

THE
GOSPEL COMMISSION,

BEING

A SERMON

DELIVERED JULY 11th, 1841,

IN AID OF THE

Suffolk & Norfolk

BAPTIST HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

BY JOHN STEVENS,

MINISTER OF SALAM CHAPEL, MEARD'S COURT, WARDOUR STREET.

“And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”
MARK xvi. 20.

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It is now more than eighteen hundred years since the Lord of glory appeared amongst men, in the likeness of sinful flesh; since he was crucified through weakness; since he rose again from the sepulchre of death, and gave his Apostles the gospel commission, with which *they went forth and preached everywhere*. In this we may view them as pattern-men, and therefore as our guides, in all matters of faith and practice, and so in our attempts to spread the everlasting gospel in the villages of our land. It is not only said that "they preached everywhere," but that the Lord wrought with them, and confirmed their message. The Evangelist adds his hearty *amen*, to this testimony, which we are allowed to reiterate, saying, So be it; and so it is, and shall be, until all the gracious purpose of the infinite God, is consummated in the advancement of a people whom he ordained for ever to live.

Having but just now heard the context read, you are well aware of the connexion of the words selected therefrom, as the foundation of our present discourse. We are reminded thence of Him in whom our hope is centered, and of the important cause in behalf of which he deigned to visit our sinful world. He rose from the dead in great power and glory, mighty to save, having "all power in heaven and in earth," to fully accomplish the sublime ends of his mission to this land of sorrow and death. After shewing himself at intervals for forty days, he ascended in holy triumph to his celestial throne. Mighty angels awaited his ascent, and worshipped him as he rode home to his glorious kingdom; while devils were arrested and confounded in the greatness of his power. The triumphs of that memorable day were unseen by eyes of flesh, but revelation intimates how gloriously he spoiled principalities

and powers, hurling them from their usurped eminence into closer confinement.

Our victorious Lord and Saviour, at the time of his ascension, gave his commission to his chosen servants, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." For he was not going from our world to care no more about it. Although he had the prospect of a glorious throne in heaven, he nevertheless kept an interested view on the subsequent welfare of his kingdom in this world. The portals of blessedness were opened to bid him welcome, and the glories of his person and offices were not to be longer eclipsed; still he sought not an honour for himself only, but as the representative of his redeemed brethren. His entrance into the heavenly and triumphant world was not as a private person, but as the public head of myriads who had entered there in earlier days; even of millions who were to follow him into his glory and joy, in ages then to come.

In the whole of this wonderful scene of mercy and triumph, his mind was both in heaven and on earth; nor could his affections be bounded by any localities. The deep interest he had taken in unknown millions of the human race, to die for their release, remained fresh on his loving heart. And still his thoughts ran on the habitations of the sons of men; and he gave commission accordingly to his chosen Apostles. For, having accomplished a marvellous work of redemption, it was not to be wrapt in concealment, nor lie hid in darkness. It was not intended to raise a commotion in Judea and Galilee, and to create a stir at the gates of Jerusalem. These were produced indeed, but there was a further design in our great Master's mind. He resolved that what he had done should be published; that what he had accomplished should be explained; that what he had purchased should be revealed to the people of his care. Those whom he sufficiently loved to die for them, he still sufficiently loves to send to them, and to send for them, and thereby to gather them from the cities, the towns, and the villages of our world. For I am persuaded that he is well acquainted with all the regions of human abode, and knows where to find his saints: and if there be many worlds, he is ignorant of none of them.

This renowned Prince of Life gave to his Apostles their commission, charging them to preach the gospel to every creature. And our text informs us that "they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord Jesus working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." Now though the miraculous operations here referred to, have long ceased, we still have the benefit of them, because they are

plainly recorded in the testament of our Lord. Reading by faith we perceive how the testimony was clothed at first with miraculous signs, and therefore have the same ground to believe it, which they had who saw those wonders performed.

Let us now consider what is taught us in our text. As to *the gospel commission*; and as to *our duty concerning it*; as to what the Lord has said to us; and as to what we have to do concerning what he has said. (And having to plead in behalf of the *Suffolk and Norfolk Baptist Home Missionary Society*, I have some things to read to you, transmitted to me by the Secretary of the Society.) It cost our Lord his life to give *the commission* of which we speak. For had he not proceeded as he did, there never could have been a proclamation of the kind made; or an everlasting gospel to preach anywhere. But now, wherever the gospel of Christ goes, the grandeur of the cross rides forth in that triumphing car. Wherever the gospel trumpet sounds, the music of the Saviour's voice drops on our ears. Wherever the grand atonement is attested, a ground of attachment is presented. And wherever his noble character is set forth and exemplified, an unerring pattern of true holiness is laid before his admiring disciples. We may therefore remark that the preaching of the blessed gospel is big with consequences; that it is fraught with the highest causes, and cannot fail to be productive of the most lasting and beneficial effects. Yes, even to the elect and mighty angels, its truths are instructive; and their joys are increased by the glorious discoveries of the throne of divine Majesty in the gospel plan; containing the development of the mystery hid in God, and the bright disclosure of him who had been concealed in the bosom of his Father, but became revealed to the nations of this world "in the fulness of the time."

1st. *The commission* given by our Lord *originates* in the eternal purpose of the God of all grace. This must be deemed the origin of this holy mystery of wisdom, love, and power. In the sovereign salvation of condemned men, the very heart of God is opened and manifested in diversified expressions of unthought-of goodness, unexpected grace, and unprocurable mercy; which the wicked, the worthless, and the undone could never have anticipated, laid claim to, realized, or even wished for. Had it pleased the eternal God of all grace to keep his purpose secret, it must have remained for ever unknown: for who by searching can find out God? "There is no searching of his understanding." Had he held back the lustre of his throne of grace, no mortal could ever have served him in the bright beams of his glory, that shine around him in heaven.

The commission given is an outflow of the sovereign favour of Almighty God. The testimony of scripture is, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel." Hence the words of the commission are, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And again, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." This holy gospel then, was a hidden depth of divine wisdom, a treasure concealed, even the riches of God's goodness towards worthless men; but it is now disclosed by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in our world. By dying himself, he has abolished death, and has taken away its sting, by yielding himself to be stung. And by his powerful resurrection, he has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, which he has formed and filled, and also given in commission to be preached to all nations, with the promise of his presence and power to the end of the world.

"God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," by the inspired gospel of his grace. And it is by this glorious gospel that he has visited us lost Gentiles, to take out of us a people for his name. Now, seeing these things are divinely recorded, no popular preaching, no pretended mission from heaven, no constructed society or community of good men, or of bad men, can ever prevent the accomplishment of God's gracious design. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. The means he has chosen will assuredly answer the end he has intended. And why may we not hope the *Home Missionary Society*, now referred to, is one of the means that he will deign to bless? Darkness may for a season hover over Zion, thick clouds may surround the mercy-seat of our God; but he will maintain the thoughts of his heart to all generations. He will work all things after the counsel of his own will: and ultimately the objects of his love and choice will be gathered into such marvellous light as shall open into everlasting day.

2nd. *The commission* given is determinate as to its subject, and well adapted to the conditions and circumstances of a guilty and helpless people; and such are all they to whom it

is sent. There is only one message to citizens and villagers. The subject being determined, no other can be introduced, 1 Cor. ii. 2. No change can be admitted, no improvement can be made, because the mission is from God. Whatever may be pretended or wished for, the truth of God can never prove injurious; neither can any false conception of mind, alter a true proposition. The real sentiment of the gospel of distinguishing grace must remain through all events and periods immutably the same. In this gracious gospel, we behold the grand design of shewing the harmonized attributes of the holy God, through the free and endless pardon of all manner of sin and blasphemy. Herein is disclosed to us the sovereign transfer of guilt from the eternally adopted family, to their chosen Head; and the imputation of his foreknown obedience to them. Thus, in him was prepared a secure salvation, present to God, founded in his unalterable purpose, and subject to the determinate dispensation of his invincible power.

Hence the conclusion is, that the system of the gospel is what the Lord God himself has devised and made known; and which must inevitably prosper in securing the highly important ends that he had pre-ordained. A good minister of Christ can preach the gospel, but only God himself could produce it. We may advance a step further, and say, a good minister of Christ *must* preach the gospel: his language is, "Wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." He is not to attempt to alter it, or conceal it; neither is he required to make it successful; yet is he to be seriously careful, lest, through his manner of preaching, he should become the occasion of the cross of Christ being made of none effect, 1 Cor. i. 17.

"It is not by wisdom, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." I admire the exemplification of this sovereign principle among a number of my poor fellow-labourers in different parts of Suffolk, who, with a very small temporal support, are traversing the villages, and spreading among the inhabitants, in their own homely style of language, the joyful news of salvation through Jesus, who died to redeem lost sinners to God. Hereby their churches become increased and strengthened, though little of this world's wealth or wisdom be found amongst them.

Those Suffolk preachers, without erudition and eloquence, are making their way into the open field; are turning the world upside down; and sowing the seed of spiritual knowledge in their several neighbourhoods. When reading in my study the printed reports of the success that had attended their united efforts; I felt as though I must some day go and witness their exertions, and join with them in their honest zeal,

for our common cause. If the hand of the Lord work with his servants, their message is sure of a glad reception, and his name will have all the praise. That form of sound doctrine which proceeds from his own eternal purpose and grace, can never fail to accomplish that which he pleases, but must surely prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. Through the mighty gospel of Christ the prince of darkness is cast out; his dominion is destroyed; and thousands who would have passed in gross ignorance to their graves, are hereby turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But *where* will you find gentlemen from our famous universities, devoting their time in going on foot from one village to another, as do the plain men herein referred to? I should be ready to say, *no where*. On the contrary, you must encourage the doing of this laborious and most useful work, by men who more resemble the Galilean fishermen through whom the kingdom of our Saviour was at first set up in the world. Yes, my good friends, you must send the gospel to the villagers by those who are willing to carry it among them, in a manner of speaking, suited to their own dialect and habit of thinking. In such connections the pride of fine oratory would starve and be starved.

It should be duly remembered that the holy subjects of gospel truth are not intended by their divine Author to tickle the ear, and please the fancy; but to enlighten the understanding; to purify the affections; to endear the Saviour; and to utterly subdue the carnal mind to the obedience of Jesus Christ our Lord. Then is a good work performed which will last for ever. Nevertheless, when the weakness of the agents employed comes under notice, some, perhaps, may be ready to fear for the cause; while constrained to own, that by such "weak things," God has been pleased "to confound the things which are mighty." *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* God works by means that men are apt to undervalue and despise. Distinguishing grace—matchless merits—invincible power—immutable faithfulness—fervent prayerfulness—a lively hopefulness—a vanquished enemy—ministering angels—a living Redeemer—a sanctified cross—and an immortal crown in full prospect! these, my brethren, are the themes which fire the heart, through influence divine, and often bring lost ignorant creatures to worship God in the Spirit, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, to the entire exclusion of confidence in the flesh.

It is said that the apostles *went forth and preached everywhere*. May we not consider them as fit patterns for imitation,

in matters of faith and practice? Were they not village preachers? In their conduct, then, we see encouragement held forth to those good men who are exerting themselves as friends of the *Home Missionary Society*. They endured persecution who appeared on the Lord's side in the beginning, and suffered loss *for* Christ, but they have lost nothing *by* him in the end: neither can those who now follow them in the same cause of mercy and truth.

3rd. *The commission* given is *limited* in its design, as to its objects. This is a point that claims our attention. *The doctrine* is preached to men in general, while the *salvation itself* is imparted to the elect amongst them. The doctrine is preached to all without distinction, and yet is, or ought to be, preached in a distinct manner. It is preached to all men in our public congregations, while the Spirit of God accompanies it with saving power in the hearts of those who are redeemed to God, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, Rev. v. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 10. While this limitation marks the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace and redemption, it involves no injustice to any one. The gospel of distinguishing grace is the due of no people, and certainly the salvation it reveals can be the just right of no man by nature. But the Apostles preached it publicly everywhere. They preached Christ—they preached him as on a cross—they preached him as exalted on a throne—they preached him as the end of the law—they preached him as the fulness of the gospel—they preached him as the friend of sinners—they preached him as the Son of the Father—they preached him as the head of the church—they preached him as the shepherd of his flock—they preached him as “the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness”—they preached him as having brought in everlasting righteousness for sinners undone—they preached him who satisfied flaming justice—who unbarred the gates of paradise—shut up the gates of perdition, that his redeemed should never enter—who attained a triumph—gained a just honour—wears a glorious crown—and waits to bless his millions with diadems like his own. His cheering words to his followers are, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me, in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father, in his throne.” Dost thou believe this, poor sinner? Because if there be no faith in the prospect, there can be no spiritual feeling of the subject.

Faith is the fit principle ordained of God, to give heavenly things a true subsistence in the regenerate mind, whereby the christian character is formed. It drinks in the spirit of the gospel testimony, and realizes the dignity of the topic, to the

saving of the soul from moral darkness, and from Satanic dominion. This special faith looks to Jesus as the Prince of heaven, who has bought with his blood, and covered with his obedience, the guilty, the worthless, and the ruined. For this almighty Saviour delivers the damnable, and justifies the ungodly, without sheltering their ungodliness. These things has he done at his own expense, and to his own everlasting praise. Now, although we are to preach the gospel of salvation to all men, yet we are to carefully maintain that salvation is imparted to some men only, and that not by chance, but designedly, according to God's eternal election, and the grace which was given us in Christ before the world began. And this is the grace of the gospel theme, which is conveyed through the doctrines of grace to the souls of sinful men, rendering them new creatures, and distinguishing them as men of God, and men for God. Thus while the word of salvation sounds in the ears of the congregation generally, as before observed, the salvation itself is conveyed into the hearts of men eternally chosen in Christ, and absolutely redeemed by him, Eph. i. 4. Heb. ix. 12.

The limitation we have mentioned exemplifies the Sovereignty of God, without in the least violating the claims of his justice. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy. He shows favour that none could deserve, and grants a salvation which might have been withheld without injustice, while every mouth is stopped from boasting. Truth ever tends to abase the self-exalted, to lay low the imperious, to empty the vain-glorious, to supply the necessitous, and to revive the hope of those who are ready to faint. What can the true disciple need, that his Lord's commission does not contain? There is nothing in this doctrine of sovereign and limited mercy, my christian friend, to discourage thee. Come on with thy empty sack. Do you reply, "But there is no money it it." I rejoin there is none wanted. The salvation of Christ is dispensed, without money and without price: though it cost our Lord his life to purchase our pardon, it is to us perfectly free. Grace saves us through *his* merits, but not through ours. Sin is obliterated, the sinner is embosomed, the lost stranger becomes housed, and the helpless supplicant is saved, with an everlasting salvation, to the praise and glory of distinguishing grace.

4th. *The commission is most powerful* in its operations, and sure as to its effects and ends. We are so to preach the gospel as to shew that its power never fails. It may be hated, but it cannot be hindered, as to the sovereign ends designed by it. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that

which I please," saith the Lord. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." There is an "exceeding greatness in his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." We know that "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation." "They preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." The salvation it publishes is not a probable salvation, but a sure and endless one. What it will not at last be found to have effected amongst men, we may safely conclude, it never was designed to effect. Thus, while the doctrine of salvation is preached to all, it is manifest in the nature and design of the doctrine, that God has a chosen people among men; that he so loves them that he will never lose them; that the gospel is sent to call them out and bring them to himself. As it is written, "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." This is still his design, it is, however, different from saying his visit to the Gentiles is to save them all. To labour by all means to save some, is not the same as labouring by some means to save all. The popular mode of speaking tends to keep God's election completely out of sight. No deep-rooted prejudices of the human breast shall be permitted to hinder the salvation of any one of God's chosen people; nor shall any man perish for whom justice is atoned. For spiritual blessings are not loseable blessings. The procurement of pardon secures the reception of it by all for whom it is purchased through our Saviour's sufferings and death. The Holy Spirit is as able and as willing to *apply* the atonement, as Christ was to *make it*. This is no small encouragement to God's chosen ministers, who go forth among the enemies of God, and of the gospel with which they are sent; that the Lord has promised to be with them, and thus it becomes evident that the work of conversion is not of man, but of God. "We have this (gospel) treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The means is preaching the gospel; the power that renders the means effectual to salvation is divine. The *hand of the Lord* was with the ministers of his word, and a great number believed, even as many as were ordained to eternal life, and those all turned to God. If the same hand of the Lord be with the *home missionaries*, their labours will prove successful to the salvation of many of the villagers.

5th. *The commission* is general as to place: the apostles preached *everywhere*—to all the world—to every creature under heaven—to all men, v. 15, Matt. xxiv. 14. and xxviii. 19. Col. i. 5, 6, 23. And daily in the temple and in every house

they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ, Acts v. 42. Notwithstanding the passages referred to, we cannot understand the clause "everywhere" in the most literal sense. It is not to be imagined that the eleven good men to whom the commission was given, were to speak to every person then existing on the earth; but they were no longer to restrict their ministry to the men of their own nation, but to preach unto the Gentiles as well as the Jews, the great salvation of God. They were henceforth to go everywhere, as the providence of God should afford them opportunity. He who gave this general charge, still retained a right to introduce any exception thereunto, as in his unerring wisdom should seem best. Therefore, we are told that, "When they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the *Holy Ghost* to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Some read, "the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not;" the Lord having work for them to do at that time elsewhere. This shews that there is a set time to favour men with the tidings of salvation, and that God's message must be delivered to them *when* he pleases. It is evident that the gospel was preached among the Bithynians afterwards; as Peter includes them in his address to the strangers scattered in those parts of pro-consular Asia. When the Lord's time came to send his word to the heathens by Missionaries, he raised up agents for the work. Until his time came, ministers and churches were not stirred up to engage in the work. Of late, the attention of the churches has become excited to the cause of *Home Missions*. And this revival has affected the churches in Suffolk and Norfolk, in whose aid I am now called to address you. The Lord seems to have kindled among them a deeper sense of their *obligation* to spread abroad the religion which the Saviour introduced, and to promote the knowledge of what they had formerly imagined it sufficient for *themselves* to know and retain. It was well to *hold fast* the faith; but of late years many have resolved to exert their abilities in also *holding it forth*, Phil. ii. 16. Herein let the Lord be magnified.

Whither the joyful news of pardoning mercy shall go is under his divine control, "who hath the key of David, who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He has authoritatively said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." James observed that, "Simeon had declared how God *at the first* did visit the Gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for his name, Acts xv. 14."

To the last, his visit will involve the same end. The popular style of our time is more general; his visit we are told is not to *take out*, but to *take all*; to save the *whole world* is now the language we are constantly hearing. The tendency hereof is to intimate that, the objects of saving mercy are unforeknown, and insecure. Such general expressions greatly tend to keep God's sovereign election out of sight, and out of remembrance; and at the same time to conceal a just representation of the efficacy and fruits of our Saviour's death, in respect of them for whom he suffered.

It may be safely asserted that, there is not one passage of holy scripture, wherein redemption is the subject intended, that will allow us to understand the term *world* to signify every man in the world. And as to the phrase *whole world*, it is evident that it can only mean many out of all parts of the world. When John says, "The world knew him not," he could not mean that no man knew him. He also says, "All the world wondered after the beast:" he could not mean that Christ had no followers. Again, he says, "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" The clause *whole world*,* in 1 John ii. 2. can no more be understood of every individual of the human race, than the same clause can be so taken in 1 John v. 19. where the Apostle says, "We know that we are of God, and *the whole world* lieth in wickedness." They who are of God are apart from *the whole world* that lieth in wickedness. The Lord's elect are of the whole world, while yet the whole world are not the elect of God. God has made this world the cradle of his kingdom, and the nursery of his new-born family. He is now gathering together his beloved and redeemed children that are scattered abroad. Nor will this view of his dispensation, damp the ardour of wise and godly men, in their exertions to preach the glad tidings of everlasting salvation. Paul "endured all things for the elect's sakes, that they might also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." He was a zealous missionary, and flew abroad like a seraph, throughout the Roman Empire, and spread the sanctifying light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, among thousands of benighted heathens. He beheld Rome in her greatness, but he gloried only in the cross of his redeeming Saviour. His language was, "From Jerusalem, and round

* The *whole world*, then, in this place, is the whole people of God, (opposed to the Jewish nation,) scattered abroad throughout the *whole world*, of what nation, kindred, tongue, or family soever, who are some of all sorts, not all of every sort; so that this place makes nothing for general redemption.—JOHN OWEN, D. D.

about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." He lets his readers know *what* he preached, and *where* he preached, for he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: he knew it to be the power of God unto salvation. It resembles a chain of a thousand links, wherein every link contributes to the usefulness and value of the whole. It is the good news of salvation.

I am hoping that, through the Holy Spirit of the Lord, your minds may be so enlightened, your christian affection so moved, and your conduct so duly actuated, that, through your liberality the Suffolk and Norfolk Home Missionary Society may be encouraged to persevere in their laudable exertions among the villagers.

Be it then observed, that, the commission given by our blessed Lord, is important in its subject, and mighty in its effects and ends. These things are well accounted for in the language of our text: they went forth and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them*, and *confirming the word* with signs following. Amen. What said our Lord when he gave his Apostles their charge? He said. "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." What, as a mere spectator? No, but by a divinely pervading energy. To mark their faults? Not for that only, but to assist their infirmities. To judge of the correctness of their doctrine? Not so merely, but to clothe it with designed effects, and important consequences, which should evermore reflect its Author's praise.

It is not enough that we have good sentiments in our heads; but we want the energy: the firing spark, the fanning breeze, and sanctifying flame of the Holy Spirit's influence, scattering hence our darkness, and enlivening our exertions. And, if we be thus blessed, will it not dispose us to minister to the instruction and comfort of others? Having obtained mercy by means of the gospel, you surely must submissively, but affectionately, desire, that your fellow-sinners may share in the undiminishable blessing which has yielded you such permanent delight; you would not hinder your fellow-sinners from going to heaven were it in your power, but will you afford them all the assistance you can?

I come now to notice what our text teaches us, as to *our duty* respecting the gospel commission.

1. To set a very high value on the great commission of our Lord to his Apostles, and through them to us. But if we do this, we shall certainly be disposed to give it the utmost publicity that may be in our power, according to our circumstances.

2. To labour after a better understanding of it ourselves, and to take heed that *we* commend it to others on our lips, and in

our lives. It must be our watchful and prayerful endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things : by living *for* him as well as *by* him. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us aim to walk in him.

3. To pray ardently for the success of the everlasting gospel, and by such means as may be in our power, to further the object of our prayers. If we thus act, we shall, according to our little ability, help to maintain the preaching of Christ and him crucified ; Christ and him exalted ; for the benefit of our fellow-sinners around. We have some strong inducements hereunto. The Lord works by means of his own choosing, but these require support, and thus afford frequent opportunity for the expression of good feeling towards his interest. He has other sheep which he said *he must bring* : they not only may be saved ; but they may not be left to perish. He has interwoven the honour of his name with the final salvation of his people. The Society for which I now plead is of like faith and hope with ourselves. Its ministers have been successful, and it has been made instrumental in doing much good in the villages. A report hereof I am now to read to you, after which I am expecting a liberal collection will be made.

A Statement made by the Secretary of the Society.

“ During the last two years very much good has been effected in the county of Suffolk, through the instrumentality of the Home Missionary Society ; conducted by the ministers and members of the churches, who are personally acquainted with the several localities where the operations of the Society are carried on. Nineteen ministers receive assistance from the fund to defray the extra expense of their village labours. The villages visited by them, extend over nearly the whole county. From the right of Ipswich to the sea-side, Pin Mill, Woolverston, Shotly, and three other adjoining villages : Felix Stow, Walton, Trimley, Curtaim, Faulkenham, Waldringfield, including nearly all the principal villages from the sea to Woodbridge. From thence ten villages are preached in, extending to Orford, and to Wickham market ; and in this district, during *the last three years, more than Fifty persons have been baptized and added to the church at Tunstall.*

“ We then take a tract of country, including the villages in the neighbourhood of Friston, Aldringham, down to Westleton, and Dunwich, and thence to Lowestoft. This includes an extent of country of more than forty miles ; and yet only just one side of the county, and only a portion of the villages. Then from Halesworth to Bungay, about eight villages are visited, and in this district there is plenty of room for the

constant labours of a minister. From Halesworth to Horleston and Laxfield, there are many villages which we have no means of visiting ; but from Laxfield, six miles round, very many of the villages are preached in.

“ At Fressingfield, a very populous village, in which place we first sent a missionary, and God blessed his labours, so that there is now a chapel which will seat seven hundred persons, and is generally well filled. This cause alone would have been an ample reward for all our toil : it is now no expense to us.

“ At Cransford, a village three miles from Framlingham, and six from any other baptist chapel, we have had a station for the last four years, it is now occupied by our *Brother Norris*. In this place there is a church formed containing thirty members, the congregation being about two hundred and fifty, or more than can get into the barn. Here there is a chapel building, forty five feet by thirty nine, on freehold ground, which will cost £500 ; and by the time of opening we expect to obtain £250 of it, and most of this from the friends connected with the cause. This cause is another of the fruits of our Home Missionary Society.

“ Around this five more villages are visited, and God is certainly doing great things here. From this we notice Earl Soham, where there is a church, and has been for many years, but which being very low, the Society has rendered it considerable assistance, and their minister preaches in six villages. We shall now have to assist in maintaining the cause at Stoneham which has been seriously injured by a person who preached there, and around which station there are many populous villages. At Occuld which cannot be viewed in any other light than a village station, there is much good doing. We also take a tract of country from Stoneham to Stowmarket, to Bardwell, Ixworth, Norton, Rattlesden, and Hadleigh, and the villages round which we have assisted : and thence to Long Milford, Glemsford, and the villages that lie between this and Clare, approaching near to Bury ; many of which are preached in by Ministers assisted from our Society. Besides many places unmentioned, we have also a station in Norfolk, at Reepham, where there is a chapel, but to this station we can only afford to give ten pounds a year : and the highest sums we have been able to give to any has been twelve pounds for the year ; but the average does not exceed five pounds to each minister. This however is gratefully received, and is of much importance to the comfort of our ministers, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.”

This, my brethren, is a concise account of the extensive and zealous efforts making by our brethren in Suffolk, which seem

to entitle them to our most benevolent consideration. They are not spreading principles hostile to our own, but are men of our own faith and denomination, so that we cannot excuse ourselves from aiding them on the ground of dislike to their sentiments. Some may smile at this remark, but I now make it, because I wish to keep everything out of sight that would injure our collection. I want a *liberal* collection, and therefore would have *all* hands employed. You that require the same doctrine to be maintained, have now a fine opportunity of promoting the spread of your own views : you cannot do better than to lend your generous aid to the *Baptist Home Missionary Society*, for which I have this day the honour to plead. On the present occasion we are entitled to take all the benefit that an agreement of sentiment and denomination, discipline and government, afford us. Let us give a strong lift by all lifting together. Although this uniformity should not be allowed to bound the generosity of the present congregation, yet it may be convenient for me thus to aim at reducing it to a beneficial purpose, on the present occasion. Hereby I involve one part of my auditory. Others who may entertain wider views as to doctrinal particulars, will, of course, not allow minor differences, as they are wont to be termed, to hinder them from acting generously. *They* will at once disdain the trammels of a creed, and act with a noble generosity, saying, "Christ is preached, and we therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Observe, my friends, no fewer than *nineteen* poor ministers are assisted by this Society, whose labours, we hear, are extended over almost the whole county of Suffolk. Mark what a number of dark villages they have visited, and still continue to visit. Think also of the smallness of their salaries, by which they and their families are upheld ; and remember at the same time the good the Lord is doing by them in the villages around ; and let these recollections stimulate you to act generously on *their behalf*, and *for His sake* whose servants they are. It is a good cause that I commend to your benevolent consideration. Let us then unitedly exert ourselves for the increase of our Baptist churches by assisting this Society ; and hereby encourage the spread of knowledge and godliness in the villages of our native land : and now especially for those on whose behalf the Suffolk and Norfolk Home Missionary Society are taking a lively interest. Forgiveness, and eternal life, are freely given you ; as you then have received freely at your Saviour's hand, so let his cause and his servants receive freely at yours.

NOTE.—It may give the reader a fair opportunity of judging of the views of the Society herein mentioned, to subjoin a citation from the *Report* published for the present year; and, in my humble opinion, the spirit and expression of the quotation do no small honour to the good man who composed the Report, or to the Society which voted its publication.

“ ‘FROM the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised:’ and while the church of Christ is travailing with expectation of the glorious issue of the prevalent intercession of her living Redeemer, in the universal extension of his reign, it may not be unuseful to mark the progress of those events which conspire to unfold the verities of ancient prediction, and to accelerate a consummation so confidently anticipated. That commercial intercourses with distant lands have in a great measure been established by the success of Missionary enterprise, is a fact that deserves the attention as well of the statesman, as of the christian, while the advancement of political science in relation to our foreign affairs, is no less conducive to the extension and establishment of the Saviour’s kingdom in those ‘dark places’ of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty.’

“ Assured though we be, of the final triumphs of the cross, and the eventual subjugation of all the kingdoms of this world to the gracious authority of the Prince of Peace, we are not led to expect,—we cannot, on scriptural authority, anticipate the arrival of so glorious a period, until the church herself awake, arise, shake herself from the dust, and loosing herself from the bands of sloth and negligence, the daughter of Zion is seen arrayed in her beautiful garment of love, purity, and zeal; purified from her uncleanness, united on the basis of uncorrupted and unadulterated truth,—looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners, and going forth in enterprises of mercy, sustained by a well-directed zeal for the glory of God, and the spiritual welfare of men. Then shall the feet of those that bring good tidings look beautiful upon the mountains: yea, ‘the mountains and the hills shall then break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.’ While, however, the progress and success of the gospel in foreign countries, afford abundant matter for rejoicing, and the benighted condition of the heathen continues to present the most urgent claims upon the resources and exertions of those, whose daily prayer is, ‘thy kingdom come,’ your committee feel a growing conviction of the importance and necessity of active and renewed efforts in that department of christian labour which your Society is

designed to sustain and promote, viz. HOME MISSIONARY exertions. Impressed with a sense of the awful ignorance and darkness that abound in the villages of our native land, of the responsibility that attaches to the character and privileges of christians, and above all, of the powerful influence of the love of Christ, you have been constrained during a period of years to combine your energies in supporting a Society whose object is to convey the glad tidings of a full and finished salvation, into the destitute villages around you. That God has abundantly blessed the labours of our brethren employed in this great work, the experience of *many* can testify, who are now living witnesses of the efficacy of divine grace, through the means of village preaching ; while some have departed this life joyfully in the faith of the gospel, blessing God for the existence of a Society by whose means the sound of salvation first reached their ears.

“ Encouraged, therefore, by numerous testimonies of usefulness resulting from these labours of love, your committee most earnestly call upon you for continued aid and increased efforts in this good cause. The sphere of labour is very extensive, and many large districts there are still remaining unoccupied, where the gospel is seldom preached, and where, for want of funds, the operations of your Society cannot be extended.”