

Pastoral Letter October 2010

To the ends of the earth

One of the most subtle dangers facing us as Christians is to be so focused upon our own generation, the church where we worship, the present state of the times, that we forget the larger picture regarding the gospel – and, in particular, its sure progress and its guaranteed success. It is not (hopefully) that we doubt the power of God or have lost confidence in the gospel. It is just that – well, things most of the time seem to remain fairly much the same. So now is the moment to remind ourselves of grander dimensions – and the particular grander dimension in mind is the absolute certainty of the success of the gospel of God's grace to the ends of the earth.

Here are four key Scriptures to assure us that this is so, despite what we see and hear:

- *The eternal decree of election affirms this:* God's people comprise 'a great multitude, that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands' (Revelation 7:9).
- *The word of prophecy affirms this:* At the end of the matchless 22nd psalm, which records both the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah, the assurance is given, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship you' (Psalm 22:27).
- *The great commission affirms this:* After his resurrection the Lord Jesus Christ declared, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:19-20).
- *The promise before Jesus' ascension affirms this:* As part of his final message to his disciples while he was still on this earth, Jesus issued this combined command and assurance, 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

We believe this – don't we? Then let it inform our minds, let it strengthen our hearts, let it invigorate our prayers, let it enliven our expectations, let it enthuse our zeal, let it aid our perseverance, and let it establish our joy – and all to the glory of our great God, whose gospel this is!