

'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,' said our Lord.<sup>9</sup> 'This is the love of God,' wrote John, 'that we keep his commandments.'<sup>1</sup> Now, evangelism is one of the activities that the Father and the Son have commanded. 'This gospel of the kingdom,' Christ tells us, 'shall' (according to Mark, 'must') 'be preached in all the world for a witness.'<sup>2</sup> And before His ascension Christ charged His disciples in the following categorical terms: 'Go ye . . . and make disciples of all the nations.' To this command He added at once a comprehensive promise: 'and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'<sup>3</sup> The comprehensiveness of this promise shows us how wide is the application of the command to which it is appended. The phrase 'even unto the end of the world' makes it clear that the 'you' to whom the promise was given was not solely and exclusively the eleven disciples; this promise extends to the whole Christian Church throughout history, the entire community of which the eleven were, so to speak, founder members. It is, therefore, a promise for us no less than for them, and a promise of great comfort too. But if the promise extends to us, then the commission with which it is linked must extend to us also. The promise was given to encourage the eleven, lest they be overwhelmed at the size and difficulty of the task of world evangelism that Christ was laying upon them. If it is our privilege to appropriate the promise, then it is also our responsibility to accept the

<sup>9</sup> Jn. xiv.21.<sup>2</sup> Mt. xxiv.14; Mk. xiii.10.<sup>1</sup> I Jn. v.3.<sup>3</sup> Mt. xxviii.19 f., RV.

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commission. The task laid upon the eleven is the Church's constant task. And if it is the Church's task in general, then it is your task and my task in particular. If, therefore, we love God and are concerned to glorify Him, we must obey His command to evangelize.

There is a further strand to this thought. We glorify God by evangelizing, not only because evangelizing is an act of obedience, but also because in evangelism we tell the world what great things God has done for the salvation of sinners. God is glorified when His mighty works of grace are made known. The psalmist exhorts us to 'shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.'<sup>4</sup> For a Christian to talk to the unconverted about the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving power is in itself honouring and glorifying to God.

2. The *second* motive that should prompt us to assiduous evangelism is love to our neighbour, and the desire to see our fellow-men saved. The wish to win the lost for Christ should be, and indeed is, the natural, spontaneous outflow of love in the heart of everyone who has been born again. Our Lord confirms the Old Testament demand that we should love our neighbour as ourselves.<sup>5</sup> 'As we have therefore opportunity,' writes Paul, 'let us do good unto all men.'<sup>6</sup> What greater need has any man than the need to know Christ? What greater good can we do to any man than to set before him the knowledge of Christ? Insofar as we really love our neighbour as

<sup>4</sup>Ps. xcvi.2 f.<sup>5</sup>Mk. xii.31; Lk. x.27 f.<sup>6</sup>Gal. vi.10.