furnishes one more proof of the place assigned by our risen Lord to the Holy Scriptures. After having manifested Himself in infinite grace and tranquillising power to His troubled disciples, having shown them His hands and His feet, and assured them of His personal identity by eating in their presence, "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms*, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus *it is written.*"

Here again we have the divine seal put upon all the grand divisions of the Old Testament. This is most comforting and strengthening for all pious lovers of Scripture. To find our Lord Himself on all occasions, and under all circumstances, referring to Scripture, using it at all times and for all purposes, feeding upon it Himself and commending it to others, wielding it as the sword of the Spirit, bowing to its holy authority in all things, appealing to it as the only perfect standard, test and touchstone, the only

infallible guide for man in this world, the only unfailing light amid all the surrounding moral gloom — all this is comforting and encouraging in the very highest degree, and it fills our hearts with deepest praise to the Father of mercies who has so provided for us in all our weakness and need.

Here we might close this branch of our subject, but we feel bound to furnish our readers with two more uncommonly fine illustrations of our thesis; one from the Acts, and one from the Epistles. In Acts 24 the apostle Paul, in his address to Felix, thus expresses himself as to the ground of his faith: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*" So, then, he reverently believed in Moses and the Prophets. He fully accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as the solid foundation of his faith, and as the divine authority for his entire course. Now how did Paul know that the Scriptures were given of God? He knew it in the only way in which any one can know it, namely, by divine teaching.

God alone can give the knowledge that the Holy Scriptures are His own very revelation to man. If He does not give it, no one can; if He does, no one need. If I want human evidence to accredit the Word of God, it is not the Word of God to me. The authority on which I receive it is higher than the Word itself. Supposing I could by reason or human learning work my way to the rational conclusion that the Bible is the Word of God, then my faith would merely stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. Such a faith is worthless; it does not link me with God, and therefore leaves me unsaved, unblest, uncertain. It leaves me without God, without Christ, without hope. Saving faith is believing what God says because He says it, and this faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Intellectual faith is a cold, lifeless, worthless faith, which only deceives and puffs up; it never can save, sanctify, or satisfy.

We turn now to 2 Tim. 3: 14-17. The aged apostle, at the close of his marvellous career, from his prison at Rome, looking back at the whole of his ministry, looking around at the failure and ruin so sadly apparent on every side, looking forward to the terrible consummation of the "last days," and looking beyond all to "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, *shall give in that day,*" thus addresses his beloved son: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and *hast been assured of,* knowing of whom thou hast learned; and that *from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,* and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that *the man of God may be perfect [complete] thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

All this is unspeakably precious to every true lover of the Word of God. The place here assigned, and the virtues here attributed, to the Holy Scriptures are beyond all price. In short, it is utterly impossible to overstate the value and importance of the foregoing quotation. It is deeply touching to find the revered and beloved old veteran, in the full power of the Holy Ghost, recalling Timothy to the days of his childhood, when, at the knees of his pious mother, he drank at the pure fountain of inspiration. How did the dear child know that these holy writings were the Word of God? He knew it just in the same way that the blessed apostle himself knew it, by their divine power and effect upon his heart and conscience through the Holy Ghost.

Did the Holy Scriptures need man's credentials? What an insult to the dignity of Scripture to imagine that any human seal or guarantee is necessary to accredit it to the soul! Do we want the authority of the Church, the judgment of the Fathers, the decrees of councils, the consent of the doctors, the decision of the universities, to accredit the Word of God? Far away be the thought! Who would

think of bringing out a rush light at noon to prove that the sun shines, or to bring home its beams in their genial virtue to the human frame? What son would think of taking his father's letter to an ignorant crossing-sweeper to have it accredited and interpreted to his heart?

These figures are feebleness itself when used to illustrate the egregious folly of submitting the Holy Scriptures to the judgment of any human mind. No, the Word of God speaks for itself. It carries its own powerful credentials with it. Its own internal evidences are amply sufficient for every pious, right-minded, humble child of God. It needs no letter of commendation from men. No doubt external evidences have their value and their interest. Human testimony must go for what it is worth. We may rest assured that the more thoroughly all human evidence is sifted, and the nearer all human testimony approaches to the truth, the more fully and distinctly will all concur in demonstrating the genuineness and integrity of our precious Bible.

Further, we must declare our deep and settled conviction that no infidel theory can hold water for a moment; no infidel argument can pass muster with an honest mind. We invariably find that all infidel assaults upon the Bible recoil upon the heads of those who make them. Infidel writers make fools of themselves, and leave the divine volume just where it always was, and where it always will be, like an impregnable rock, against which the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency.

There stands the Word of God in its divine majesty, in its heavenly power, in its beautiful simplicity, in its matchless glory, in its unfathomed because unfathomable depths, in its never-failing freshness and power of adaptation, in its marvellous comprehensiveness, in its vastness of scope, its perfect unity, its thorough uniqueness. The Bible stands alone. There is nothing like it in the wide world of literature; and if anything further were needed to prove that that book which we call "The Bible" is in very deed the living and eternal Word of God, it may be found in the ceaseless efforts of the devil to prove that it is not.

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is *settled in heaven*." What remains, beloved reader, for thee? Just this: "Thy word have I *hid in my heart*, that I might not sin against Thee." Thus it stands, blessed be His holy name; and when we have His Word hid in the depths of our hearts, the theories and the arguments, the reasonings or the ravings, the questionings and the conclusions of sceptics, rationalists, and infidels, will be to us of less moment than the pattering of rain upon the window.

Thus much as to the weighty question of the "*authority*" upon which the great commission proceeds. The immense importance of the subject, and the special character of the moment through which we are passing, must account for the unusual length of this article. We feel profoundly thankful for an opportunity of bearing our feeble testimony to the power, authority, all-sufficiency, and divine glory of "the Holy Scriptures." "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

Part 8

In full keeping with all that has passed in review before us is the *sphere* of "the great commission," as set forth in that comprehensive clause, "*Among all nations*."

Such was to be the wide range of those heralds whom the risen Lord was sending forth to preach "repentance and remission of sins." Theirs was emphatically a world-wide mission. In Matt. 10 we find something quite different. There the Lord, in sending forth the twelve apostles, "commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not."

This was to be a mission exclusively to the house of Israel. There was no message for the Gentiles, no word for the poor Samaritans. If these messengers approached a city of the uncircumcised,

they were on no account to enter it. The ways of God — His dispensational dealings — demanded a circumscribed sphere for the twelve apostles sent forth by the Messiah in the days of His flesh. "The lost sheep of the house of Israel" were to be the special objects of their ministry.

But in Luke 24 all is changed. The dispensational barriers are no longer to interfere with the messengers of grace. Israel is not to be forgotten, but the Gentiles are to hear the glad tidings. The sun of God's salvation must now pour its living beams over the whole world. Not a soul is to be excluded from the blessed light. Every city, every town, every village, every hamlet, every street, lane and alley, hedge and highway, must be diligently and lovingly searched out and visited, so that "every creature under heaven" might hear the good news of a full and free salvation.

How like our God is all this! How worthy of His large, loving heart! He would have the tide of His salvation flowing from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His righteousness is unto all, and the sweet tale of His pardoning love must be wafted far and wide over a lost and guilty world. Such is His most gracious purpose, however tardy His servants may be in carrying it out.

It is of the greatest importance to have a clear view as to this branch of our subject. It brings out the character of God in a very magnificent light, and it leaves man wholly without excuse. Salvation is sent to the Gentiles. There is absolutely no limit, and no obstacle. Like the sun in the heavens, it shines on all. If a man will persist in hiding himself in a mine or in a tunnel, so that he cannot see the sun, he has none but himself to blame. It is no defect in the sun if all do not enjoy his beams. He shines for all. And in like manner, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared." No one need perish because he is a poor lost sinner, for "God will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

And then, that not a single feature might be lacking to set forth with all possible force and fullness the royal grace which breathes in "the great commission," our blessed Lord does not fail to point out to His servants the remarkable spot which was to be the centre of their *sphere*. He tells them to "begin at Jerusalem." Yes, Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified; where every indignity that human enmity could invent was heaped upon His divine Person; where a murderer and a robber was preferred to "God manifest in the flesh"; where human iniquity had reached its culminating point in nailing the Son of God to a malefactor's cross — here the messengers were to begin their blessed work; that was to be the centre of the sphere of their gracious operations; and from thence they were to travel to the utmost bounds of the habitable globe. They were to begin with "Jerusalem sinners" — with the very murderers of the Son of God, and then go forth to publish everywhere the glorious tidings, so that all might know that precious grace of God which was sufficient to meet the crimson guilt of Jerusalem itself.

How glorious is all this! The guilty murderers of the Son of God were the very first to hear the sweet tale of pardoning love, so that all men might see in them a pattern of what the grace of God and the blood of Christ can do. Truly the grace that could pardon Jerusalem sinners can pardon any one; the blood that could cleanse the betrayers and murderers of the Christ of God can cleanse any sinner outside the precincts of hell. These heralds of salvation, as they made their way from nation to nation, could tell their hearers where they had come from; they could tell of that superabounding grace of God which had commenced its operations in the guiltiest spot on the face of the earth, and which was amply sufficient to meet the very vilest of the sons of Adam.

Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding:

Ransomed souls the tidings swell;

'Tis a deep that knows no sounding;
Who its length or breadth can tell?

Precious grace of God! May it be published with increased energy and clearness throughout the divinely appointed sphere. Alas, that those who know it should be so slow to make it known to others! That slowness is, most surely, not of God. He absolutely delights in the publication of His saving, pardoning grace. He tells us that the feet of the evangelist are beautiful upon the mountains. He assures us that the preaching of the cross is a sweet savour to His heart. Ought not all this to quicken our energies in the blessed work? Ought we not in every possible way to seek to carry out the gracious desire of the heart of God? Why are we so slow? Why so cold and indolent? Why so easily discouraged and repulsed? Why so ready to make excuses for not speaking to people about their souls?

There stands the great commission shining on the eternal page of inspiration in all its moral grandeur — its *terms*, its *basis*, its *authority*, its *sphere*! The work is not yet done. Nearly nineteen hundred years have rolled past since the risen Saviour sent forth His messengers; and still He waits, in sweet, long-suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish. Why are we not more willing-hearted in carrying out the gracious desire of His heart? It is not by any means necessary that we should be great preachers, or powerful public speakers, in order to carry on the precious work of evangelization. What we want is a heart in communion with the heart of God, the heart of Christ, and that will surely be a heart for souls. We do not, and cannot, believe that one who is not led out in loving desire after the salvation of souls can really be in communion with the mind of Christ. We cannot be in His presence and not think of the souls of those around us. For whoever cared for souls as He did? Mark His marvellous path! — His ceaseless toil as a teacher and preacher! — His thirst for the salvation and blessing of souls!

And has He not left us an example that we should follow His steps? Are we doing so in this one matter of making known the blessed gospel? Are we seeking to imitate Him in His earnest diligence in seeking the lost? See Him at the well of Sychar! Mark His whole deportment! Listen to His earnest, loving words! Note the joy and refreshment of His spirit as He sees one poor sinner receiving His message! "I have meat to eat that ye know not of;" "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

We would earnestly entreat the Christian reader to consider this great subject in the divine presence. We deeply feel its importance. We cannot but judge that, amid all the writing and reading, all the speaking and hearing, all the coming and going, there is a sad lack of deep-toned, earnest, solemn dealing with individual souls. How often do we rest satisfied with inviting people to come to the preaching, instead of seeking to bring them directly to Christ? How often do we rest content with the periodical preaching, instead of earnestly seeking, all the week through, to persuade souls to flee from the wrath to come? No doubt it is good to preach, and good to invite people to the preaching; but we may rest assured there is something more than all this to be done, and that something must be sought in deeper communion with the heart and mind of Christ.

Some there are who speak disparagingly of the blessed and holy work of evangelization. We tremble for them. We feel persuaded they are not in the current of the Master's mind, and hence we utterly reject their thoughts. It is to be feared that their hearts are cold in reference to an object that engages the heart of God. If so, they would need to humble themselves in His presence, and seek to get their souls restored to a true sense of the magnitude, importance and interest of the grand question before us. At least let them beware of how they seek to discourage and hinder others whose hearts the

Lord has moved to care for precious, immortal souls.

The present is most assuredly not the time for raising difficulties, and starting questions which can only prove stumbling-blocks in the pathway of earnest workers. It becomes us to seek in every right way to strengthen the hands of all who are endeavouring, according to their measure, to publish the glad tidings, and make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let us see that we do so, so far as in us lies; and above all things, let us never utter a sentence calculated to hinder any one in the blessed work of winning souls to Christ.

There is one more point in our subject which we feel must not be omitted, and that is the power by which "the great commission" was to be carried out. To leave this out would be a great defect, a serious blank indeed; and we are the more anxious to notice it, inasmuch as the special form in which the power was communicated links itself, in a very remarkable way, with that which has been before us. If the *sphere* was to be "all nations," the *power* must be adapted thereto; and, blessed be God, so it was.

Our blessed Lord, in closing His commission to His disciples, said, "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This promise was fulfilled, this power was communicated on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came down from the ascended and glorified Man, to qualify His servants for the glorious work for which He had called them. They had to "tarry" until they got the power. How could they go without it? Who but the Holy Ghost could speak adequately of the love of God, of the person, work and glory of Christ? Who but He could enable any one to preach repentance and remission of sins? Who but He could properly handle all the weighty subjects comprehended in "the great commission?" In a word, the power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential in every branch of Christian service, and all who go to work without it will find it to be barrenness, misery, and desolation.

We must call the reader's special attention to the form in which the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost. It is full of deepest interest, and lets us into the precious secret of the heart of God in a most touching manner.

Let us turn to Acts 2.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were *all with one accord in one place*" — instructive and suggestive fact! — "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them *cloven tongues*, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" — He had full possession of their hearts and minds, full sway over their whole moral being — blessed condition! — "And they began to speak with *other tongues*" (not in the absurd and unintelligible jargon of cunning impostors or deluded fanatics, but) "as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven.*" Note this fact.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that *every man heard them speak in his own language.*" — How real — how telling! — "And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how *hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?*" — not merely wherein we were educated — "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, *we do hear them speak in our tongues* the wonderful works of God."

What a marvellous occurrence! How marked the coincidence! God so ordered it, in His infinite wisdom and perfect grace, that there should be assembled in the city of Jerusalem, at the exact moment, people from every nation on the face of the whole earth, in order that — even should the twelve apostles fail to carry out their commission — all might hear, in the very dialect in which their mothers first whispered into their infant ears the accents of a mother's love, the precious tidings of God's salvation.

Can anything exceed this in interest? Who can fail to see in the fact here recorded that it was the loving desire of the heart of God to reach every creature under Heaven with the sweet story of His grace? The world had rejected the Son of God, had crucified and slain Him; but no sooner had He taken His seat at the right hand of God than down came the august Witness, God the Spirit, to speak to man — to every man — to speak to him, not in accents of withering denunciation, not in the thundering anathemas of judgment, but in accents of deep and tender love, to tell him of full remission of sins through the blood of the cross.

True, He called on man to judge himself, to repent, to take his only true and proper place. Why not? How could it be otherwise? Repentance is — as we have already fully shown and earnestly insisted upon in these papers — a universal and abiding necessity for man. But the Spirit of God came down to speak face to face with man, to tell him in his own mother tongue of the wonderful works of God. He did not speak to a Hebrew in Latin, or a Roman in Greek; but He spoke to each in the very dialect in which he was born, thus proving to a demonstration — proving in the most affecting manner possible — that it was God's gracious desire to make His way to man's heart in deepest, richest, fullest grace. All homage to His name!

How different it was when the law was to be published from mount Sinai! If all the nations of the earth had been assembled round that fiery mount, they could not have understood one word — unless, indeed, any one happened to know the Hebrew tongue. The law was addressed to one people, it was wrapped up in one language, it was enclosed in the ark. God took no pains to publish the record of man's duty in every language under Heaven. But when grace was to be published, when the glad tidings of salvation were to be sounded abroad, when testimony was to be borne to a crucified, risen, ascended and coming Saviour and Lord, then, verily, God the Holy Ghost came down, for the purpose of fitting His messengers to speak to every man in a tongue which he could understand.

Facts are powerful arguments, and assuredly the above two facts, in reference to the law and the gospel, must speak to every heart, in a manner the most convincing, of the matchless grace of God. God did not send forth heralds to publish the law to "all nations." No — this was reserved for "the great commission" on which we have been dwelling, and which we now earnestly commend, with all its great subjects, to the serious attention of every reader.