

*when his forgiveness can be of no avail, and that he must not forgive when the act would be efficacious, is equally absurd as to think that a person must not be charitable till he has money to bestow, and then, that it would be a sin to give.*

4th. That the power to forgive sins cannot be taken in an absolute sense, is further evident, from the fact that the Apostles *never* exercised it. That they did not, we may presume from there not being the least shadow of evidence in support of a contrary supposition. Though many sinners came to them desirous of being saved, yet they never pretended to pardon their sins; but directed them to repent and believe in the *Lord Jesus Christ if they would have life, or have a full remission of sins.* Thus it was at the time of Pentecost; thus it was in the case of the Jailor; and thus it was in instances too numerous to be here repeated. If the Apostles had possessed the power to forgive sins, they doubtless would have exercised it. But though we hear of their preaching *Jesus Christ and Him crucified* to a great part of the world, though we hear of their baptizing many, yet we do not read of their pronouncing absolution, no, *not in one instance.*

Having considered what was not the sense of the charge which our Lord delivered to his disciples, let us now attend to its true meaning.

Our Lord, just before his ascension, according to St. Mark's gospel, said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

And according to the gospel of St. John, he said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Ghost." And he said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

That our Lord, in saying, "*whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted*," had reference to their *preaching the gospel, is evident, since, in preaching the gospel they would fulfill that mission upon which Christ sent them, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them."* That it had reference to this is