

ANOTHER COMFORTER

by W.T.P. Wolston

Wolston's exposition on the person and work of the Holy Spirit as the 'Another Comforter' promised by Christ in John 14-16. He emphasizes the necessity of the new birth, the Spirit's indwelling presence, and His ministry of guiding believers into all truth.

13 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01. The Spirit in Old Testament Times
2. 02. Born of Water and of the Spirit
3. 03. A Well of Water; or, Worship in Spirit and in Truth
4. 04. Rivers of Living Water
5. 05. The Spirit of Truth
6. 06. Receive Ye the Holy Ghost; of, Life More Abundantly
7. 07. The Day of Pentecost
8. 08. The Gift of the Spirit
9. 09. In Christ; or, the Indwelling of the Spirit
10. 10. The Baptism of the Spirit
11. 11. The Gifts of the Spirit
12. 12. Spiritual Offices
13. 13. The Seven Spirits of God

01. The Spirit in Old Testament Times

The Spirit in Old Testament Times

Christ personally is not only the truth, but He is the center round which all truth circles. From Him all truth radiates, and therefore, no matter what may be the subject in the Word of God we desire to learn, we are certain to learn it more truly, and deeply, and, I believe, more accurately too, if we view it in its connection with, and relation to, the Person of Christ, rather than by dwelling on the way that truth may affect ourselves, or relate to ourselves. That which I trust, with the Lord's help, to bring before you in these lectures—the testimony of Scripture as to the varied operations of the Holy Spirit of God—is no exception to what I have said. Tonight, the work of the Spirit of God in Old Testament times is our subject, and I shall seek to show how absolutely, and entirely different was the manner of the action of the Holy Spirit then, as compared with what He is now doing.

If we are to learn the action of the Spirit of God at the present time, and His relation to those who are the children of God, we must begin with Christ Himself, as the pattern, and that is why I read these few verses in the first of John. It is indeed truly delightful to the renewed soul to discover that it is the Lord Himself, as Man, who illustrates the nature, and character of the relationship to God, into which Christianity introduces us, and into the enjoyment of which the Spirit of God would now bring our souls. In truth, what the Spirit of God was to Jesus, as Man, He is to us. Before, however, saying anything about this beautiful passage in John's gospel, I would seek, for a few moments, to glance over the Old Testament Scriptures, to learn somewhat therein as to the varied activities of God's blessed Spirit.

We turn first of all to the opening chapter of Scripture—the first of Genesis. There we read (vs. 2), "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The first place then, in Scripture, where we learn of the existence of God's Spirit is in connection with creation, and not merely creation, as that which came out of the hands of God at the beginning, but that which this second verse presents to us, namely, the earth in a state of chaos, that God was about to put His hand to, in order to fit it for man's dwelling place. I suppose that every person here knows that the first verse of Genesis, where we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," carries you back to limitless ages, previous to the moment of which the second verse speaks, and that the interval between verses 1 and 2 admits of that, which geologists demand, namely, almost immeasurable periods of time in which the various strata of the earth's surface were deposited. We find in the second verse that "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," and thereafter it is we read, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and consequently, and immediately, we find God acting, during six days, in infinite goodness, at the end of which, we learn that the earth, as it now is, was prepared, and turned out of the molding hand of God, fit for the habitation of man. I believe these six days were days of twenty-four hours, as the language, "the evening and the morning were the first day," naturally suggests, and the seventh day proves. In the next chapter,

man is put upon the earth to dwell therein, to keep it, and rule over it.

It is in connection, then, with this remodeling of the earth, to be man's dwelling place, that we get the first indication in Scripture of God's Spirit. He moved on the face of the waters. There is no doubt whatever that what God did, He ever did by the power of His Spirit, although throughout all Scripture, from one end to the other, creation is invariably referred directly to the Son of God, as being the Creator. You will find it is always the Lord Jesus, the Son, who is spoken of as the Creator. I know that man's creed is, "I believe in God the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth," but Scripture—when it distinguishes the persons of the Godhead—never refers to creation as the work of the Father, but invariably as the work of the Son of God. Whether it be the first of John, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (vs. 3); or the first of Colossians, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth" (vs. 16); or the first of Hebrews, "God... hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (vs. 2), it is always and ever the same Person. The Son is the Creator in every instance, though doubtless acting by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit without doubt had His part in the creatorial work, as one of the Persons of the triune God, as we learn from these opening words of Genesis.

There is another scripture in the Old Testament to which, in connection with this point, I would have you turn. It is found in the book of Job, where we read, "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens" (26:13). While Genesis 1:1-31 speaks of the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters, and having regard to the chaotic condition of the earth, as it thus presented itself to the eye of God, before He fitted it for man's habitation, the writer of this other scripture turns our attention to the Holy Spirit in relation to heaven, as he says, "By his Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." That is, the Spirit of God has His own part in the work. If, upon the one hand, He acts to render the earth fit for man to dwell upon, so, on the other, He garnishes the heavens with beauty, that wherever man has his place here upon earth he may cast up his eyes to heaven, and find them resplendent with a galaxy that shall give him delight to behold. The hand of God is thus seen in a marvelous way, working by His Spirit. As regards the Holy Spirit, then, we have simply the fact recorded that He displayed His power and work in creation, whether in its earthly, or heavenly side. Little is said about it, because, observe to know a great deal about creation does not put man in relationship with the Creator. Again, to know what God has done in the way of creation, though very blessed, is not necessary to put the heart in happy communion with Himself. The Bible is not a book of geology, but a revelation of God. But, in order to be in understood relationship with, and in the abiding enjoyment of, God, everything turns upon the possession, the presence, and the indwelling of the Spirit in you, and herein lies the great difference between the saint of the Old Testament, as compared with the believer in the present dispensation. The point for us to inquire, therefore, is this, Did the Spirit of God dwell in the saint in Old Testament times? I think you will find that the Word of God speaks otherwise, and that such was not the case.

Coming now to the sixth of Genesis, we get the first reference to the work of God's Spirit in relation to man as a sinner, fallen, and outside paradise. Man had sinned, and utter ruin had been brought upon the scene that God had made so fair. So terrible was the state of matters, that God was now about to sweep man off the face of the earth. At this juncture we read, "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). Clearly there had been, ever since the Fall, a great striving of God's

Spirit going on with man. Now do you suppose that this is the work that the Holy Spirit delights in—to be striving with man? Oh, no! When we come to look at man as he should be—man walking here on earth as he should walk before God—we do not find “striving,” but “sealing.” (See John 6:27).

We find the Spirit descending on, and abiding in, that Man, and leading Him to overcome Satan, and do God’s will only and ever. In fact it was by the Holy Spirit, we know, that He did all His works, and uttered all the words that fell from His lips in His pathway here. You may say, That is the Lord Jesus. Quite true! It was none other than He, seen as man here upon earth, walking in dependence upon God, and in the power of the Spirit of God. We get everything that God’s heart could desire to see in man on earth, brought out in Christ, in perfection. In this chapter, however, it was a totally different scene God’s eye fell on, as His Spirit is seen striving with man—striving that went on, in the marvelous patience of God, for one hundred and twenty years, and then judgment fell. In the book of Genesis we have no further allusion to the acting of God’s Spirit—save the query of Pharaoh to his servants—when in quest of “a man discreet and wise,” to be a Saviour in a day of coming famine—“Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38.) When we come, however, to the book of Exodus, which is the book of redemption, and you have man upon the ground of redemption, you find more about the Spirit of God. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest’s office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.” You have, summed up there, the whole details of the tabernacle, the place in which God was going to dwell, on the ground of the redemption which He had, by the blood of the paschal lamb, and in power, accomplished. That tabernacle was the figure and type of Christ, in one aspect or another, and it was by the Spirit of God, observe, that Bezaleel and his fellow workers were empowered to bring it into existence, and manufacture all its various parts, which we now know speak so eloquently, and so beautifully of the personal worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not to be wondered at, then, that God filled Bezaleel with His Spirit to that end. In the book of Leviticus we have no mention of the Holy Spirit, nor, on reflection, is this remarkable. It is a book of types, and a type of the Holy Spirit, without doubt, we find in chapter 2, where the “oil” plays so large a part in the meat offering—the holy humanity of Jesus. The type in this book therefore replaces the Spirit personally. The “oil” plays an important part in many of the sacrifices. (See 5:11, 6:15, 21, 7:10, 12; 8:10, 12, 30; 9:4; 10:7, 14:10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29; 21:10, 12; 23:13, 24:2. Compare Matthew 25:3-4; Matthew 25:8).

Let us pass on to the book of Numbers. This is the book of the wilderness, where all depends on the action, and guidance of the Spirit. The people are out of Egypt, that is, the world, and on their wilderness way to Canaan, that is, heaven; the tabernacle is reared, and God is in their midst. They are being led on to the pleasant land; but there are difficulties in the way, and the people show their want of confidence in God, as, in chapter 11, we find that they despise both the “light food” and “the pleasant land.” They turn away from Christ really, and reject Him in their hearts. Moses is greatly distressed, and he says to the Lord, in the eleventh verse, “Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swearest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone” (Numbers 11:11-17). Moses gained his point, but got no honor by his plaintive attitude that day, nor was he any the better for that which the Lord took from him. I refer to the loss of spiritual power by the Holy Spirit, which till now had rested on him, though we do not learn when, or where, he first received the Spirit of God, here merely called “the Spirit which is upon thee.” The Holy Spirit is only spoken of here as being “upon” Moses, observe. It does not say it was dwelling in him. A little further on in the chapter, in verse 25, it says, “And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad, and the Spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle; and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them” (vss. 25-29). That verse makes it perfectly clear who this unnamed Spirit was. It was His Spirit—the Spirit of God; and Moses, in the beautiful generosity of his heart, in no way dejected, or put out by the fact that he would be robbed of the Spirit to the extent of seventy others sharing that which he possessed, is delighted that they should be able to minister the grace that he enjoyed. “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them,” is a fine utterance at such a moment.

Now this expression “upon” is the characteristic term, in the Old Testament, of the relation of the Holy Spirit to those even who were manifestly servants of God, and children of God—that is, born of God. But, nevertheless, you will observe this, that the Spirit of God did not confine His action in this way—particularly in prophesying—to those who were undoubtedly born of God, and were the servants of God. God is sovereign, and in the exercise of this sovereignty He could, and did use to

do His work even those whose history plainly manifested they were none of His.

Turning now to the twenty-fourth chapter of this same book of Numbers, you get the history of Balaam. That Balaam was a man of God, no one, I presume, would dare to affirm. That Balaam was a saint, it would be impossible to conceive. He “loved the wages of unrighteousness,” he ranked himself with the avowed enemies of the Lord, and undertook for money to curse the people of God—albeit God turned the curse into a blessing—and you know he died—spite of his prayer, “Let me die the death of the righteous” pitted against the hosts of the Lord. He died by the sword in the land of Canaan, under the judgment of God (see Joshua 13:22). Therefore I have no hesitation in saying I do not believe that Balaam was a saint. He was never a converted man, nevertheless—and this is very solemn to consider—God could use him as a vessel to express His thoughts of His people; hence in Numbers 24:1-25 we read, “And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments”—he had professed falsely before that he had gone to consult the Lord, but in reality he went and conferred with Satan—”but he set his face towards the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.” What he says of the delight of God in His people (vss. 5-9) is not a matter for our inquiry now, although what he does say is remarkably beautiful. The point I want to bring out is this, that the Spirit of God could, and actually did, come upon a godless, unconverted, money-loving man, and act through him. Does He do the same now? is the natural query; and, in reply, I venture to affirm that, while He is only given to dwell in man after the pattern of Christ, there is no reason now, any more than then, why God should not take up an unconverted man, and make him the vessel of the power of the Spirit. As to this see Matthew 7:22; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2; and especially Hebrews 6:4-5, a deeply solemn consideration. He dwells only now in God’s children, in those who are before God on the ground of redemption, and in the same relation to Him as the Lord Jesus Himself. Nothing is more important than to distinguish between a mere vessel of the power of the Spirit, and the possession of the divine nature, and the indwelling Spirit.

Balaam’s is not the only case, however, as we read of Othniel that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (Judges 3:10); and that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon” (ch. 6:34); also on Jephthah (ch. 11:29). Again it says concerning Samson, “The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times” (ch. 13:25), and that “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him” (ch. 14:6, ch.15:14). We read also that Samuel, in anointing Saul to the throne of Israel, distinctly declares to him that “the Spirit of God will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:6). “And when they came thither to the hill, behold a company of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them” (ch.10:10). In the next chapter we have a renewed visitation of Saul by the Holy Spirit, and we read there—”And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly” (ch. 11:6). The thought of the Holy Spirit abiding is never suggested in Old Testament Scripture. It was merely His coming upon a man in the character of power, and particularly with the view of prophesying. God, as sovereign, used any mouth He liked, and it only made the history, and the eternal future of those men more awful for them, that they were so near the channel of grace, as to have God’s Holy Spirit come upon them, and they to be His mouthpiece, and yet to miss the real knowledge of the heart, the grace, the love, and the nature of God.

Such was the case with Balaam, and I fear no less in Saul's history is this sad end seen. If we pass on to the eighteenth chapter of this same book, we find that "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul" (ch. 18:12). That was a solemn discovery for Saul to make—that the Lord had departed from him. And why had He departed? Because Saul had disobeyed the Lord. He had pursued his own way, and the kingdom was not only taken from him, but God departed from him. He was afraid of David because the Lord was with him. Saul was sensible of this fact, yet the fear of the Lord did not keep him from the dreadful act of attempting to slay David. In the next chapter he twice seeks to slay David, and finally we read that "Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (ch. 19:20). Not only does Saul prophesy, but God visits his servants in the same way—as a testimony to Saul's conscience surely. Then it goes on: "And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu; and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?" (vss. 21-24). This inconceivable action of a man like Saul the very world uses as a proverb. This only shows what God can do, and what opportunities men can miss. But the end of that man was terrible. In the twenty-eighth chapter and in the sixth verse you read, "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Then, when he goes to the witch of Endor, who brings up Samuel from the grave, you remember, Samuel said to Saul, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do" (ch. 28:15). He had the solemn, awful sense of being truly forsaken of God, and soon after is cut off in his sins (ch. 31:1-10).

Now the Spirit thus coming upon, and then departing from a man, might seem a very strange and arbitrary action in the eyes of some people, but it is not so. Save in the case of the Lord Jesus personally, the abiding, and permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit can only be on the ground of redemption, really accomplished. The temple in which God takes up His abode must be clean, and be morally suited to Him who is holy. He dwelt in the Lord Jesus, as man, surely on that very ground, and if He dwell in you and me, on what ground does He dwell there? Because the Saviour's blood has fitted the temple for His occupancy. Hence we read, "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17). This is collective, but also the body of the believer, as an individual, cleansed through the blood of Christ, is "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Little wonder therefore is it, if the Spirit of God forsook a man like Saul, in whom there was no holiness at all. But what about the saints of the Old Testament? Let us now look at a saint in the Old Testament, and in connection with him, it is noticeable that we first of all hear in Scripture about the Holy Spirit. We have had the expression, "the Spirit of God," we have had "His Spirit," and we have also had, "the Spirit of the Lord" abundantly in the early part of Scripture, but not till you reach the 51st Psalm, to which I beg you to turn, do you find that title which is so

characteristic of God's Spirit, ever used. This lovely term, "Holy Spirit," is not employed, so far as I know, in Old Testament Scripture, more than three times—once here, and twice in the sixty-third of Isaiah, to which we will presently refer.

David, in this Psalm, is passing through the deepest exercise of soul, after his sin with Bathsheba, having been awakened to a true sense of it by the parabolic language of the prophet Nathan. The latter goes to him, and gets from him a righteous, and true judgment on the supposed unrighteous, and mean actions of another man (see 2 Samuel 12:1-31). Thereon the prophet, led by the Spirit of God, declares, "Thou art the man!" and then unmasks his wicked course. David, completely roused out of his state of spiritual torpor replies, "I have sinned against the Lord." This confession is met by grace, as he hears, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." But grace and government are two different principles. The former says, "The Lord hath put away thy sin," the latter can only say—"The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die"—for the wheels of God's governmental chariot never stay, and "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:17).

What follows is truly touching, as David gets before the Lord in the deepest exercise, and contrition of soul. The feelings of his heart, the writhings of his conscience, and his soul's agonized experiences are given to us in the pathetic, and touching language of the 51st Psalm, where, in the presence of the Lord, he makes a clean breast of all his transgressions, and sins, and lays them down by the side of the multitude of the Lord's tender mercies, with which the Psalm opens. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Then in the tenth verse he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." I do not doubt he feared as he remembered Saul. Trembling, as he recollected what had been the fate of the king who had preceded him—for well he knew that God's Spirit had been upon Saul—he now prays, in the deepest earnestness possible, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit" (Psalms 51:11-12).

Let us here ask, Could the Christian rightly, or intelligently, pray that prayer today? I do not think so! I believe we entirely fail to grasp the spirit, and present privilege of Christianity, if we admit that a child of God now, could rightly pray the prayer that David prayed; because our Lord, in the fourteenth of John, so distinctly brings out this truth, that, consequent upon His death, and His being received into heavenly glory, the Comforter would come, and "abide with you," as He says, "forever." It was absolutely comely, and strictly suitable for David, to pray as he did, because it was characteristic of the dispensation for the Spirit to depart from, as well as come upon a saint. David lived in the day when the coming and going, the visiting and departing of the Spirit of God was a thing of everyday occurrence, and knowing the blessedness of having that Spirit, resting upon him, and fearing the awful issue of the Spirit leaving him, as a consequence of his terrible sin—sin which might well justify God in visiting him with such punishment, he rightly enough prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." He felt how utterly sinful he was, which only made the holy character of God's Spirit the brighter before his eyes, and it was therefore with unfeigned fervency he prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

If you will turn now to the sixty-third of Isaiah you will see the true ground on which the Holy Spirit could be with the Lord's people. In the seventh verse it says, "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old." That is a lovely recapitulation of the ways of God, as He carried them through the wilderness to the pleasant land. "But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?" There you have the other two places where He is called the Holy Spirit. I have called attention to this passage just to indicate that the Holy Spirit's being with them was on the ground of redemption, and even then His presence was of a transient nature.

We have seen, then, what was the character of the Holy Spirit's working in that day. That He wrought in new birth is unmistakable. That He was the active agent of the new birth in every saint of God, I fully believe, and only by the Word and Spirit of God were they newborn then, as now, because the new birth is a necessity for the kingdom of God, whether in its earthly aspect, which the Jew knew, and looked for, or in its heavenly aspect, which you and I are called to know now. But besides all this, there was the action of God's Spirit in taking up, and using for prophetic testimony certain vessels, whether converted, or unconverted, is not the question, for God is sovereign.

There is yet another action of the Spirit of God visible in the Old Testament, which is exceedingly interesting: and that is, the way by which divine truth and knowledge came. I refer to revelation, and inspiration in prophetic Scripture. God not only unfolded to man His thoughts, but empowered certain vessels to record those thoughts. It is to this that the Apostle Peter refers in his second epistle. There we read, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (1 Peter 1:20-21). It is a very remarkable thing, that although we sometimes get the historical record of the Holy Spirit coming upon these men, in order to utter the words of the Lord, there is but little allusion to their recording the same. We read that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and then we have that which they spake recorded by the Spirit of God, so that thereby we are furnished with the Old Testament Scripture.

Let us turn now to a passage in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, to see what the Spirit of God says about the communications which these holy men of God had. We read in the twelfth verse of the second chapter: "Now we 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 Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." You have there three things. First, the truth is revealed by the Spirit. "We 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" (vs. 12). This is revelation—and by the

Spirit. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; communicating spiritual things by spiritual means." That is inspiration—plenary, verbal inspiration—the words, as well as the truths revealed—are the choice of the Holy Spirit. The truth of God in the words of God. Such is inspiration. Perhaps you say, That passage refers only to the writings of the New Testament prophets. I should not accept that, because I find in the writings of the same apostle: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures"—those clearly are the Old Testament 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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:14-17). All Scripture is God-breathed. In these New Testament passages, then, we have a flood of light thrown upon the lives of these holy men of God, who, in Old Testament times, wrote by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit having come upon them, they became the vessels, in God's hand, of communicating His mind, and, I need scarcely say, their writings therefore did not come by human will. Taught of God, they spoke by the Holy Spirit, and Paul tells us, for the faith and food of our souls, that "every Scripture is God-breathed," just as Peter informs us that "holy men of God spake in time past as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If a man says that he does not understand, or that he cannot see with clearness the logical sequence of the varied parts of the Old Testament, and that therefore he does not recognize its inspiration, that man only demonstrates his own blindness. Such misunderstanding and misapprehension is due, not to incompleteness in the book, but to the insufficiency and incompetency of the man who is professing to criticize it. I do not dwell more upon this side of the subject, but merely direct your attention to it. What we have to note is the sovereign action and peculiar wisdom of the Holy Spirit in taking up certain vessels for His purpose. Peter's allusion to it is noteworthy: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12). They wrote, by the Holy Spirit, what He revealed and indited, and then they sat down and studied their own writings, to inquire the meaning thereof, just as we would study Scripture today.

We have in our hands, and thank God for it, a book which in every part of it is complete—as given of God, and written in the words which the Holy Spirit chose. I quite admit that the characteristics of the different human vessels are seen. God uses the beautiful, but bold and vehement style of an Isaiah for one object, and the fine but ever-varying moods of the Psalmist for another purpose. What we have recorded is God-breathed. No doubt an immense deal more might have been related, but God did not see fit to have it recorded. We have all we need, and that all in His way, in His words, and by His Spirit. The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is of vital importance, so let us see to it that we hold to that. In these days of so-called scientific criticism hold fast to every word of the living God, for as sure as you give up one portion Satan will steal a hundred. Revelation and inspiration are like an arch. Take away one stone in the arch, and you know the result; the whole structure comes down about your ears. The Scriptures are one solid concrete

whole. Men think they see flaws therein, but the flaws are not in the book they are looking at, but in the perceptive power and spiritual apprehension of those who are looking at that book. What at first sight might seem an inconsistency, when understood, always turns out to be a gem of inspiration, which none but the Holy Spirit could have produced. What we have to do, therefore, is to hold on to Scripture, and if we find difficulties, as we are sure to—for we are finite, and God, and His Book too, are infinite—let us be humble, and look to God for light, and He will assuredly give us it.

Ere I close let me dwell, for a moment, on the scripture which I at first read, in the first chapter of John's gospel (vss. 29-34). This part of the history of the Lord Jesus is really connected with what I call Old Testament times. We have not as yet come to the moment of the revelation of Christianity. Christ, in His life, is connected with the history of man in responsibility, under law, and being tested both by God and Satan. Christianity is consequent on the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus to heaven, and the coming down of the Holy Spirit. But the action of the Holy Spirit in relation to Him, as coming into, and living in this world as a man among men, is most blessed and instructive. If you turn for a moment to the first of Matthew's gospel we find Jesus' entry into this world predicted, and narrated. Joseph is thus addressed by the angel of the Lord in verse 20, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived (begotten) in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Again, in the first chapter of Luke's gospel, Mary herself is instructed by God, through the angel Gabriel, who says to her, in verse 30, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God, and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." In response to the inquiry of pious ignorance, that Mary puts, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" the angel adds, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." His first entry into this world by the assumption of humanity is carefully guarded by the action of the Holy Ghost. He is begotten of the Holy Ghost, which, of course, I need not say, is miraculous. Though born of a woman, and entering the human family, his humanity is holy. "That holy thing," furthermore, is "the Son of God." It is a miracle; a profound and inscrutable mystery, that no human mind can fathom. But what we cannot fathom, we can receive and enjoy. What we cannot fully apprehend, we can have faith in, and our souls are sweetly fed and sustained by the truths that are altogether beyond our finite comprehension.

We delight therefore to see this absolutely holy Man enter our world in this profoundly, to us, incomprehensible way. In connection with His entrance the Holy Spirit, we see, plays a very large part. In the second chapter of Leviticus we read, "And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil." Here we have a lovely type of the holy spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus. I do not doubt that in the first of Matthew, and the first of Luke, we get the antitype, in His blessed person, of the mingling of the fine flour and the oil, that is, the part which the Holy Spirit takes in His assumption of humanity, and in His birth into this world. When you come to the first of John's gospel it is not the mingling of the oil and the fine flour, for the making of the unleavened cake, that is, the assumption of sinless, holy, spotless humanity—but it is the anointing of the unleavened wafer with the oil, in view of its presentation to God for His eye. He was anointed with the Holy

Spirit (Acts 10:38).

John sees Jesus coming unto him, and testifies "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me for He was before me." And so he proclaims His eternal being. "He was before me; and I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." Mark that word, "It ABODE upon Him." In former days it had come "upon," but often it had left man. Moses partly lost it. Balaam lost it. Saul lost it. And David feared to lose it, but here is the only sinless Man, out of Eden, that the world, or God, has seen, and He received the Spirit, and "it abode upon Him." The abiding Spirit is the Father's testimony to His delight and joy in that perfect Man whom He then, and thereby, owns as His Son. "And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

Now mark, God whispered into the ears of the Baptist, Here is the man upon whom the Holy Spirit will come, and will not only come, but coming will abide upon him. Why? Because He was the sinless, perfect, absolutely Holy Man, One in whom God's heart found all its delight. As you know, it was at His baptism that the Spirit descended. The heaven is opened, and the voice of the Father is heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Baptist delightedly adds, "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John had his eyes opened to the wonderful truth that that lowly blessed man, who, while praying (see Luke 3:21) receives the Holy Spirit, as the seal of the Father's delight (but not on the ground of redemption), is Himself the Son of God. He receives the Holy Spirit upon the ground of His own personal perfection, and, in this scene, the Holy Spirit is like the dove sent forth from the ark. It has at length a spot upon which it can find a place to rest—to abide. The dove, you remember, went forth from the ark once and again, but returned, as she "found no rest for the sole of her foot," but at last she found a resting place, she "returned not again any more" (Genesis 8:9; Genesis 8:12). The heavenly Dove, after 4,000 years of vainly seeking a sinless resting place in man, has found One to rest on in the first of John. It is on the Person of this sinless Holy Man, who is the delight of the Father's heart. The Spirit's object in thus coming to Him is given elsewhere, as we read, "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 receiving of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them which are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord....This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-21). Again, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Furthermore, we read, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34). Again, the Lord says to those who were coming after Him, for mere relief from bodily hunger, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27).

Added to this it is important to notice that, amid the varied testimony in John 1:1-51 to the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus it is brought out, that, besides being the Lamb of God, He it is that baptizes with the Holy Spirit, giving, as we shall see, the Spirit from the glory into which He ascends, when His work is done, to bring us, in power, into the whole of the position He takes

there as the only measure of our place and blessing as Christians.

Jesus then, before His public ministry began, is presented as an object of God's infinite favor, and delight—delight that is manifested when He receives the Holy Spirit as the expression of the Father's unfathomable joy and good pleasure in Him personally. By the Spirit too, as Man, He is furnished for His service. What the Holy Spirit was to Jesus as the sinless Man, He comes now to be to us—only ever guarding the glory of His Person. With Him it was on the ground of His own personal excellency: if He dwell in us, it is on the ground of redemption, accomplished by Christ, and of our sins being cleansed away through the blood of His cross. Christianity as regards the Holy Spirit, which is its very essence, takes its color and character from Christ, and when you see that the Holy Spirit was first given to Him as man (the only One upon whom He ever rested without blood), you will be able to estimate more fully what it is to receive the same blessed Person to dwell in you, on the ground of the atoning blood of Christ.

Now then, Have you received Him? A very serious question indeed is that put by the Apostle Paul to the twelve men at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed?" I likewise would put it to you, Have you received Him? I do not say that every one in whom God has wrought has received Him; but, now that Jesus is glorified, it is a blessing and a privilege that every believer receives the moment he believes the testimony of God to the value of the work upon the ground of which Jesus is glorified. Have I received that Spirit? Thank God, yes! And upon what ground? Not as a sinless being, but as a poor sinner, washed from my sins through the blood of my Saviour. And now, for every believer in Jesus, is it true that the temple is cleansed, into which the Spirit of God can come to dwell, as the witness and seal of redemption, and the expression of the Father's delight, and the Father's favor, not only to Christ the Son, but to those who are saved by Christ, because they believe in Him, who is the only-begotten Son.

02. Born of Water and of the Spirit

Born of Water and of the Spirit

It is of the last importance that we should understand that which the Lord Jesus brings before us in this Scripture with regard to the new birth. I do not deny that in other parts of scripture you hear about the new birth, because even in the Old Testament it is referred to, but in fullness of detail, and depth of expression, nothing can surpass that which we have here from the lips of the Saviour Himself. Added to this is the fact that His words are personally addressed to a man—better, I believe, than any man in this hall to night—if human goodness come into the question—but to the best man that the earth could produce the Lord says, “Ye must be born again.” The new birth is an absolute necessity, if man is to enter into known relationship with God.

Now, the way in which this truth is brought out in this chapter is very interesting. I do not say that the truth which the Lord brings out is that which, most of all, attracts the heart, or wins the affections, but what He unfolds here is of primary importance for our souls. If therefore we have not understood, if we have not comprehended, experienced or gone through what the Lord describes in this chapter, we may take it as an absolute certainty that we have not taken one solitary step Godward, Christward, or Heavenward. Well, you say, that is a very sweeping assertion. If it suffice to sweep away what is hollow, unreal, or false in any soul here, I shall thank God, and so will that soul likewise. “Ye must be born again,” is written over the gateway of God’s kingdom—an absolute rule, with no exception. The Lord had gone up to Jerusalem at the Passover. When there, many had believed in Him—apparently. “Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” Then we read, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” Why? “Because he knew all men.” He did not trust them. He “needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.” Man, in the springs of his moral being, disliked and distrusted God. This, you will find in the third chapter, He reminds Nicodemus of, as He says, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.” Man will not have the witness of the Son of God. Concerning those who professed to believe in Him, how solemn is the record, “Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” The truth found in the end of the second chapter of John is this, Jesus says to man, I cannot trust you. In the third chapter all is reversed, and there He says, If you are going to be blessed, you must trust Me. That is an immense difference. Why did He not trust man? Because there was nothing in man to suit God. It is a humbling truth which we must all learn. There is nothing in man, as man, that will suit God, gratify His heart, or answer either to His claims, or His nature. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”—it is not spirit. I know men do not like this doctrine, but, beloved friends, let me appeal to you. If you have never yet known, or passed through what the third of John teaches, bow now to the testimony of Scripture, bow to the solemn word of the Lord Jesus, and do not reject what He there so emphatically presses. But you may say, Did not these people believe in His name? They did, but when? When they saw the glory of His Person? They did not see it. When they saw what He was, and who He was? Alas! they were blind. When they saw His miracles? Yes, and then thought much better of themselves for their faith. If you put a man on the bench, and demonstrate certain things which his

eyes can see, and concerning which he is to give judgment, he immediately feels he is of importance. He can draw conclusions from the things before him perhaps honest and just conclusions—but that is not faith, it is reason. There are plenty of believers in the world today of the type spoken of in the second of John. Theirs, however, is not divinely produced faith. It is merely mental credence of a fact, or a thing concerning which they have had ocular demonstration, and which they cannot deny. Faith after a divine sort is clearly defined by the Baptist, as he says, “He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). Faith, then, is the soul’s reception of a divine testimony. When we come to chapter 3, we see that Nicodemus firmly believed in the miracles. He could not deny them—he could not gainsay them, and therefore he comes to Jesus with this confession, “Thou art a teacher come from God.” He comes up like a scholar to be taught, But there was what distinguished him from those of chapter 2; there was a need in his soul. He came to Jesus by night. It was at the risk of losing his reputation, which he would minimize by coming at night. True, but he came to Jesus, and that ensured blessing. Why by night? He did not want anybody to know that he had come to Jesus. There are many persons today exactly like that. They would like to come to Jesus, and get their need met, but at the same time, they would not like all the world to know it. Nicodemus knew perfectly well that the world would be in opposition to him if he confessed Jesus to be what He was—the Christ. John the Baptist had plainly declared that Jesus was the Messiah. This news had gone forth throughout the land, and Nicodemus ruler of the Jews, and man of importance though he was—knew full well that if he confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, he would have the whole nation against him. What matter? If all the world is against you, and you have the Lord Jesus, what matter? Suppose you have all the world with you and are without Him, you will sink to an eternal hell without Christ—you are opposed to the Son of God.

Nicodemus took the first step, and the right step, when that night he came to Jesus—impelled, no doubt, by desires to know something more about Him, desires that nothing but Christ could gratify. It was the expression of the inward craving of the heart, that man, unknown to himself, has after God. Why is man seeking after God? Because he has lost Him—he knows that. Wherever you find men trying to reach after God, it is only a confession—a tacit confession possibly—that they have lost God, they know Him not. Where will they find Him? They can only find Him, where, thank God, Nicodemus found Him, in the person of the Man who died on the cross for sinners. There only is the place where man can fully find God. You cannot so find Him, in creation. You there find His handiwork, not Himself. “The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psalms 19:1). But that is not Himself. You may have seen a fine piece of sculpture, and admired it greatly; and you have also been shown a magnificent picture, and you have, in your rapture, said, What a wonderful genius, what a hand that man has! Look at the skill of his chisel, and the power of his brush—what a wonderful man! Stop, I will tell you something about him. He is utterly selfish, beats his wife, and starves his children. Seeing his handiwork does not declare to you his nature—you do not learn his heart. If I turn to nature, and study creation, I see the “eternal power,” and almightiness of the Lord there, but that does not bring out His heart. No, you never get the heart of God brought fully out until you come to that which this scripture brings before us. Here you have the Son of the living God standing before a man dead in sins, and telling him that His Father has so loved a ruined guilty world as to give His Son to die for it. God is Love.

Nicodemus did not know that when he came up that night. He came as a scholar, desiring to be taught, but is little prepared for the first lesson he has to learn. He is met at once by the Lord with this statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nothing could be more solemn. Nicodemus understands Him not, and anything more absolutely stupid than his reply (vs. 4) can scarcely be conceived. But the Lord passes that over, and amplifies, and emphasizes the truth, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In verse 3, it is "he cannot see," and in verse 5, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." None can see God's kingdom, and none enter it save they who are born again. There must be a nature suited to that kingdom. Unless a man possess that nature by new birth, he does not understand the things of God. That is why, if you talk to an unconverted, an unawakened man, about heavenly things, the subject is most irksome to him. Talk about religion, preachers, sermons, ordinances, ecclesiastical forms, or philanthropy generally, and he will very likely be either a capital listener, or a critic, but tell him of heavenly things, touch the soul, bring in the claims of God, press the guilt of man, and the necessity of this new birth, and it is at once a most irksome subject. He has neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear, unless, unknown to himself, there have first been a work of God's grace—a need created—in his heart.

Observe how the Lord opens this subject out. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The reason is then given. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—a most solemn truth with regard to what man is, as man. Everything partakes morally of its source. Flesh is flesh. Do with it what you will, it is flesh, and nothing but flesh. Educate it to the highest pitch, and it is flesh still, not spirit. Raise the flesh to the highest point you can, and what is it? Flesh, Saul of Tarsus went to the very summit, so to speak, of the tree of human excellence in religion, and what was he doing?—persecuting and slaying the saints of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You may sublimate the flesh as you like, but you will never distil spirit out of it. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It partakes of its source; the nature of it is the same as its source.

Then Jesus turns to Nicodemus with immense force, saying, "Marvel not"—for He saw the blank look of amazement that possessed that man's face, dark as it was—and just as the Lord read his face, so does He read your heart, my friend—"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Would you enter that kingdom?—"you must be born again." Would you have to do with God, and enter into His heavenly things?—"you must be born again." This, beloved friends, is intensely solemn. There is another "must" I shall come to presently, where the Lord shows that if you and I are to be rescued from our lost condition, He must die. But the first thing is this, He gets at the soul. The plowshare of conviction was allowed to do its work in the conscience of Nicodemus that night, and I have no doubt he was absolutely staggered beneath the weight of the saying, "Ye must be born again." As Nicodemus answers, "How can these things be?" light would appear to be desired, if not already dawning on his soul. He is an anxious inquirer. It is a very happy thing when a man gives up all his learning, and all his knowledge, and takes the place of nothingness at the Saviour's feet. That is what Nicodemus does here, as he says, "How can these things be?" Now he is going to learn. Have you ever asked that question yet? Have you ever been troubled with the knowledge that "you must be born again," and yet have not been able to answer in your soul honestly before God, that you have been born again? Have you ever quietly before

God asked “How can these things be?” The Lord’s reply to Nicodemus is very suggestive. “Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?” He ought to have known them. This weighty truth of the new birth was in a sense not new. It was figuratively alluded to in Old Testament Scripture. What the Lord speaks of here was known before, because He says presently, “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” He had been speaking, up to this moment, of what he calls “earthly things,” that is to say, that the new birth was a necessity for every soul of man, even to enter God’s kingdom in its earthly aspect, and sphere. The Old Testament spoke thus: “Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring” (Isaiah 44:2-3); “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:25-28). Here we have doubtless the new birth depicted, in moral effects that could not be without it, in connection with “water and the Spirit.” If the figure had a doubtful meaning to any mind, the Lord’s reference to such in John 3:1-36 as “earthly things” should dispel all such doubt. Observe that both these passages speak of the kingdom of God not yet come, but prophetically marked out as that which is to come. They both refer to the future day of Israel’s blessing, when the kingdom of God will be manifested here upon the earth. Those verses are yet unfulfilled, and the Jew is now rightly looking forward to that day. What the Lord Jesus brings out in the chapter before us, however, is not to be waited for, because, if I might so say, the kingdom of God was there in the person of the Son of God that day. (See Matthew 12:28; Luke 17:21, margin). Man had not eyes to see it; but nevertheless the power of it, and every characteristic trait of its blessedness was there in His person. When set up, and we brought in to it, it can be said, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” How perfectly displayed were all its principles in the Person of the blessed Saviour!

Let us now inquire, What does the Lord mean by being “born of water, and of the Spirit”? You will find, as we go through John’s Gospel, that He constantly uses figures—figures that are perfectly familiar too—to express some weighty spiritual truth. He uses them as symbols of something unspeakably blessed in relation to the soul and God. In the fourth chapter, He uses the well, to which the poor woman of Samaria had come for water, as the figure of the Spirit of God indwelling the believer, and, in the seventh chapter, speaks of that same Spirit as “rivers of living water.”

Many expositors have endeavored to extract baptism out of this expression of the Lord, but we must remember that baptism was not a Jewish rite. A man may be baptized, but does that give him new birth? We must be careful always to use Scripture in its right context, and not distort its figures, or symbolical language. Let us turn to other parts of the Word of God to learn the meaning of water. Our Lord takes water in John 13:1-38 and washes the feet of the disciples, saying thereafter, “Ye are clean, but not all.” Then in chapter 15, when Judas had gone out, He says, “Now ye are clean”—through the water that I washed your feet with? No. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Water, in Scripture, is always the Word of God

applied by the Spirit. It brings God's thoughts to man, and morally judges all that is in him, withal purifying his heart. Again, in the nineteenth of John, out of the side of the dead Saviour, there comes "blood and water"—the blood for expiation, and the water for purification. Water carries the sense of moral cleansing, because man's nature is vile; whereas the truth is that what is needed for man is a nature suited to God. Therefore Jesus says, "born of water and of the Spirit," that is, there must be a new nature thus characterized morally—the water—and in its source—the Spirit. Water purifies that which already exists, whereas "that which is born of the Spirit" in its nature partakes of that of which it is born. It is a new nature imparted by the Spirit—a new, life which is really Christ in us. Morally the soul becomes a "partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). I have no doubt, then, that the water, as a figure, is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit to the soul. The Word carries with it the sense and conviction of my defilement, and need of purification, which, impossible as of the flesh, is only found through the end, under God's judgment, of all that it is, in the cross of Christ (hence the water flowed, as the blood, from His side in death) and by the communication of a new life and nature.

Turning now to Ephesians 5:25, we read distinctly what water means: "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Again, James 1:18 undeniably attributes new birth to the word: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." So also does the Apostle Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). Nothing could be more conclusive to any mind subject to Holy Scripture.

We have therefore the word of God the instrumental means of the new birth; but not the Word of God alone, for the Word of God alone is inoperative, It must be conjoined with the living power and energy of the Holy Spirit. If I am born again, I am so by the Word, but also of the Spirit. It is God's sovereign grace reaching the soul by His own blessed Word and producing faith in it, the Holy Spirit to this end using the Word of the Lord. The result is a new life—a new nature characterized by its source. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Have I been born again? That is a question that every soul within these walls may well ask himself. Thank God, I know that I have been born again, and that is why I am so desirous that you should be also, because it is fundamental to the soul entering into relationship with God, without which there is none, and makes it capable of the enjoyment of God, and what is of Him. Put a man into heaven, if it were possible, without the nature thus received, and he would desire to get out of it as fast as he possibly could, because he would feel he was morally, utterly unsuited to the scene. The Holy Spirit, then, is the mighty agent, and the Word of God is the instrument, which being received as the result of this divine action by faith in the soul, there is the imparting of this new nature. To again quote Peter's words, we are "made partakers of the divine nature." I quite admit that the possession of this new nature does not carry with it power. That will come in its due place in John 4:1-54, in connection with the Holy Spirit as a spring within the believer. But the point here is that there is imparted, by the Word and Spirit, a new life, a new nature, a new existence before God. "Born of God" is elsewhere the way St John speaks of it. Thus, in chapter 1 of his gospel we read, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons (children) of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were

born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Then in his first epistle we read, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (ch. 5:1). Again, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not” (vs. 18); and “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (vs. 4). This I call the New Testament term, in its highest development, for this blessed truth—of which the primary elements have been before us—“born of God,” which carries with it the thought of relationship.

Returning to our chapter, we now find the Lord speaking to Nicodemus words which should have revealed His divine glory to him, and unfolding the heavenly side of the truth. As yet all had been earthly. “We speak that we do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Observe there is a great difference between this, and the end of chapter 2. There they believed the miracles, but did not receive the testimony. In the “We” of verse 11 we have the most absolute testimony to the Godhead of Christ. True, it is a Man who is speaking, but that Man had been with God, He knew God, nay more; He was God, and He speaks as God. He knew all about everything; knew exactly what suited the heart, and nature of God, and He says, “We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” He is leading up to heavenly things, because His object was to win the heart of man for heaven. Then He passes on to tell us how this is effected. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Well, you say, I cannot understand that. I do not ask you to. Do you believe it? If you believe it, you have in your soul the sense of the glory of the person of Him who speaks here. The Son of Man, as to His divine nature, was from heaven, and in His Person we have a revelation of heavenly things in all their freshness, as He, who, because of the glory of His Person, could be said (even when speaking to Nicodemus) to be in heaven, and was its glory, enjoyed them. He came out of that scene to a scene absolutely unlike it. For what? He came down to reveal the Father, and, while ever remaining in heaven in the essence of His divine nature, inseparable in His Person from the humanity with which He was clothed, He was found on earth in the form of a servant, in a nature which He will never leave, and in which He has undertaken man’s cause, and gone to death to deliver him from eternally perishing. He came to fit you and me to enter that scene where He had ever been, and to make us companions with Himself for evermore. Precious Saviour!

How did He effect this? Listen—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” He brings out that if there be an inexorable necessity for this new birth because of man’s condition, not less is it the necessity of God’s own nature that sin shall receive its judgment if man is to enter the heavenly scenes of which He speaks. We not only have sins that must everlastingly debar us from His presence, but we possess a nature unsuited to God, and therefore the Lord brings out in verses 14 and 15 the truth of the cross, the necessity of His death to meet the claims of God in righteousness, and make a pathway for us into glory. How? Through His death for us on the tree? Look at these two “musts,” and put them together. “Ye must be born again,” “The Son of man must be lifted up.” The “must” of man in his need, is divinely and fully met by the “must” that flows from the heart of Christ in His blessed grace, and led Him to the cross. The Son of Man must be lifted up. All that the flesh was in man must meet its judgment. His

sufferings for us were necessary. Did Nicodemus understand that? Do you? He knew well that deliverance came to the dying people, when bitten by the serpent, by simply, in faith, lifting their eyes to the brazen serpent on the pole. What has brought in death? Sin. And what do I see upon the cross? He who is Himself the Son of God, and the Son of Man, who knew no sin, made sin for us; and, in His death, sin in the flesh is condemned. As He dies, death is annulled, and my sins are blotted out. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Is not that good news? Who does "whosoever" mean? Who does it not mean? That is the point. But you might say, Who can the Son of Man be, that will die on the cross for a sinner like me? Jesus anticipates the query, as He passes from the necessity of His death for God's glory, in sin's necessary judgment, to the deep and ineffable love of the nature of God, saying, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You have come back to the spring of all goodness. You reach up to the very source of all blessing. It is the heart of the living God, "for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."

God is love, and His love has been shown in this wonderful way, that He gave His only begotten Son. And now, all of man set aside for God, and for faith in the cross, and God revealed, not only in the holy judgment of sin, but in His nature of love, there is not merely the new birth, but the life received in it takes its blessed form as eternal life; the one connected with the earthly things, and necessary in order to see or enter into the kingdom, the other found only in the testimony of the heavenly things that have come in by the cross, and known and enjoyed in the revelation of them.

It is when the soul sees this that the beautiful link that secures blessing is formed—the little link of faith, that which connects the soul with God. Have you ever weighed that 16th verse. It is very beautiful. There are two things that God does in the verse, and two things appear on man's side. They are these—God, loving and giving, and man, believing and having. How blessed! You say, That is very simple! But is it too simple for you? You will never get eternal life in any other way; God loving and giving, and man believing and having, is the divine way. What! get eternal life like that? Yes—for "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:1-23), and "he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:1-36).

Eternal life is something a great deal more than being saved from death and judgment. I believe most of us have limited the thought of eternal life to this, I shall go to heaven when I die. Eternal life is what we possess as life now, and soon as heavenly glory with Christ. If I think of eternal life, I think of the Father, and the Son—of those bygone ages of sweet unbroken communion between the Father and the Son, and I am told that if I believe on the Son, who died, and rose again, I get eternal life. Jesus as it were says, I am going to bring you into association with Myself in all the joys, and incomparable delight that I have known forever. I have come down to this scene to unfold it to you, and to clear away the barriers, and the hindrances. Rising from the dead, He has gone, as Man, again to the scene where He ever was, and the Holy Spirit has come down to put the believer in the enjoyment of eternal life. That is why the Spirit of God is called "truth" in John's First Epistle. "The Spirit is truth." God is, but the truth is the absolute delineation and expression of something that is. You could not say that God is the Truth—He is true—but Christ is the Truth, the Truth about God and about man. In His death on the tree I learn the truth about my own ruin, and my own position, in relation to God—and my condition of distance from God, and, blessed be God,

the absolute end thereof. When I look at Jesus now on the throne, there He is still the Truth, the truth as to my nearness to God. Christ is the measure of everything before God. On the cross He is the measure of my need, and distance from God; and now, on the throne, He is the truth as to my acceptance and nearness to God. Christ is the truth objectively, and the Holy Spirit is the truth subjectively, as making all good and true to the soul of the believer experimentally.

I do not think Nicodemus got the whole truth that night, but he went away with an arrow in his conscience. He comes up again in the seventh chapter, when he puts in a word for Jesus edgeways. Then again at the cross, he appears. There are three stages in his history. It is midnight with his soul in the third chapter of John, twilight in the seventh, and daylight in the nineteenth. And now, as I close, let me ask, How does it stand with you? Is it midnight, twilight or daylight in your soul's history? Have you been "born of water, and of the Spirit?" Have you yet received eternal life by faith in the Son of God? If so you will gladly follow the Spirit's teaching yet before us in John's gospel.

03. A Well of Water; or, Worship in Spirit and in Truth

A Well of Water; or, Worship in Spirit and in Truth

It is important to bear in mind that in the Gospel by St John the Lord Jesus is from the very outset presented as rejected of men, whereas, in the synoptic gospels, He is presented to the responsibility, and for the acceptance of man. The first chapter, you recollect, is occupied with the unfolding of the personal glories of the Lord Jesus. That first chapter contains the statement, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." This gospel starts, then, with the fact that He is a rejected Saviour, while the first chapter gives us His personal glories, and these I might say are innumerable. The second chapter carries us on to the glory which is His connected with the kingdom over which He is to reign, and you will find therein two points. You have the joy of the kingdom prefigured in the marriage scene at Cana (see vs. 11), and then you have the judgment that will characterize the kingdom, in the Lord's cleansing the temple, and casting out the money changers (vss. 14-17). In the third chapter, which we were considering last Lord's Day evening, the question was raised as to the qualification necessary to enter the kingdom of God. We saw how only man could enter this kingdom. I have no doubt Nicodemus, when he went to the Lord, thought he was quite fit to go in. Nay, I think he was certain, but after that conversation he would go away thoroughly convinced, I am not fit to go in. I believe, nevertheless, he did go in afterward. The flesh, however religious, was morally incompetent to enter therein. The only pathway to life is through death. The only way to reach the kingdom of God is by a wholly new birth, a new life, a new nature in us, and in order to impart that, which involves the judgment of the flesh, He, who had life in Himself, must die. This is the end, under God's judgment, of all that is of the flesh, and hence the introduction of heavenly things, and eternal life. That was what the learned doctor of divinity in chapter 3 was informed.

Now, in the fourth chapter, we come to the opening of the Lord's proper ministry in this gospel. (Compare chapter 3:22, 4:3 and Matthew 4:12, Mark 1:14) We get brought before us not the truth of the necessity of the new birth, but the Lord, in His infinite grace, addressing a sinner as degraded, and absolutely outcast, as was to be found in the lowest level of human society, and unfolding to her the most wonderful truths. If I might so say, He proposes to set that woman up in the very scene of her degradation, misery, ruin, and wretchedness, in a new condition of unparalleled blessedness. You will see how well He did it. He is not only the giver of eternal life, but He is also the donor of the power necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of that life—a power which leads into the enjoyment of the love of the Father and the Son, in a way never dreamed of, or hinted at in Scripture before. The way that our Lord treats this poor woman here is blessed beyond description, and you will find interwoven with the narrative beautiful instruction as to what real worship is. Worship is the natural, unpremeditated, but instinctively Godward outflow of the newborn soul that has received the Spirit. But let us look a little closer into details.

You see the Lord had gone outside Judea (vs. 3). He had left the religious center of men, that He might be untrammelled in the display of grace; and depend upon it, if the truth of God is to be reached and enjoyed, you have to leave human religion in every shape behind. You must go outside man's circle of accepted religion; and it is very instructive to note that the Lord left Judea, which was at that time the center of what God had till then recognized. He left it because of the jealousy of the Pharisees, and because He saw rising against Himself the tide of hatred. He goes outside all the boundaries and limits of Israel. He goes, in the freedom of His own grace, to the spot where He can meet with the most wretched heart on earth, that He may fill it by the revelation of Himself. Despised and rejected of men, and not having where to lay His head, He went away to carry the testimony of God's love to the weary, and display it in His own Person. He takes His journey and goes down to a city of Samaria, "which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph."

We are here on the most interesting, traditional, and historical ground in Scripture. There was Jacob's well, and Jesus, "being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." He who was God had stooped down, in infinite grace to be a wearied man, and appeared to be such. He never used His Godhead power to shield Himself from the wilderness circumstances with which, as a true and real man, he was surrounded. He accepted all the external conditions of humanity, when, in love and grace, He came down to earth, and became man, that He might in His life present God to man, and in His death bring man to God in righteousness. He never used His divine power to shelter Himself, or relieve Himself from that which was the portion of manhood, as He passed through a scene where man was, not now in paradisaical circumstances, but an exile, and sunk under the power of Satan. He tasted and felt all this to the uttermost, for while ever the object of the Father's delight and love, there never was one who trod this earth who had outwardly so little of the expressed favor of God. Homeless, penniless, and at length friendless, the Lord of glory passed through, and out of the world He had Himself formed. Mystery of love!

Jesus then was wearied, and sat thus on the well. By these words the Holy Spirit means that when the woman came up she simply saw a tired-looking man. That is all she saw; but oh! the grace of Christ is exquisite, and if I may so say, He leaves His glory in order to unfold the deep grace of His heart. Nevertheless He is never more glorious than when He is in the lowest places of humiliation. Never is His glory more enhanced than when, apparently stripped of it all He sits as man in weariness at the well. Out comes this woman from the city. It is the sixth hour—twelve o'clock. The sun, in meridian splendor, was pouring its burning rays upon the arid ground. That is the moment the Lord chooses to pass that way, in order to meet that soul. The Spirit records the fact. And why? Because that was not the time when the women in the East went out to draw water. That was done in the morning, or in the evening, when the heat was not so great (Genesis 24:11). But this woman comes out in the middle of the day, and you may ask, Why? There is no doubt about the reason. Her sin had isolated her. Her sin drove her into absolute solitariness. She shunned the face and company of men, and went out to be alone, but got into the company of God. She shunned the face of man, for she feared his frown, and his judgment, But see the grace of Christ, He goes to the spot at the moment when He knew He would meet her. He knew the isolation of her heart, and felt for her, for He, I believe, was really more solitary than she. There never was one so absolutely solitary as the Saviour. It was the solitariness of a divinely perfect life, in the midst of a scene where nobody wanted Him. Can you conceive anything more solitary? And He proposes

to Himself this—to find a place in a heart that never thought of Him till that hour; and to effect this, in beautiful grace, He stoops now and says, “Give me to drink.”

Although there in the lowliness of manhood, He was God, and to that soul He was going to reveal the heart of God. In lowly grace He was there, but nevertheless it is with all the dignity of Godhead that He says, “Give me to drink.” He does not ask for the water. His word is “Give me.” Whether she ever gave Him the water which, as a thirsty and weary man He desired, we are not told, but she was surprised at His demand, and says, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” All that she saw was a weary Jew, and observe how far short the woman of Samaria comes of the truth. What was the truth? He that had said, “Give me to drink,” was the One who made the well, and the water therein. He was the Creator Himself. She knew it not. He knew it. She, a needy sinner, can alone be met and saved by the grace He could bring. The Saviour is outside the circle of promise, and yet someone is saved and deeply blessed. There are depths of grace in God which promises cannot express. What is a promise? It is only measured grace, but what we have in Christ is immeasurable grace. He is life, and all else, to the needy soul, and there is no measure for His grace towards the heart which will take from Him what He is able to give. It is immeasurable grace which comes to us through the life and death of the risen Son of God, and all are welcome to these untold stores of the grace of God which flow through the Lord Jesus Christ. But the lovely grace that could say, “Give me to drink,” was only met by, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” To this the Lord replies, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” How beautiful are these words! “If thou knewest the gift of God.” Did she know God as the Giver? not a bit. Do men know Him any better nowadays? I know not, oftentimes. She did not even know the law of God, nor what the law’s claim might be, much less did she think of God as a Giver. Man regards God as a claimant, a receiver, a demander, like the servant spoken of in the gospels who said, “I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.” In the blindness of nature we think of Him as always looking to gather something. I know I did so before I was converted. I remember it perfectly well. I thought the eye of God was upon me, and that I could not render to Him what He desired. Did you not think so? I believe every Christian would say, Yes. Then came the moment in your history when you found, first of all, that you could not render anything, and secondly, what was more surprising even than this, that God did not want you to render anything. What was the next step? God came to you as the Giver.

But, you may ask, What about forgiveness? Well, it is a remarkable thing that you read nothing about divine forgiveness in John’s gospel. He presents the positive, the life-giving side of the Gospel, whereas forgiveness is the negative side of the Gospel, and if you want to learn from his pen about forgiveness, you must go to his epistle for it. It is never spoken of in the gospel. There God is the Giver—“If thou knewest the gift of God.” When we come to the epistle of John we learn about forgiveness also, as that is based on redemption. How blessed to know God as the giving, as well as the forgiving God, I need forgiveness because I am a sinner. But supposing I am forgiven, that would still leave me helpless and bankrupt, unless I learned, what we have here, that God, come here in Christ, is a Giver, and what He gives is worthy of Himself: Let us learn what that is from what follows. The “gift of God” the Lord speaks of to the woman is not simply life, as it

was introduced in the third chapter. There we are told of the communication of a new life by the Holy Spirit to the soul, which by faith in the lifted-up Son of Man, and the opening of heavenly things, takes the character of eternal life. What I find the Lord proposes here is an added blessing—the Holy Spirit as the power of life forming a well (Greek, a fountain) within. He says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Christ Himself is here the giver, and therefore “the gift of God” cannot be Himself. You may say to me, Is it not eternal life? We find in the Epistle to the Romans that “the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (ch. 6:23). Again, we find the Apostle Paul saying, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). That may refer to the Lord Jesus. Scripture never repeats itself. Here, however, is something new proposed. “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is” that has stooped down so low as to say, “Give me to drink,” your heart would have been attracted, your confidence won, and “thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” He makes no claim on her, but her need is a just claim on His gracious heart. Love and need are face to face, in this touching scene, and therein is always the point of contact between the soul and God—need on my side, love on His.

Thoroughly interested, “the woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with.” She is surprised. She does not understand the Lord, she does not rise to the thought in His heart, so she goes on, “and the well is deep.” What a revelation! There are volumes contained in these four words, “The well is deep.” They bespoke a weary existence. She was tired of life. Her will and her sin had but left her heart empty. Despised of all, isolated, and abandoned, she came at a time when the well was very empty. And is not that exactly what every man, passing through this world finds, “The well is deep,” and gets deeper every year he lives, and he has to lengthen the rope by which he seeks to draw the water with which he would fain satisfy his heart. That becomes more difficult as time goes on, and the Lord tells us the reason, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” The water from the world’s well can never satisfy the soul that drinks thereof, but observe the deeper meaning in the next words, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well (a fountain) of water springing up into everlasting life.” “The well is deep,” indeed, for you, if you have not found the Lord. You have not received eternal life, nor the Holy Spirit, and you are not satisfied. There is no satisfaction here except in the love of Christ. No one can be satisfied without Christ. You may be seeking after your pet objects, following your pet occupations, and be engrossed by your choicest pleasures, but, mark, there is sin coupled with every one of them. And what is the result? Man is unsatisfied. He is lost, at a distance from God, and he never can be satisfied until he comes back to Him. What a contrast exists between an unsatisfied sinner in his sins, and on his road to hell, and a real Christian who possesses Christ, and enjoys Him, too, because he has within him “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Without doubt the Lord is here speaking of the Holy Spirit, under the figure of “living water,” not yet however as a divine Person come down to dwell within the believer (though what He speaks of could not be without this) but as the power of life. Water always rises to its own level. We noticed in chapter 3 that the water, so to say, came down from God—the Word communicated by grace being operative by the Spirit, and a new life and nature the result. Now we find there is to be a new power within to enable that life to rise up to its source—to that life of heavenly relationship and

communion in which eternal life consists. The Lord proposes here that the water He shall give, shall be in the believer “a well of water springing up into everlasting life,” a divine and ever-springing up fountain of joy. Life is dependent on external supplies for its sustenance, but here we find a fountain spoken of—a constant, continual source of supply. It is a new privilege and blessing. We have not as yet the personality of the Spirit, indwelling the believer, spoken of, but it is couched under the lovely figure of “living water.” It is the thought of a power acting in the new nature, and leading the possessor into the enjoyment of divine, and heavenly joys, and relationships. It brings the soul into the full joy of grace, tasted, and proved, and leads to deep communion of heart with Him who is the perennial source or spring of everlasting joy. The heart is brought by the Spirit into a region of entire satisfaction in the Lord. The more you are in communion with the Father and the Son, the more you enjoy His grace, and His sunshine, the more will your heart live in the atmosphere which is characteristic of everlasting life. This can only be in the power of the Holy Spirit, hence the Lord says, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst” They are remarkable words. I admit you may turn to me and say, Who is thus satisfied? I never saw the person. Well, if you never saw the person, let me say to you, Drink yourself of that “living water,” and be the person. Get to know in the practical experimental history of your own soul what the Lord says here, “He that drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” I have no doubt this refers to the Spirit of God as the power acting in that new life which is possessed by the believer in the Son of God now.

We have not yet come to that part of John’s gospel where the Holy Spirit is presented as a divine Person come to earth, but you notice that the Lord speaks of eternal life as evidently possessed by the soul that has received Him. Life is not power, nature is not power, hence what He suggests here is of paramount importance. The newborn babe has no power. What does that babe need? It needs a nurse, one to care for it in everything; and, thank God! if you get this new nature in the way presented in John 3:1-36, we find in chapter 4, that it is nurtured, cared for, and energized by the Spirit of God, that blessed third person of the Trinity, who comes and dwells in the body of the believer. And what is He in the believer? He is the source of joy, of communion, and of delight in the Father and the Son, and in all that suits them. The Lord teaches us by the most expressive figure “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”—what our eternity will be. It will be joy in communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We shall have dropped everything that will be a hindrance. There will be nothing but the unhindered action of the Holy Spirit when we reach the heavenly land by-and-by, but the point here, I apprehend, is that the believer is to enter into all this even now upon earth. We are brought to the sources of eternal joy even now.

I pray you to notice that the “well springing up” and “everlasting life” are distinct, and they must not be confounded. When the soul, through the sovereign grace of God, has been born of Him, and possesses the divine nature, the next thing the Lord proposes is this—I will put a power within you, the exercise of which will ever lead you to enjoy that which belongs to you in heavenly relationship, and to which you belong. It shall be “a well (fountain) of water springing up into everlasting life.” It is not our idea of a well that is here represented. You know what a fountain is. It is a perennial spring, ever bubbling up, and unhindered. The statement which the Lord here makes is a wonderful one. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.” The soul

that thus drinks is landed in a region of satisfied desire.

Evidently the woman of Samaria did not comprehend the Lord's words, as her next words were, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She knew not then who He was, but as He passes on, in His marvelous presentation of grace, she gradually gets her eyes, as well as her heart, opened. His grace evidently greatly attracted her, while she also felt what a toil was connected with sin, and you may depend upon it no man can sin, in this earthly scene, without having toil and sorrow connected with it. But she thought as yet, doubtless, more of her toil than of her sin, therefore the Lord now begins to deal with her conscience. Man has a conscience, and the conscience must be met, and reached, and the springs of the soul's history be touched with a sense of its sin, and guilt, or there never will be a link with God, or the true enjoyment of His grace. She would greatly have liked to be relieved of her toil, forgetting that she would not have been there trying to get a drop of water to quench her thirst had it not been for her sin, so the Lord now touches her conscience. "Go," He says, "call thy husband, and come hither." It was not often that the Lord bade any one go from Him, but it was necessary in this case. It was this "Go" which tested her heart, as to whether she cared enough for Him to induce her afterward to come back. She was now sensibly alone with Jesus—alone with God, and I ask you, Have you ever known in your soul's history, what it is to be alone with God? She was consciously alone with God, but her conscience is not yet fully reached. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither," deeply touched her, however. She quibbles, and without a blush replies, "I have no husband." This was true, but not all the truth, so the Lord rejoins, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly." To answer that she had "no husband" was only using the truth to hide it. Oh! what cowards we are! How we like to keep away from God. Sinners will bring in anything and everything rather than come into close quarters with God. But it will not do. There is nothing like facing all out with the Lord, and this is what He effects here, as He tells her she was living in open sin. All was out; He knew all. In a moment the conscience is reached. Conscience is the avenue by which God, now that man is a sinner, enters his heart. It is also the door of intelligence by which man learns God. Man feels he is known of God, and thus learns to know Him. She is discovered in the presence of Him, before whom she stands, and she exclaims—as she slowly discovers His glory, and that He whom she had never seen before, knows all about her—"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Her eyes are opened, the sense of her sin is pressed in upon the soul, and this is always the moment when the soul really gets God's blessing. She does not, however, go away. The fact is that the grace of Christ had triumphed, and it was the deep sense of His grace that now bound her to the spot. There was a deep change in her soul's condition. God had spoken to her, and she recognized His voice.

Nevertheless what had before occupied her mind, at once comes out, as she now says, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Should I worship at Mount Gerizim, or in Jerusalem? is the point. It is to be observed that whenever you get a soul exercised about its state, and about the truth, Satan will seek to obstruct that soul, by raising questions, and difficulties, as to the differences which have taken place among the people of God. Here this poor soul says, "You say in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," while "our fathers worshipped in this mountain." Gerizim was a well-known name in Israel's history, and there the Samaritans had a sort of mongrel worship. The

Lord takes the opportunity of revealing what was altogether new—the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth. His reply is most remarkable—“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” First of all He speaks to her of the gift of the Spirit, and now He proposes that she shall know the worship of the Father. “Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” The Father must be revealed before He can be worshipped. This the Son was doing. Worship, connected with an earthly Jewish system, gives place to the introduction of heavenly relationships. This change depends upon the revelation of the Father in the Son, a change not then apprehended, but nevertheless true as connected with the presence of the Son here; hence He could say, “The hour cometh, and now is”...(vs. 23).

If therefore you have not known the Son of God, do you think you can worship? Never! You cannot worship the Father unless you come to Him through the Son. Unless you have been born of God, and have received the Holy Spirit, to enable you to take up your place consciously as a child, do you suppose you have ever been a worshipper? Certainly not. Most seriously do I entreat you to weigh this matter, if you be a professed worshipper. To this Samaritan woman the Lord now adds, “Ye worship ye know not what.” That was a dreadful blow to her ideas of religion, and it may equally be said of every man, who is not born of God. “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” Yet Christ was now outside the land of the Jews. To a certain extent the truth was among the Jews. The temple, and the oracles of God, had been with them, but now the Son of God had come, and they had refused Him. He was thus quite outside—and there can be nothing more solemn than this break with the place of recognized privilege—and therefore He says, Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. But further, in verse 23 of our chapter, He adds, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (verses 23-24). I draw your careful attention to this.

There is no true worship unless we know God the Father as He has been revealed in the Son; we are dependent solely upon the Son, the Lord Jesus, for the knowledge of the Father. “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father.” Who are the true worshippers? you ask. No one is a true worshipper unless he be able to take up his place consciously in relationship with the Father, as revealed in the Son, by the Spirit of the Son dwelling in him. That is a most sweeping assertion, you say. I do not deny it. Will you deny it? I only ask you, Do you know what worship is? Perhaps you reply, I thought it was a giving of thanks. Not at all. The giving of thanks is a right and very blessed thing to do. It is a happy thing to give thanks, but then thanks are given for benefits received. Is that worship? When you come home after a few days' absence, and enter into your house, and your dog comes bounding to meet you, careers around you, and shows its deep delight in your return, is that thanksgiving? No. You have given it nothing, for which it should return thanks. What is it then? It is the delight of that creature in you. That is worship. Worship is the outflow of the heart towards the One who delights and fills it. If I may so put it, it is the overflowing of the full cup. Filled with the sense of what God is, and, in purest grace, revealed as the Father, in the Person of His Son, the heart overflows in worship. Therefore to be a true worshipper you must not only be born of the Spirit of God, and thus have a nature that delights in God, but possess also the Holy Spirit, in indwelling power of relationship

and joy, whereby this worship flows out to God the Father.

Observe carefully that the Lord speaks here of “true worshippers.” This is not a question of form. You may have all that the most;—aesthetic mind could desire; a suited building, pompous priestly paraphernalia, incense-laden atmosphere, windows stained, and dim religious light, music in perfection, and ritual to the uttermost, and yet—solemn thought for Christendom’s professing millions—be utterly devoid of all that is necessary to be what the Lord calls a “true worshipper.” Let no soul be deceived. Unless you are born of God, and have the consciousness of relationship by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, you have not the capacity for true worship. But now notice the statement concerning the “true worshippers.” Of them the Lord says, “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.” Beautiful words! God, if I may so say, is searching the world to find—what? To find worshippers. How are they produced? Elsewhere we read, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), and the lost ones He does save. He sought not even worship, or aught else from us as sinners; He sought us till He had found us, and saved us. Then become sons and children of the Father, by love that gave us all that love could give, and thus true worshippers, the Father—wondrous thought—seeks our worship, and we can give Him what He seeks. Such is the co-working of the Father and the Son.

I wonder if you know what it is to be a worshipper. It is said that we are in a day when all the world worships. Such a thought is deep folly. Do you for one moment suppose that “the children of disobedience” who are “by nature the children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:2-3), unconverted, and utter “men of the world which have their portion in this life” (Psalms 17:14), can worship, together with the children of God? Impossible! The Lord says, “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.” They must be His children, and know it by His Spirit in order to worship Him, for “they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit, and in truth.” I cannot worship Him unless I have received the Spirit by which alone true worship is possible. Reality must be the thing which marks the soul. Coupled with the worship of the Father, you will observe, is this expression, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”—in the power of the Spirit, and according to the truth of the revelation He has given us of Himself. It is important to dwell for a moment upon this. You may say, I really can go and call Him “Father.” Thank God if you can. It is your right and privilege. It is written, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). But there is more than this. Can you draw near to God—get right into His holy presence—with this sense, I am welcome here; I am wanted here; I am fit to be here; I am delighted to be here? Does the blest knowledge of God fill your soul with joy and delight? “We joy in God” (Romans 5:11), is the highest possible experience of the soul. While it is well that we Christians should know that God is our Father, let us never forget that our Father is God.

All this, I do not doubt, was a little beyond the woman’s then understanding, so, taking relief in her prophetic knowledge, she says, “I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.” Mark the Lord’s answer, “I that speak unto thee am He.” Save in the ninth chapter of John, you do not get another instance where the Lord absolutely reveals His Person, as He did to this poor soul, There are only two souls in the gospels to whom the Lord told who He really was. Here, in the fourth of John, He reveals Himself to the outcast sinner, and in the ninth of John He reveals Himself to the outcast saint, the man who had been blind. You may be a moral outcast, or an ecclesiastical outcast, but if you thereby get into the company of Christ it is a

most blessed thing. In the ninth of John He says to the man who was endeavoring to witness for Him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He replies, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" that is, I should like to believe on Him. To this Jesus replies, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." The result is lovely, for the man became a worshipper, as he replies, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." I believe we do not really enter into the spirit of true worship until we have been cast out for Christ's sake, so we need not fear to suffer shame for His name (Hebrews 13:10-16). The Lord having thus revealed Himself to the woman, her eyes are fully opened, and now she drops her waterpot, the symbol of her earthly toil. At that moment His disciples returned, and "marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?" He knew, and so did she: and so she leaves her waterpot in a moment, for she has Christ instead of her cares, as well as her sins now, and goes away filled with unspeakable joy, and her message in the city is, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" She is a transformed creature, and I do not think any man or woman can be filled with the grace of God, that met me in my sins as it met her in hers, without desiring to tell everyone else about Him. Anyway she left her waterpot and went into the city, where everybody knew her, and where people might have sneered at her, and where women would not be seen walking on the same side of the street with her, and there proclaimed, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." What confidence she had in Him! What a spirit without guile!

Now see what is the result? Many come out, for the fields, as He tells His disciples, are white unto the harvest. The woman, like the good sensible soul she was, went in to reap. She was the first reaper, and the Lord goes in after her, to further reap. And many more believed, for I read that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, he told me all that ever I did" (vs. 39). Then in response to their invitation Jesus tarried two days in Samaria, "And many more believed because of his own word." God had His eye, in deepest grace, on guilty Samaria, for we later read, "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake," and "there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:6-8). This I may style the superabundance of grace. Where would there be a less likely spot to find the deepest blessing going on than in godless Samaria? But this is God's way. It is God's grace. How refreshing—first, many believed because of the woman's word; next, many more believed because of His own word; and lastly, Philip reaps nearly the whole city.

There is great force in the testimony of the "many," as they say to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying," but note this, "we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (vs. 42). Marvelous discovery! Priceless treasure trove! Have you, my friend, heard Him for yourself? and do you know indeed that He is the Christ, the Saviour of the world, and therefore your Saviour? The fact is certain that if, without doubt, you are assured that you have heard the Lord's own word, you have heard Himself. What a wonderful fact, and oh! how happy it makes us to be able to say, "We believe, for we have heard him ourselves." In connection with the well, and the parcel of ground that Joseph possessed, how beautiful is it here to see the Lord, in His own Person, fully answering to the type, and showing Himself to be the true Joseph! His name has been changed to Zaphnath-Paaneah—meaning, in the Coptic, a revealer of secrets, and, in Hebrew, the Saviour of the age (Genesis 41:43). The woman learned Jesus as the revealer of the secrets of her guilty life, while the Samaritans discerned, and proclaimed Him to be the

Saviour of the world. Such must He be to all our souls. In this chapter then we find that the water flows up to God in worship, and it is very important to bear that in mind. When people are saved they are often at once set to work. If you are saved, before you set yourself to work for the Lord, get right into the spirit of worship. The moral order in John's gospel is very important. The fourth of John follows the third, and the seventh of John the fourth. In the third we have the water coming down from God. In the fourth we have the "well of water springing up"—the worship of the renewed heart going up to God. In the seventh we shall find "rivers of water" flowing out, that is testimony for God in service of every kind. The importance of this order cannot be overrated. All service will be poor and fruitless, if we are not first of all rightly exercising our priestly functions in the assembly of God, and as children before the Father, in worship. In other words, the claims of the Father, the claims of God, must ever supersede the claims, or the need of man. Herein lies the difference between worship and ministry. Worship is what flows from the heart to God, and must have the first place. Ministry is what flows from God to man. It is the exercise of a spiritual gift, as we shall see more fully hereafter.

04. Rivers of Living Water

Rivers of Living Water The Holy Spirit, under the figure of the “well of water,” was what we looked at last Lord’s Day evening. Tonight we find, in the chapter I have read, our blessed Lord speaking again about the giving of the Holy Spirit, but here, you will observe, He does not use the figure of “a well of water springing up,” but of “rivers of living water” flowing out. We have not yet got out of the region of figures, in the Lord’s speech, in this part of John’s gospel. When we come a little further on in this precious gospel we find all figurative language dropped, and then we get most simple and plain statements from the Lord about the Spirit of God; His coming, and character, and what He would do when come. But here, we are still in the region of figures, and, you may depend upon it, there is some very wise purpose of the Lord in thus speaking.

How beautiful and charming are His figurative words: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Nor are we left to guess at, or conjecture what He means, for immediately the Spirit of God, by the pen of the evangelist, gives the meaning of His language. “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (vss. 37-39). In the fourth of John we read about life in the power of the Spirit being given as “a fountain of water,” in connection with the presence on earth of the humble, lowly, gracious, condescending Saviour—albeit rejected, as we also saw. In this chapter the reception of the Spirit of God by the believer is distinctly connected with the rejection on earth, but exaltation to heavenly glory, of the Son of Man. The world did not want Him, but heaven claimed Him, and the giving of the Spirit, in this scripture, is directly connected with the present place, in heavenly glory, which the Lord Jesus, as Man, has taken.

Before seeking, with the Lord’s help, to unfold this passage, I should like to show you the setting in which this scripture is found. Everything in Scripture comes in a marvelous but divine order; and every one, who has been with us on previous nights, will feel that there is a growing light, a development of truth, in connection with that which here falls from the Lord’s lips, as compared with what has gone before. Like a diamond properly mounted, its setting shows it off. What then is its setting? It is the sad, yet solemn fact that the world would have nothing to do with Christ. The world would not have blessing from Him, and therefore, so to speak, He retires out of the scene altogether, and says, I shall go to the place that suits Me, and thence I will bless to the uttermost any soul that will follow Me there—will come to Me there.

Now if we turn back to the beginning of the chapter, we read that, “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.” He knew perfectly well that His death was determined upon by the Jews. He therefore goes now into Galilee. In the second verse we read, “Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.” In the previous chapter, at the fourth verse, you will find, “And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.” Now do you think it is merely what we call at haphazard, that we read of the passover in the sixth chapter, and

of the feast of tabernacles in the seventh? Impossible! Both are remarkable types, and have a very large, and important place in Old Testament scripture. The passover was the type of the death of Jesus. We have no doubt about that, because the Apostle Paul says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). If you turn to the sixteenth of Deuteronomy you will find there recorded three occasions on which the Jew was to appear before the Lord. These three occasions were the passover, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. Now the passover, as I have said, was a figure of the death of Jesus—the cross. The feast of weeks evidently finds its answer in Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Leviticus 23:15-20; Acts 2:1-4). The feast of tabernacles is a type of the millennium—peace, rest, and glory, under the sway of the Lord Jesus, In the gospel of John we read of the passover, and of the feast of tabernacles being kept, but there is no mention of the feast of weeks, because in point of fact what the feast of weeks prefigured was yet to come, namely, Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit. The feast of tabernacles has its antitype in a scene of blessing, and glory, by-and-by, when Jehovah's name—when Jesus' name shall be delighted in, and rejoiced in over the whole world. That is what is to come. The feast of tabernacles, therefore, has no counterpart, or antitype in Christianity whatever. It remains to be fulfilled, and will be, when the kingdom of the Lord Jesus is come. In the sixth of John we find that they wanted to make Jesus a king. Turn to it. At the 15th verse we read, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." But how could He take the kingdom with sin rampant on earth, and the world in the state it then was, and even yet is in? Impossible! Therefore you find later in the sixth of John that He tells the people plainly that He Himself must die, and unless they ate His flesh, and drank His blood, they had no life in them. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (vs. 53), are His words. I grant you His words were not apprehended then—nor, indeed, do they find general acceptance now.

We must bear in mind that what we have in the sixth of John is the antitype of the manna—that bread which the Israelites had in the wilderness. I do not doubt that in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters you have a striking picture of what every Jew would understand perfectly. In the fifth you find them, so to speak, in Egypt, in bondage; in the sixth, in the wilderness, with the manna among them; and, in the seventh, they are in Canaan, keeping the feast of tabernacles. But how, you may say, in the fifth chapter, are they in Egypt? What do you find there? You find a poor cripple delivered by the Lord from his diseases and distress. That was exactly what had taken place in the history of Israel. They had been delivered from Egypt by the power of God's grace, and here was a man whose misery resembled theirs, and whom Jesus—Jehovah Himself now on earth—delivered absolutely. In the sixth chapter Jesus refers to their experiences in the wilderness. Had they not manna there? They had. He says, "I am the bread of life"; I am the true manna; you must eat Me—you must have Me. This they declined, and murmured at Him, so when we come to the seventh chapter, where we have the feast of tabernacles introduced, and in a manner kept, the Lord refuses to sanction it with His presence: the day for its establishment must be postponed. Joy on earth must give place to joy in heavenly scenes, in association with the earth-rejected, but heaven-crowned Son of Man. The Lord was outside, and those who would go to Him must part company with what is of man, and his world, and follow Him in present rejection. The Spirit of God is most careful to call the occasion "the Jews' feast" of tabernacles. So in the sixth chapter the passover is also called "a feast of the Jews." Those who are familiar with Scripture will remember that in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, where we have an account, given in detail, of the

institution of these feasts, the Holy Spirit is careful, over and over again, to call them “the feasts of the Lord.” Here, in John’s gospel, the Spirit of God now stamps them as merely “feasts of the Jews.” All was false, hollow, unreal, as, alas! much is unreal in Christendom today. He who was the sum and substance of everything—the antitype of all these figures—Jesus Himself, the Son of God, was there. In Him they were to find fulfillment, but He, alas! was unknown, unrecognized, unwanted, unwelcomed, nay, more, He was hated, and the Jews, while keeping the feasts that pointed to Him, were working for His death. He therefore goes outside. Our chapter opens with His reason for this action. “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him” (vs. 1). Thereon His brethren go to Him, saying, “Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.” He had been making the small supply of five loaves and two fishes more than abundant, and feeding the multitudes. His own brethren in the flesh did not believe in Him, as verse 5 tells us, but nevertheless they would have been very glad to have got a lift in the world owing to their connection with Him, when He was able to do such mighty works. Alas! man would use Christ’s name to get into worldly popularity if he could so ensure it. Such is the heart of man. His brethren further add, “There is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.” Assert yourself. Bring in the real feast of tabernacles. Establish the kingdom. “Show thyself to the world.” Take your right place in it, we shall benefit by the step. That is what they really meant. But what is His answer? “My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.” That is a very solemn word for the unsaved man. “Your time is always ready.” Unconverted one, today is your time. The present day is the world’s time. Nothing can be more touching than our Lord’s word as to Himself here—“My time is not yet come.” He referred to His death. As to them, how different is the statement. It is the world’s time now, the world’s day, man’s day, “Your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you.” The world loves its own. You are part and parcel of it. It does not hate you. You are an integral part of it, and perhaps you are essential to its progress. “But me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast.” The world and its religion were suited to each other, then as now, and every Christian should be exercised as to whether he is, or is not, helping today to reenact the scene of John 7:1-53. It was the outward semblance of joy without reality. It was merely external religious formalism—dead, because Christless, without a bit of reality in it. There was nothing to satisfy the soul. But to His brethren the Lord says, “Go ye up to this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.” When they are gone he goes up secretly, not to join in, but to witness against it. He goes into the temple immediately, and speaks openly. There is a good deal of discussion about Him, and the people are divided because of Him. It is always so. Even in this hall the people are divided because of Him. There are hearts that love Him, and that delight in Him; and there are hearts that do not care the least about Him, and you know you are of the number, unsaved one. “There was much murmuring among the people concerning him” (vs. 12), but no certainty. What was He? and who was He? that was speaking in their midst. Was He the Son of God, the Christ, a good man, or only a deceiver? None knew. But He “went up into the temple, and taught” (vs. 14). “How knoweth this man letters (or learning), having never learned?” (vs. 15) was next the query. They had never heard such ministry. He had never been seated at the feet of the scribes. He had never gone to a theological seminary, nor attended the rabbinical schools of learning, and therefore they say, “How knoweth this man letters?” The fact is, man thinks there is no learning except that which comes from himself, and his schools; God is left out,

and His Spirit ignored. Jesus rejoins, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." How lovely the grace of this answer! Christ ever hides Himself behind God—the Father. Mark, too, how clearly you have Him here as the "sent one" of God. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Any one that desires to do God's will, will learn it; on the other hand, "he that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (vs. 18). He had come—the sent One of God—to bring out the thoughts of God, and the heart of God, to unfold the nature of God, the purpose, the counsels, and the love of God. God's glory was His motive and object. Self-seeking was unknown to Jesus. He spoke ever from, and for God, hence "he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." Let the eye rest abidingly upon this. Jesus' object, as He passed through this world, was to reveal the nature of God, to unfold that which was in the heart of the Father, and to bring out to man that which would meet him in his ruin, his misery, his need, and his sin. As for taking the kingdom, it was then impossible. I le knew that nothing but His death could meet the claims of God, and the need of man; and therefore He came to do the will of Him that sent Him. His words elsewhere are, "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (John 6:38). The Lord then asks why they were angry at Him for what He had done. He had healed the poor cripple, who, for thirty and eight years, at the pool of Bethesda, had known naught but disappointment. "If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?" In the fifth chapter we are told, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (vs. 17). How could God rest in a world of sin—in a world where evil was rampant, Satan ruling, death governing, and man miserable and wretched? How could God rest here? His nature of love made it impossible, hence "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." That is all Christ's answer. You cannot shut up the bowels of God, you cannot stop the outflow of His grace and goodness, and so here, the Son of the Father, the blessed living expression of the unspeakable grace that fills the heart of God, says, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." The result is that there was a good deal more discussion with regard to Him, and then the Pharisees sent officers to take Him. They determined they would kill Him, but did not know how to manage it. No man laid hands on Him because "his hour was not yet come"—the hour when He was to lay down His life for the glory of God, for man's salvation, the putting away of sin, and the destruction of the power of Satan. A crisis had, however, arrived. The rulers of the feast of tabernacles had determined on His death, and as the officers appear, in obedience to their orders, to take this blessed witness for God, mark what He says, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (vs. 34). He does not mean this for the anxious seeking soul. That statement is not for the heart that loves Him. It is not for the anxious inquirer after salvation, or the seeker after grace. Nay! these words are meant for His implacable enemies, the foes clamoring for His blood. "Where I go ye cannot come." "Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go?" The fact is He will go back to the spot whence He came, and, as He goes, He will open up the way to God, so that, whoever will follow Him thither, may do so, on the righteous grounds of accomplished redemption. His foes are completely puzzled by His words, as evidenced in their query, "Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me,

and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" (vss. 35-36). This leads up to, and gives occasion for the Lord's remarkable words, now to be considered. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The feast had gone on for seven days, and this was the eighth day. Seven is the number, in Scripture, for completeness, whereas the eighth day is connected with resurrection blessing. It was on the eighth day, the first day of a new week, that the Lord rose from the dead. It was eight days after the sayings recorded in Luke 9:23-27, that He was seen in glory on the mount of transfiguration. You will find then in Scripture that the eighth day is connected with resurrection blessing, and resurrection glory too. The feast of tabernacles had a double aspect. It was typical of the coming kingdom, and it was commemorative of Israel's entry into Canaan. God had enjoined on His people, who had come out of Egypt, had passed through the wilderness, and had got into the pleasant land, that once every year, at the end of the harvest and the vintage, they were to keep a feast for seven days. Now, what do the harvest and the vintage teach? I have no doubt as to their meaning. The harvest, in Scripture, is the figure of the judgment, which the Lord will yet bring upon the world; a discriminating judgment, in which He will save the righteous, while the wicked are cut down (see Matthew 13:38-43). After this will come the vintage, and what is that? It is the indiscriminate judgment which the Son of Man will pour forth on a guilty blood-stained world, and upon those who bear His name falsely and hollowly. After that vintage you have His kingdom brought in and established, and therefore the feast of tabernacles was not to be kept until the harvest, and vintage, were over (see Deuteronomy 16:13). In it Israel commemorated the fact of how they had been brought out of Egypt and bondage, how the Lord had kept them during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, and how He had planted them at last in the promised land, where He had placed them, according to the dictates of His loving heart. It was to be a feast of joy. Gladness was to be its characteristic! But "in the last day, that great day of the feast" (it alone of the feasts had this overlapping day outside the seven ordinary days), when everybody was rejoicing, where was Christ? He was outside, and apart from the scene altogether. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He knew that, spite of the festivities before His eyes, He was surrounded by weary, wretched, thirsty hearts. He knew that amongst that immense crowd, engaging in religious services, there were hosts of unsatisfied, empty, thirsty souls; and are there not thousands today in the same position? In the midst of abundant religious formality, what thirst, what misery, and what need in the heart! How blessed it is to hear the Saviour say, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Who does He mean by "any man"? I should like to know whom He does not mean? Is there a thirsty soul here? It is he that is meant. But you may say, Does it not mean the saint and believer, who, when he wants refreshment, is to come to Jesus and drink? It may embrace that, but I should be slow to limit the Scripture to that. I find, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." You must come to Me, Jesus says. But you may tell me, that those spoken of are they who are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, when He comes, for the fact is here contemplated of Jesus having gone to heaven.

True, but there can be no doubt of this, that while our Saviour, who is now ascended, and glorified, was here, and passing through this dark, weary, restless, and thirsty world, He invited any who would, to come and drink; and every wretched heart in this company tonight should heed what He said, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." I grant you it presupposes thirst, presupposes need, and that we must come to Him because we are thirsty, but He it is that

quenches the thirst. None come to Him unless they feel thirsty, and I quite admit that the Spirit of God produces this thirst, this sense of misery, and of unsatisfiedness. And are there not such hearts in this company tonight? My friend, listen, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And if you come, what do you find? That He satisfies you, and your thirst is quenched? Far more than this. One drink of cold water would quench one's thirst. What does He say? I will quench your thirst? Nay, He says, I will make you to quench the thirst of a great many others. I will make you—not the source, for He Himself is that—but the channel of blessing to others. You come to me, and I will meet the thirst of your own soul first, and then you shall be made a channel, through which the rivers of God shall roll to the thirsty, and weary all around. When the heart, drinking of that which is in Jesus, is satisfied, then the waters overflow and refresh other thirsty souls. Testimony becomes simple and natural. This is a wonderful theme; I am almost afraid to touch it. It is so magnificent, so perfect, so blessed. You come in your misery, and want, and need, to Jesus. And what do you find? All that heart could wish, and then are made the channel of deepest blessing to others.

All this depends on the Holy Spirit, "which they that believe on him should receive." Not only is the thirst quenched, but "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is clearly by the power of the Holy Spirit, which comes from the glory where Christ is, and fills the heart of the believer with the glory into which He has passed. Wondrous words, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (vs. 39). And what is more suited to an arid wilderness, like this world, than "rivers of living water" flowing through it. We may well marvel that we should be the channels through which those rivers roll. But that is just why we are left down here after conversion. We are to witness for our absent Lord. This figure manifestly differs from that in chapter 3, where by the "water and the Spirit" we are newborn. Nor is it like "the well of water springing up"—the power of the Spirit within you, giving you to enjoy the sense of association with the Father, and the Son—the believer entering into the enjoyment of things not seen, because heavenly, and eternal, as spoken of in the fourth of John. In the seventh chapter the "rivers of living water" are undoubtedly connected, more with service, than with worship. They further suggest the thought of connection with an inexhaustible supply of perennial refreshment, making the believer, through grace, really superior to the circumstances that surround him. What is your thought of living water? Is it not a thing that sparkles with blessings? It conveys to me the idea of the fullest refreshment.

It is to be observed that the Lord Jesus says, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Where does the Scripture say this? There is no passage, that I am aware of, that so reads. It is therefore the spirit of the testimony in Scripture, that I conclude the Lord refers to. For instance, "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook" (Proverbs 18:4). Again, "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isaiah 58:11). We also may learn much, I think, by observing the use of the term "river" in Scripture. If you turn to the 46th Psalm, you will find, at the fourth verse, "There is a river," says the Psalmist, "the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." There it is something that flows from God. In the 65th Psalm, and at the ninth verse, it says, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with

the river of God, which is full of water.” If you have not drunk of this river, if you have never been brought, in the history of your soul, to know what this means, let me assure you, you are missing a great blessing. The “river” in Scripture has an early place, and is a remarkable figure. Let us trace “the river of God” a little in His Word. Its channels will be found to differ, according to the different dispensations, but it is the same river. Turn to the second chapter of Genesis, where it has its rise in Eden. Creation blessing is the order of Genesis 2:10, “A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.” There we have the river of God, carrying with it refreshment, and blessing, all over the world. The dispensation was one of blessing, and good on earth, and all man’s joys were connected with creation, and with God, known as Creator. But sin came in, and where do we next find the river? I believe you have it in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, the book of typical redemption by blood. In that chapter you will find the Israelites in the wilderness, and there was no water. What happened then? In the fifth verse we have Moses thus instructed: “Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go: Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb: and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

Let us pass on now to the seventy-eighth Psalm, and hear what the Holy Spirit says about that scene. The Spirit of God describes it most graphically. “He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed” (verses 15-16, 20). Yes, the servant struck the rock, and there gushed out the refreshment that God gave, for His weary people. It followed them in all their wilderness course, for they were the redeemed of the Lord. The channels might be many, through which it ran, to assuage the thirst of those mighty hosts of God, but the source was one, the smitten rock. In the tenth chapter of first Corinthians we are told what that Rock was, as we read, “They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (vs. 4). The rock was Christ, and the water, the Spirit of God. It is a figure, I admit—but how apt, as every figure of Scripture is—of the Spirit of God which would come from a glorified Christ. It is the Spirit of God, coming from a living Christ, filling the soul that turns to Him, and believes in Him, with unfailing refreshment, so that it flows out from him to others. When Israel was settled in the land of promise, Jehovah’s dwelling place was there, and He watered the land “with the rain of heaven,” but, at the time we have reached, in John 7:1-53, the moment had arrived for leaving Canaan a dry land—spiritually—and the river of God is not found there anymore. Henceforth, as Jesus here tells us, it would take its rise in the glorified Son of Man in heaven, and flowing down through altogether new channels—the bodies of His believing people on earth—should refresh the spiritually thirsty. For the time earth, as such, is neglected. The present moment—or dispensation—is one marked by “spiritual blessings in heavenly places,” and to use the figure, earth is not now to be watered, but only the people of God—the Church, formed by the descent, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Lord means in our chapter. When the Church has been taken up to heaven, at the moment of the Lord’s second coming, the River of God will find other channels, and earth again be blessed. This will be in the coming kingdom of the Lord. The heavenly side of that kingdom we see in Revelation 22:1-21, and there the “river of water of life” is seen “proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb” (verses 1-2), and preserving all in freshness and gladness. If we gaze at

earth in the millennial day, we see this river rising under the sanctuary of the earthly Zion, and flowing out, to water, not only Jerusalem, but all the earth (see Revelation 7:17; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8). It will be a wondrous time of heavenly, and earthly glory, and due really to the “river of God which is full of water”—type of the Holy Spirit—flowing in unhindered streams in every possible direction, although the character of blessing then will not have the depth and fullness it possesses now. But to return, where does that river rise today? From the heart of the ascended Son of Man in glory, who gives the Holy Spirit to every soul that, thirsty, really comes to Him. Of this there can be no manner of doubt, as we read, “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” It is not now a material thing, outside, in creation. It is the Spirit of God coming from the ascended Saviour, to be the witness of His glory, and the power of the enjoyment in us of all that flows to us from the glory in which He is, consequent upon accomplished redemption—forgiveness, justification, peace, acceptance, and to give us the knowledge of the relationship in which we stand to God, as our Father. It is by the Holy Spirit received, that we are set in the Christian place, and state. It is not only thirst met, gratified, satisfied, and quenched, it is more than that. The soul first has its thirst quenched, is filled, and then out of “his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

There is immense force in this statement. There are souls, I am persuaded, in this hall tonight who are thirsty, who have been quickened by the Spirit, and have desires after Christ. They are anxious, exercised, possibly pious, and prayerful, like Cornelius, yet they are not at rest, because they have not the Spirit of God. They are never at peace, and more, they never will have peace in their souls, until they have done with themselves, bow to the righteousness of God revealed in the cross, and see all that they are, and have done, set aside by that cross, and know that they are even now accepted by God in Christ, who died on the cross, and has risen again. The Spirit, given from the glory where Christ is, is received by the individual believer the moment he believes the testimony of God as to the work on the ground of which He has set Him there (Ephesians 1:13). The Spirit of God is then the seal of the faith that believes God’s testimony to the work of Christ, and the power of the enjoyment of the place which depends upon it, and which is the normal Christian state. I say the Christian state. What is that? It is the new place, measured and marked by Christ, who risen from the dead, on the ground of redemption takes a new place, as man, before God, into which He introduces all His own. This place the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the believer, consciously sets him in, with settled peace as the result, for what is there left that could disturb it?

Now the truth is that we get everything in, and through Jesus. We first of all get our sins forgiven. We get our thirst quenched, and we receive the Holy Spirit, who, in the character of “living water,” flows out through us to others. If we come to the Lord, and get our own souls blessed, and refreshed, and helped, by the knowledge of His grace, we have to represent Him in this scene. We are empowered, by the Spirit of God, to be here channels of blessing to those around us. The Saviour in glory is the source of all, while the believer, still in this scene, is the channel of the “rivers of living water” which, through the energy of the Holy Spirit, are to be apparent. It is the thought of service to, and testimony for Christ, that is here presented. If we have received the Holy Spirit, and are, by daily, hourly communion with the Lord, drawing from those unfailing springs of living water, which are in Him, we cannot help answering to what, is described here—“Out of his

belly shall flow rivers of living water.” We come out of the enjoyment, into which we have been first brought in our own souls (the belly not the brain), in testimony and in service—in the preaching of the Gospel, the ministry of the Word, the feeding of the lambs, and sheep of Christ’s flock, the seeking of the lost, the recovery of the wanderers, in visiting the sick, looking after the poor, the sorrowful, the widow, and the orphan; in fact every branch of Christian service is included, from the giving of a cup of cold water in Christ’s name, to the highest form of spiritual ministry.

It is the overflowing energy of the Spirit of God, as come from, and so intimately connected with, the glory of Christ, that in the heart of the believer, leads him to be a channel of blessing all through his course, and wherever he may be; opening his lips, and molding his life, so that he becomes a living testimony to those with whom he comes in contact. He becomes an illustration of those of whom Peter writes: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the virtues of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). It is a wonderful thing to be not only a “holy priest” in worship, but a “royal priest” in service. As the former you are in John 4:1-54, as the latter you are in John 7:1-53.

I will read the Lord’s Word once again—“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” You may say to me, I know nothing about that. Well then, my friend, it is high time you were deeply exercised that you should know something about it. That is what, in conclusion, I have to say to you, each one. Do you not think it is a wonderful thing that in a dark, miserable, wretched, sin-stained, and Satan-governed world like ours we should be called to this? Would it not be a wonderful thing for you to get filled with Christ, and with the Holy Spirit? And would it not be a still more wonderful thing if you were to pass through this world in communion with Christ, deriving from Him, and thus be the means, in His hands, of helping and blessing others. It would make a great difference in your life. I believe that most Christians are looking to get, rather than to give, in spiritual things. Getting is all right, but if I do not keep the sluices open, to let the blessing pass through me, the heart’s joy is soon spoiled. Not untruly did the poet write:—

“Dig channels for the streams of love, That they may broadly run; For love has overflowing streams, To fill them every one. But if at any time thou cease These channels to provide, The very fount of love for thee Will soon be parched and dried; For thou must give, if thou would’st keep That good thing from above:

Ceasing to give, we cease to have— This is the law of love.”

If we were filled with this thought, that we have everything in Christ, and that we are but channels of communication, from the inexhaustible stores of grace that are in Him, to the needy souls around about us, what an immense difference there would be in our daily lives, and what joys would mark them. May the Lord grant this grace to each of us that we may go to Him, and drink deeply of His grace, and Spirit, and thus become, in this scene, the witnesses of His love, and be free, and able to show forth the beauty, and charm of that grace, by which He has called us to such marvelous privileges.

05. The Spirit of Truth

The Spirit of Truth

Apart altogether from the intrinsic preciousness of the words of the Lord, which I have read to you this evening, they possess, without doubt, to every heart that loves Him, peculiar sweetness, from the circumstances in which they were uttered. It was the last day He had with His own here below. The false man, Judas, had gone out, and the Lord was left in the upper room, with the eleven men that really loved Him. That He loved them I need not say, but that they might know, more deeply than ever before, His love, He addresses them in the unspeakably touching way that we find in these three chapters. We all know the peculiar value that is attached to the last words of any one we have loved, after that one has passed away. It is little wonder, therefore, that the fourteenth of John has been a peculiarly precious part of the Word of God to His children. There are communications in it, however, which, I am bold to say, demand more careful consideration, and attention, than the Lord's people have as yet given them.

What the Lord brings out here will never be adequately understood, unless we bear in mind the fact that He was just going away; and not only was He going to the Father, but He was going back to heaven on new and righteous ground, that gave Him a just title to take others with Him to the place to which He was going. This comes out in what is found in chapters 12 and 13. In the twelfth chapter the Greeks came up, desirous of seeing Jesus (vs. 21). Philip and Andrew come and tell Jesus. He at once says, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He brings out the stupendous truth that He must die, or be forever alone—Himself the solitary, unique corn of wheat, the only sinless man whom the eye of God ever beheld. He must die, or abide alone forever, as man before God. But He is prepared to die, to ensure having others with Him, and having died, and accomplished redemption, on that very basis it is, that He unites others with Himself in resurrection, and thus "brings forth much fruit." The blessed truths that the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John unfold to us are based on the Lord's death, as foretold in chapter 12, and on His living ministry, as departed to the Father, given us in chapter 13.

Before Judas had gone out, the Lord had washed the disciples' feet, Peter did not understand, nor the rest of the disciples, what He meant by this act. What did He mean? Surely this. He would not only die to make them clean, but He would take His place in heaven as the One who would keep them clean. Do not forget this. The Lord died to make us clean, and lives to keep us clean. Precious Saviour! That is what is brought out in the thirteenth chapter. In the end of that chapter the Lord says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself; and shall straightway glorify him." This, I judge, is the Lord's moral, personal glory. He will yet appear in glory, and have all things subject to Him, but that is not the glory spoken of here. It is the cross which is really the glory of the Son of Man. Thence shines a moral glory that eclipses all other glory. In the cross He has established, and

brought to light, all that God is—all that is found in His nature. By the words, “Now is the Son of man glorified,” I do not doubt he anticipates the cross, with all its wonderful effects for God, and for man. Because, you see, in the cross He glorified God, infinitely, and absolutely, about sin. He went down to death, that in dying He might glorify all that God is, in his love, His holiness, and His majesty.

“God is light,” and therefore hates, and must judge sin. He is righteous, holy, just, and abhorrent of evil. But it is equally true that “God is love.” He is gracious, merciful, kind, and compassionate. Only in the cross are these apparently opposite characters reconciled. It is absolutely impossible to reconcile them elsewhere. But there we see His righteous judgment against sin exercised, while His infinite love to the sinner is manifested. Sin had brought in death, and only by death could sin be put away. Jesus was the only man on whom death had no claim, and He underwent death, that He might thus glorify God infinitely, and absolutely, in so dying. Obedience and love towards the Father, tested in circumstances that could not be equaled, were manifested in Him. No element of pressure whether from man, Satan, or

God Himself, was wanting in the test. He was found perfect in obedience, as well as in love. Obedience led Him to be made sin, with all its terrible consequences—the forsaking of God, as His just judgment of sin. In that moment His love for His Father, and for us, was at its full height. What is God’s answer to all this suffering, and devotion, on the part of the lowly Son of Man? Straightway He raises Him from the dead. Every other man was left in death, to lie there, and to see corruption, but this Man, who has glorified God unto death, and in death, God raises from the dead—in token of His delight in Him. As we read in the sixth of Romans, He “was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.” The glory of the Father saluted Him in death, took Him out of death, and straightway glorified Him, at His own right hand. Yes, the Son of Man has been glorified, and God is glorified in Him. “If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself.” This is as Man, clearly! God shall glorify Him, as man, in Himself, and not wait for future glory to display His worth, and His judgment thereof. God will take Him up, as man, and put him into the glory of God, “and shall straightway glorify him.” He will lose no time in doing it.

Here, then, is the basis, the foundation, the groundwork, of all that comes out in the three chapters—of which I would now speak, specially as regards the coming, and personal presence, of the Holy Spirit, as sent down from the ascended Saviour in glory. You see God has glorified the Son of Man, by taking Him out of death, and therefore Satan is utterly defeated, and redemption accomplished; and although you do not get all the fruits of the cross stated here, nevertheless the deliverance, and blessing of the believer, is supposed to be known, and is anticipatively brought out by the Lord in the fourteenth chapter. The basis is laid, and now, viewed as raised from the dead, and having passed into glory, He proposes to His disciples this incomparable blessing—the coming of the other Comforter, the Holy Spirit, as a divine Person to dwell on earth. The personal presence of the Spirit of God on earth, to abide, and dwell in those who are Christ’s, I am bold to say, is a truth of transcendent importance for every Christian. Hence I press it upon you. The great thought, in each of these three chapters, is the personal presence, on earth, of the Paraclete—the Comforter. Here it is that for the first time the Holy Spirit is called “The Spirit of truth,” proceeding from the Father, and coming to earth, to abide in the believer. He is given by the ascended Man in glory to His people here on earth. No doubt the Spirit of God wrought in Old Testament times; no doubt we read of the Spirit of God coming upon certain believers; and, as we have already seen,

upon certain unbelievers in Old Testament days—for there could not be a greater sinner than Balaam, yet the Holy Spirit came upon him. The Holy Spirit had come upon man, but He was liable to, yea, often did, leave him. Even David, fearing such a sad issue, as the fruit of sin, said, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” No Christian could now, in the day of the Holy Spirit, intelligently or rightly pray that prayer, for reasons I shall show you, as I pass along. What the Lord here affirms is that, when come, the Comforter should abide. As we have already observed, John’s gospel opens with the fact that in Jesus, at the moment of His baptism, the delight of God was manifested by the voice which said, “Thou art My beloved Son; in thee have I found My delight” (Luke 3:22 JND). At that moment the Holy Spirit fell upon Him, and abode upon Him. After the scene at the baptism it says, “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:32-34). Now you will find that what characterizes Christianity is that which marked, and marks, Christ as Man. In Him God delights. At His baptism the Spirit of God descended upon Him as Man—Man as God would have Him be, sinless, obedient, perfect. His reception of the Holy Spirit then was the expression, and manifestation of the delight of God in Him personally. Thirty years of lowly grace, self-abnegation, and subjection to the will of God, in scenes veiled to mortal eyes, are followed by this public testimony to His moral worth, and glorious perfection as a Man.

All this was a testimony merely to what He was in Himself, and it was for Himself, and Himself alone. Now we reach a point in John’s gospel where the consequences of His yet deeper and fuller obedience to God’s will are brought out. He was about to go to the cross, and accomplish that atoning work, which was the result of His utter devotion to the glory of God. As a direct result of this work, and His consequent exaltation, He unfolds to the disciples this marvelous truth, that the Spirit of God—the third Person in the Trinity—would come into this scene, in an altogether new way, and new character, and for a new object. When come He would abide, and, therefore, the present moment is really the day of the Holy Spirit. The present moment, among all the dispensations, is really the day of the Spirit of God. The millennial day is the “day of Christ.” I do not doubt for one moment—no serious man could—that the Holy Spirit will be here in that day in a special manner, but, never again, will the blessing, that is connected with the presence of the Spirit of God, rise to the level, or lead the soul up to the wonderful heights that mark this our day, when, redemption accomplished, and the Saviour, the Son of Man, passed into glory, the Holy Spirit has come down to indwell the believer, and unite him to, and give him the sense of being one with that rejected Saviour, who now is at God’s right hand.

It is well that you should read the scriptures which refer to the millennial day of the Lord. There will be no rent veil then. There will be then again a veil unrent, and the worshippers will be outside. The privilege of going inside the veil to worship, in the full and rich enjoyment of the Father, and the Son, absolutely revealed—the veil in fact done away—is the peculiar blessing connected with Christianity now, and can only be enjoyed by the presence of the indwelling Spirit. This new action of the Holy Spirit we will now therefore contemplate. The Lord, in the fourteenth of John, tells His disciples that He is going away. The way in which He breaks the news is like Himself. He produces a void to more than fill it again. “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come

again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.” And is that place prepared, or is it being got ready? Clearly, the former, I judge. You might say, How? It was prepared, I apprehend, when, as the victorious Son of Man, the Lord stepped up into the Father’s house, entering the glory as the head of a new race, a new creation, a new order of things. When, as man, He passed into God’s glory righteously, and on the ground of that redemption by which God was glorified, the place was prepared for us, and we prepared for it. The very fact of His thus entering into it, and His being there, is the title of the believer in Him to be where He is. His going there on the ground of redemption gives us title, and fits us, as brought into His new place, to be there. In chapter 13 He prepares us for the enjoyment of the place, and in 14 prepares the place for us; His entrance leaves nothing to be done for us to enter, save His coming back to gather in the co-heirs with Himself. The Lord then speaks of the way to the Father Himself—and of the manner in which we treat that which flows from His lips. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” The way in which the coming of the Comforter is connected with this is noticeable, and I believe there is a great moral lesson here, namely, that unless there is love for the Lord, and His behests, we shall not get the enjoyment of that, which He speaks of in this chapter. Be that as it may, observe the order, “If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” The Lord had been their Comforter while here, and now He was going away. In John’s first epistle we read, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (ch. 2:1). Now the word there rendered “advocate” is the same word that is translated “Comforter,” twice in the fourteenth of John, once in the fifteenth, and once in the sixteenth. Only five times in Scripture do we find the word; on four occasions applied to the Holy Spirit, viewed as come to earth, and once to the Lord Himself, when in glory. We have therefore, you see, in that sense, two Comforters, and yet the word Comforter can never fully express what the Greek word *παρκλητος* means. There is indeed the sense of an Advocate, as given in John’s epistle, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Lord Jesus occupies this character, as well as that of a Priest. As a Priest He maintains His people before God. As an Advocate He pleads with the Father, for the erring child that has turned aside. As a priest He maintains the believer, if in weakness here, in consistency with the place, that the value of His blood has set him in, before God. His advocacy, however, is with the Father, on behalf of, and of course only realized by, those who are God’s children, and has to do with the restoration of communion, when it has been interrupted by any allowance of the flesh.

Here, however, the Spirit of God is called the “Comforter.” The fact is that the word thus rendered here as “Comforter,” and in John’s epistle as “Advocate,” means both, and a great deal more than these both taken together. It is more than a comforter, and more than an advocate. It doubtless carries both thoughts, but is wider, and fuller than either, presenting the idea of One who acts for us in whatever we have need of Him. I have no doubt the thought conveyed is, that the Holy Spirit, when come, would occupy Himself with the interests, the comfort, the happiness, the blessing, the prosperity, the needs, the difficulties, the trials, and the temptations of every child of God.

He is the Comforter, however, only of believers. We must distinctly understand, that in this character He has nothing to do with the worldling, though He may have somewhat to say to the world, as a matter of testimony. He will surely testify against the world, while He will sweetly comfort and sustain the feeblest believer in Jesus. “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you

another Comforter,” and observe, “that He may abide with you forever.” The great thought in this chapter is the abiding presence of this blessed “Spirit of truth,” as He is also, for the first time, styled. It is to be observed, that in all three chapters the Lord calls Him “the Spirit of truth” (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In John’s first epistle he says, “the Spirit is truth” (vs. 6). Here the Lord designates Him as “the Spirit of truth,” and we may be sure that there is a meaning in, and a reason for, any change in the words of Scripture. The Lord, in the fourteenth chapter, says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Yes, Christ is the Truth; and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. In John’s epistle, as I have already said, the Spirit is said to be “truth,” and the reason is simple. Christ is the truth objectively. We have all truth in Christ, for God is perfectly revealed in Him, and having the truth as to God, we have the truth about ourselves, and everything manifested in relation to Him. But the Holy Spirit is also called “truth,” as it is He, and He only, who can make the truth good, experimentally, and who is the power of it in the heart of the saint. Nevertheless I quite admit, that if walking carelessly, or grieving Him, we may have the Spirit of God, without getting the experimental sense, of what is normally coupled with His indwelling presence.

It is very important to see that the Lord Jesus is the truth. He is the truth about everything. You could not rightly say, God is the truth. Christ is that; for Christ is the revelation—the absolutely perfect revelation—of all that God is. He is the truth about everything, He is the truth about God, about His love, His righteousness, His holiness, His sense of sin, His judgment of sin, and, more than that, He is the truth about man. In His life He was what a man ought to be, absolutely for God, in blessed perfection; and in His death He was the truth, as to the final consequences of our utter ruin, as sinners, under the judgment of God. He has taken our place on the cross, in grace, and, blessed be God, ended it forever. Yes! Christ is the truth about everything, and the man that has Christ has the truth, and he that has not Christ has not the truth—no matter what he may have. But here, you see, the Holy Spirit is called, “the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.” Why? “Because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The Spirit of truth! Could I expect a world of falsehood to receive Him? Nay. And why cannot it receive Him? The Lord tells us, “It seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” He is outside the world. You have come into an out-of-the-world atmosphere, when you come to the fourteenth of John. Perhaps someone may say, I know very little about that atmosphere. The reason is not far to seek. You are too much in, and of, the world, to know much about this atmosphere. That is a very hard saying, you think. Well, I pray you weigh it, as I repeat, that we are in a very out-of-the-world atmosphere, in the fourteenth of John. You are in the atmosphere where the Son reveals the Father, and the Father bears witness to the Son. The world has refused and rejected Him, who was incarnate, and cannot receive the Spirit, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. The Holy Spirit was never incarnate. What the world sees it is prepared to believe. What it does not see it declines to believe, hence “the world cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” He was not presented to the world, as an object, to be received by it. What does the world know about the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit? Nothing. It is the truth carrying with it the sweetest, richest, and most blessed consequences to the believer. But the world receives Him not; for though the Holy Spirit has a certain relation to the world—as we shall see presently in the sixteenth chapter—yet it is unaware of His existence, or presence in its midst, as it sees Him not.

But, says Jesus, “Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Of course this was not true at the moment the Lord spoke to His disciples. He is anticipating the cross, with its effects, and what would be, in the day of the Holy Spirit. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The tenses are really the same in each part of the statement, both alike referring to the consequences of His death, and going to the Father (ch. 13:1) but, nevertheless, we have two totally distinct truths presented. “He dwelleth with you,” collectively—and should not leave them, as Jesus did. If you have somebody dwelling with you, we naturally expect to find him in your house. You of course say, But that will be a real person. That is the whole point here. It is as a Divine Person He is to come, and abide. But, you say, I never thought of the Spirit of God as a Person, is He not an influence merely? You would think so if you heard the prayers of Christendom week by week. If you judged by them, you would think He was only an influence, to be constantly, and repeatedly poured out. Mark the Lord’s words, “He dwelleth with you,” that is, in the company, God’s family, collectively. “And shall be in you.” This, as clearly, is the individual! What can be more blessed than to think of the family of God, thus provided for in the absence of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, that other Comforter, dwelling with them, in their very midst; or of the individual, as born of the Spirit, redeemed by the Saviour’s blood, and brought to God, cleansed, and forgiven, and then having the Spirit dwelling in him? Jesus, who had been with them, was going away, but the other Comforter should come, and be with them, and in them “forever.”

I can understand now, the Apostle Paul, when he says, “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is individual, whereas, you observe, that Paul speaks of the corporate aspect of His presence in a previous verse (1 Corinthians 3:16). Have you learned, beloved fellow Christian, that “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). Paul thus addresses the fleshly-minded Corinthian, and no more important, or practical truth could a Christian receive than this. For instance, he may say, I will go to such and such a place. Well, you will have to take the Holy Spirit with you. What! I shall have to take the Holy Spirit with me? Yes, you cannot leave Him outside. Why? Because the Lord here says, He shall “abide with you forever.” This is the great outstanding truth of Christianity, in connection with the Spirit of God, that He abides, when He comes. Yes, let us thank God that, in spite of all the failure individually, and in the Church of God, since the day of Pentecost until now, the Holy Spirit is still here. That is just what we find in the closing verses of Scripture. “The Spirit and the Bride, say, Come” (Revelation 22:17). Yes, infidel as the Church has been, faithless as Christians have been, thank God! the Holy Spirit has been faithful. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” I know no truth more sanctifying to the Christian than that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Not even the truth of the Lord’s coming is more powerful in this way, albeit we read, “Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He (Christ) is pure” (1 John 3:3). You will notice that the Lord is coming—not yet come—whereas we know that the Holy Spirit has come, and that He dwells in the body of every believer.

This, then, is the incomparable blessing that the Lord proposes to His loved ones here, and thus one is prepared to understand what He means, by adding, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” How are they comforted? By the possession of the Comforter, whose blessed work it is to occupy the heart with, and give us to realize the presence of Jesus with us here below. The Comforter gives us the realization of what it is to be in Christ, and to have Christ in us, and leads

us on, in ever-deepening knowledge of God our Father. But how does the Lord come to us now? He is in glory at God's right hand. How then does He come to us? Do you ask that question? I am afraid you cannot have touched this out-of-the-world atmosphere, and learned how to breathe it, if you so query. He says, and surely means it, when He says, "I will come to you." Clearly this is by the Holy Spirit, and for a deeper realization of His presence than even the disciples knew, before He went away, and sent the Spirit. And what is the work of that Spirit? To show the things of Christ to us, and to bring us into the enjoyed presence of the Lord Jesus. It is a spiritual atmosphere, I quite admit, hence if your soul and mine get exercised about how little we have lived in it, the more deeply so the better.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you." Touching words! He was going away, but adds, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." The truth of this we find reiterated, as Paul says, "We see Jesus... crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2:9). Do you see Him? The world sees Him no more, but we see Him, by the power, and the direct effect of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Sad would it be to miss in any way the realization of it. But what blessed words do we now hear, dear trembling fellow believers in the Gospel, "Because I live, ye shall live also." He is our life. Because He lives, we live also. Have you any doubts? You say, I often have doubts. Have you? Where do they come from? Has He any? I am speaking of Christ. Listen, "Because I live, ye shall live also." My life is bound up in His. I have said before, and say it again, It will be time for me to have doubts and fears, when I find that Christ has them. You say, That is a very strong statement. I admit it. But is it not true? I was a sinner, under sentence of death, and He went to the cross, and bore my sins, died my death, and took the judgment due to me upon Himself, and all the waves and billows of God's righteous wrath, which should have rolled over me, swept over Him. He was on the cross for my sins, and my sin. He underwent death, was buried and was raised for me, and now I know the truth of the Apostle Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Ah! beloved friend, when you reach that ground, you will become a bright, happy Christian. You say, I have not touched it. Why have you not? Does not your Lord here teach you to touch it, "Because I live," He says, who is our life, "ye shall live also"—a dependent life then, moment by moment hanging upon Him, but a life that can never fail as long as He lives. The Lord then adds: "At that day"—the day of the Holy Spirit—"ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." We are in that day now. The disciples should have seen the Father in Him during His sojourn here on earth, however little intelligence they had, as He said to them, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." But in the day when the Holy Spirit should have come, they should know Jesus, as being in the Father. This was in the divine glory of His Person, and this His own were to know, and, furthermore, that they were in Him, and He in them.

What a blessed statement of the believer's position! And that both in its privileges, and its responsibility; for if I am in Christ, in divine righteousness before God, He is in me, in life, in this world. And let men say what they will, it is His will that I should know this. "At that day ye shall know"—not hope or doubt, but have the simple confidence of faith, by the power of the Holy

Spirit's indwelling. But if Christ be in me, as life, He ought to be seen in me, before men. "Ye in me." That is the truth of Ephesians. God has raised us up together, and set us in heavenly places, in Christ. When I come to the Epistle to the Philippians I find Paul saying, "For me to live is Christ." That is Christ in us. God wants to see Christ in you before man, and that is what the Lord, begins to unfold here. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

I press this, because it will not do for the believer to simply say, I rest upon Scripture, and upon the Word of God. He must not be satisfied without experimentally having the comfort of the Holy Spirit—the witness of the Spirit of God. Paul says in Romans, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (ch. 8:14). Nay more, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (vs. 16). Am I then to be content merely with the fact that I am forgiven, and saved, as the consequence of Christ's death, and resurrection? Am I to rest in that? What would you think of the man who only knew that he was married because his wife's name was in the registrar's book? Little good, or comfort, would the relationship be to him, if he only knew that she was his wife, because her name so appeared. And is not the Holy Spirit to be, to the new man, the evidence and witness of our new place, and of the actual relationship in which we stand to God our Father? Of course. The Holy Spirit feeds the new man, comforts him, ministers to him, and unfolds the beauties and glories of Christ to him. These things are to be known, and if you do not know them, you have need to know them, "In that day shall ye know," says Jesus—and not merely as a matter of the acceptance of the doctrine of Scripture—"that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." But the Lord continues to instruct, and there is great moral beauty in His next words, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.... If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (vss. 21-23). We now see how Christ should be expressed, in the believer, as his life. Love and obedience are the blessed principles of that life. The one that loves Him keeps His words. There is a difference between keeping His commandments, and keeping His words. A command is a distinct injunction. Of course, you would not like to disobey His commands, but do you keep His words? What does that mean? Let me illustrate. A loving mother goes out from her house one morning, but before doing so she calls her daughter, and says, "My child, you do so and so," naming several things, "while I am out, and when I come back I shall have to do so and so," naming another half-dozen things. When she comes back she finds that her child has been obedient, and has done the things commanded her, but when she turns to do the things she meant to do herself, she finds all done. She says to her daughter, "I did not tell you to do these things." "No," replies the child, "but I thought you would be pleased if I did them." She has kept her mother's words. You see the meaning of the action—affection prompted it—and our affection is what the Lord prizes above all. Note what the Lord says here—"If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him." Suppose you keep His commandments, what follows?—"I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." Keep my commandments, says the Lord, and I will pay you a visit; keep My word, and My Father and I will make our abode with you. We will not be content with merely paying you a visit, but we will come permanently to abide with you, that you may enjoy Our company. There are unfathomable depths of blessedness in the communion of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord lays before us in this scripture, and may we each seek more and more to know them, for it is by the Holy Spirit, that this abiding of the Father and

the Son is realized.

But, further, the Holy Spirit was to come in Christ's name. Observe, too, that in the fourteenth chapter the Father sends the Spirit, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (vs. 26). The Father sends the Spirit to represent Jesus, when thus gone away, and to take His place. He has come in His name, so whatever might have been the relation of the disciples to the Lord, while He was here, whether it was a question of obedience, or subjection, that place was henceforth to be theirs in a new order of blessing, and privilege, by the Holy Spirit: and yet Christians are in doubt as to the presence of this blessed Spirit. I press this aspect of the truth, that the Father would send Him "in my name." Though the Spirit of God has come in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet Christ does not abandon His Lordship. The Holy Spirit does not come to displace the Lord, for that would be to dislocate the affections of the heart of the disciple. The Spirit of God has come, however, and He is here, in the name of the Lord Jesus, bringing to our remembrance all He said—that is, all He was—leading us into the communion of all that was thus presented, in His commandments, and His word; which were the perfect expression of Himself to His disciples.

Having developed this presentation of the Spirit of God, the Lord goes on to add another most important part of His service, when come, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Coupled with delight in His word, comes the ministry of the Spirit, "He shall teach you all things," and that is why it says in the First Epistle of John, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20). Even the youngest Christian has a perfect competency, by the Holy Spirit, to know what is the truth, for the point is that the Christian has this competency, in every sense, to learn, and know the truth, and to glory in it. "He shall teach you all things," And, further, "bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." I do not doubt that what the Lord speaks of here in the twenty-sixth verse, we have, first of all, fulfilled in the records of the words of Jesus, in the four gospels, which are not a mere human recital of things that happened in the life of Jesus, but a divinely given, and divinely expressed, communication thereof. The Holy Spirit is the power in us of entering into that which is thus laid before us. The expression "shall bring all things to your remembrance" is therefore absolutely fulfilled in the writings of the four evangelists.

Coming now to chapter 15, you have another point. We read there, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me." In the fourteenth chapter you have, "He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you," that is, on earth. In the fifteenth chapter the Comforter would give a new testimony to the earth-rejected, but now heaven-welcomed, and glorified, Son of Man, "He shall testify of me." Where do I find that fulfilled? I believe, primarily, in the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of Paul. In the Acts there is a very distinct fulfillment of this verse, while there is also the testimony to the ascended Saviour in the writings of Paul. I do not altogether eliminate the writings of James, Peter, John, and Jude, but in them there is not exactly a new testimony. There are very comforting things found in these epistles, but they do not present a new revelation. It is specifically in the writings of Paul that you have the new testimony to the heavenly Saviour, and to the relationship of the saints to that Saviour. When you come to the

sixteenth of John, and the thirteenth verse, you find the Lord says, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come." Especially in the writings of John, in the Revelation, we have the fulfillment of that verse. The fourteenth chapter states that the Spirit of God should bring to remembrance what Jesus spoke on earth, for communion. In the fifteenth we have the new revelation of what is the truth for the Christian now, in connection with the heavenly Saviour, rejected by the world, and power conferred to be His witnesses (vss. 26, 27). In the sixteenth chapter we read, "He will show you things to come." I would not confine the meaning of this merely to the book of Revelation. I think, particularly speaking, however, that it does refer to the prophetic truth there unfolded. The Spirit, however, abides, and I believe, that by the Holy Spirit, the saints are here enabled to see things in God's light, and to measure, and weigh them properly, to appraise that which is all around them in the world, and judge of all divinely, because the Holy Spirit leads the soul into the apprehension, and use, of the light which God has given it.

Turn back again to the fourteenth chapter for a moment, as it is important to see how the truth regarding the Comforter comes out. Observe it is the Father who sends Him in the fourteenth chapter. In the fifteenth chapter the Lord says of the Comforter, "whom I will send unto you from the Father." It is the Lord Himself, as the ascended man, who sends down the Spirit, although He proceeds from the Father. Observe that beautiful link—"which proceedeth from the Father." So in the Acts, in the second chapter you have, "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (ch. 2:33). It is therefore the world-rejected, but the ascended, and glorified Saviour, that sends down the Holy Spirit. In the sixteenth chapter, at the seventh verse, the Lord says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." What He had told them had filled their hearts with sorrow, and He says now, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." And when He is come, what will He do? You now get the true relation of the Spirit of God to the world. "And when He is come He will reprove (convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." Not of sins—not of man being an ungodly person, not because of the broken law; but the point is this—the sin of the world is that they believed not on Jesus. If I might so say, when the Holy Spirit came down, the first question He asked was, Where is Jesus? The world replied, He is not here. But He was here? Yes, but He is not here now. Where is He? Oh! He died, the world replies. How did He die? We killed Him. You killed Him? God has raised Him from the dead, and put Him into glory. There is then a breach between God and the world that nothing can bridge. The Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin by His very presence; He came consequent on Jesus' rejection. It would not have Him. What is the next thing?" He will convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." He leaves the world in its own darkness. "I go to the Father." The Holy Spirit convinces the world that righteousness can only be found in one place. And where is it? In that Man at God's right hand. He is the only righteous One—the One who has died for man, and whom God has raised to glory. He is our righteousness, and if you want righteousness you must be found in Him—not having your own righteousness, but "that which is through the faith of Christ," as Paul beautifully says (Php 3:9). There is now righteousness in the Father's presence. It is in the Person of that Man, who died, and whom God raised. But further, the Spirit of God, when come, should also "convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Satan did

sorry work in getting man to join with man, in the day that the Saviour died. He got them to combine and coalesce. Prince and peasant, priest and people, chief and subaltern, Greek and Gentile—he got them all to combine against Christ. As you know, Herod and Pilate shook hands over the murder of Christ. But Satan did it to his own discomfiture, and destruction, for God has bruised his head. And here the Spirit convinces of “judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” Judgment is not yet executed, but Satan is a defeated foe, for Christ has risen from the dead. Good news for sinners that! The very moment, when it looked as if He were in the grasp of Satan, was just the opportunity that the Saviour took to do His mighty work, and burst open the door of the prison where Satan’s captives were. And now, the door is burst open, and the shackles, and fetters, of the captives and slaves of sin, are broken. Satan is a beaten foe, and let me tell you this—If you go to Jesus you will be saved. I recommend you to do so. But the Lord, speaking further of the Spirit, says, “He shall not speak of Himself.” The Spirit of God would glorify Him. That is His business. His only thought is to glorify Jesus, the exalted One, and to delight your heart with Jesus. “He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” But all things belong to Him, as Man, before God. “All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” The essence of Christianity is this, I have to do with the Father, and I know the Father, from the knowledge I have of Him who is the Son. “Therefore said I, He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.” What are these things? The Father’s things? You have all these that He has entered into before the Father. Gone on high, He sends to those that trust and believe in Him, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in them, and to show these things to them—to make known to the heart of the believer, the present enjoyment of that which the Christian will enjoy forever. Oh! beloved friends, what a wonderful truth is this that a divine person—the Holy Spirit—has come to earth, and dwells in the Christian personally, and among believers collectively. May He take of the things of Jesus, and make them better known to our hearts.

06. Receive Ye the Holy Ghost; of, Life More Abundantly

Receive Ye the Holy Ghost; of, Life More Abundantly (John 20:19-23.) The expression in the twenty-second verse, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," is that to which I desire, with the Lord's help, specially to turn your attention this evening. I am persuaded, that no right, or adequate conception of the meaning of the Lord's words can be gained, unless there be a careful review of the surroundings of the scene in which this statement occurs. It is perfectly manifest that we have not, in this chapter, reached the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down. It is quite clear that we do not reach that until fifty days have elapsed after the scene brought before us in the twentieth of John, nevertheless, the Saviour says here to His loved ones, as He breathes on them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." What does He mean?

Now, if we turn back to the previous chapter, we have the most stupendous fact recorded that the world has ever known, and recorded in a very remarkable way by the Spirit of God, namely, the marvelous fact of the death of the Lord Jesus. That death is of unspeakable importance to every soul of man. God has been careful to tell us about the death of His Son, with many details, four times over. Every gospel contains an account of it, each perfect, each having special details, but all combining to tell the wonderful truth that the Son of God has died, and died for man. His death, I repeat, with all its details, is recorded four times, whereas His birth is only given to us twice.

You may not be very clear about all that is wrapped up in the wonderful truth of the incarnation, which is beyond any creature's finite grasp, but you must know the meaning, and the value, of the death of the Saviour, if you are going to be saved. Little does it matter what you know about creation, although "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear" (Hebrews 11:3), and this puts God into His place, and us into ours; but it is of vital importance to understand what is taught by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John's gospel, Jesus is presented as the Divine Word—the Son of the Father. It is the personal and intrinsic glory that is His, and has ever been His, as Son of God, that is brought forth in this gospel. You have therefore, no genealogy, and no allusion to His birth. How could you have these in a gospel that presents the Eternal One—the Christ—coming down to men, and walking among men for their blessing? You could not have His genealogy, and birth into this world, in a gospel like John's, which tells of the Eternal Son of God having come into this scene to manifest God, and the Father, and that eternal life might be known in its true, full character, and be given to those who had it not. But then, as we have seen, if we are to have any part in it, He must die. Man is dead in sin; man is carried into distance from God by sin, and nothing but the death, sacrificially, of Him who is here presented as the Eternal One, can bring the soul to God. In the twelfth chapter of this same gospel, where, you will recollect, on the occasion of the approaching passover feast, some Gentiles came and said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus," the Lord, when He hears of it, immediately says, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (12:23, 24). He was this corn of wheat, the solitary, unique, peculiar, self-existing One, become man—a holy, perfect,

sinless man. He was alone in all this; every other man was sinful, therefore, you see, that incarnation in no way whatever, links Christ with man, in the state in which he now is, nor gives man any link with Him. I am well aware that the doctrine is widely held, and taught, that, because of the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God, that therefore, in some occult way, man has been raised out of his ruin and brought into union with the Son of God. Such, I am bold to say, is utterly false, and not of God. Do you not see what this would mean? If He unites Himself to us, in our fallen state, He is brought down to our level. Now what is the truth? There is no union with Christ till He is risen. It is to the risen, ascended Man in glory, that the believer is now united. Union with Christ is not by incarnation, but consequent upon His death and resurrection, and even then not by faith, but by the Holy Spirit. It is not by the Son of God coming down, and uniting Himself to man, in ruin, and wretchedness, and guilt down here. Nay! His own words show that this last was impossible, for "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Let us look at some of the fruit which that corn of wheat, having died, has now produced. Blessed be God, He did die. He went down into death in all its terribleness, and overcame it. He went, in love and grace, to the cross, and there took up, before God, the whole question of man's sins, transgressions, and guilt; and not that only, but He there identified Himself with that, which was the condition, and state of the first man, and sustained all the judgment due to him from God. Blessed be His name. He not only bore my sins, but I know that there, in His death, He ended for me all that I am, as a child of Adam. That is what faith clearly sees. The judgment of God—the due of man—was laid upon Him. Man, but for Christ's atoning work, must sink forever in the depths of an eternal hell, and could never rise out of the judgment of God.

What a joy is it to turn the eye to the One, who, in deepest love, and self-sacrifice, has borne the dark, indescribable, overwhelming judgment of God, and thus settled for God, and for faith, every question of my sins, and my sin also. But He has borne that judgment, and come up out of it—the last Adam—the quickening One. On the cross He sustained the unsparing judgment of God, and you may depend upon it, if when Christ was made sin for us, He was not spared, you, I repeat, may be certain, that you will not be spared in the day of God's judgment, if you are found in your sins then. The blessed truth of the Gospel is this, that "God spared not His own Son" that He might spare us, "For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because He has suffered in the darkness, we are brought into the light; and because He knew what it was to be forsaken of God, on our account, therefore, the believer in the One who is alive from the dead, knows the complete and full acceptance, which it is the delight and joy of the heart of God, to accord to those who trust in His Son.

Now we read in John 19:1-42 "It is finished!" What is finished? I cannot tell you all that those wondrous words contain. Can you tell me what is not finished? You cannot. All God's claims of outraged holiness and broken law have been met by the death of Jesus, and all the exigency of man's condition, that he might be before God, also met by the judgment of the cross. Yes! God has been glorified, Satan has been defeated, and man is delivered absolutely by that death. "It is finished." Blessed words! Wonderful words! glorious words for anxious souls! glorious words for sinners. "It is finished." Have you been laboring to do something for your own salvation? You are too late. All has been done already. All has been perfectly finished by Jesus, alone on that cross,

and the answer of God has been expressed by His taking Him from the grave and putting Him in glory.

John's gospel presents the divine side of the cross. Here Jesus lays His life down, and takes it again. He is a Divine person. In the second chapter he says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In the tenth chapter the Lord again says, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and have power to take it again." It is true that He was "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). It is equally true that He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18); but forget not, for if you forget you deprive Him of a large portion of His glory, that He raised Himself from the dead, and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:8). What a Saviour! Listen to His words, "It is finished!" "Peace I leave with you." Peace, made by the blood of His cross, is His dying legacy to every sin-sick soul, in this dark, benighted world; peace, the fruit of that work by which God has been glorified, sins borne, and put away, and redemption fully accomplished.

Let us now consider the chapter I have read. Here we find the Lord risen. The importance of this fact cannot be over-estimated. Resurrection is the backbone of the Gospel. There are some details connected with it, which I will touch on for a moment, because we find ourselves here in what I may call the region of loving souls. In this twentieth chapter we are among hearts that love Jesus. It is a choice atmosphere, that of a company of people who truly love Jesus. In the twentieth of John we are in such an atmosphere, and first of all, meet with that devoted woman, Mary Magdalene. She was a woman of wealth, no doubt, possibly a titled person—Mary of Magdala—but spite of all, under the power of Satan, until the Lord cast out "seven devils" from her. Her heart was thenceforth deeply attached to the Lord, and Luke tells us she ministered unto Him of her substance (ch. 8:2, 3). But He who was her deliverer and her Lord, is dead. Her heart is broken. The light has gone out of her life. She has nothing to live for now, and she goes to His sepulcher, early in the morning, long before the sun is up. Others follow later, but she is first, and all by herself. Impelled by her love she thus visits the sepulcher, and finds the stone gone, the tomb empty. Fear and trembling seize her, and she runs to tell Peter and John the sad news. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him." She knew He was their Lord as well as hers, hence in verse two she says, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him." When she comes, presently, to speak to the angels, she says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (vs. 13). Oh! it is blessed when the heart speaks in that way!

Peter and John go out, and find that every word is true that Mary had told them. They come to the sepulcher, and, looking in, see "the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." There is the absence of all evidence of disorder, untimely haste, or hurry. Matthew tells us of an earthquake, as the angel rolled away the stone. Do you suppose that act was to let the Saviour out? God forbid, a thousand times, the thought that the stone should be rolled away to let Jesus out. Oh no! What was it rolled away for then? To let you and me look in. He had risen, in calm majesty, long before that stone was rolled away. They had to gaze into an empty tomb, where the Saviour had lain, and we see what perfect order there was. It was as if He had taken a night's repose, had risen early in the morning, and had left everything perfectly orderly behind Him, in that vacant tomb. "And the

napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." Yes! He rose from the dead, a triumphant, victorious Saviour, and He left behind Him the tacit, yet eloquent proofs, of the victory that He had won, over sin, and Satan, and death. He left those evidences behind Him for the faith, and comfort of those, who care to gaze into His grave. That some hearts did care, is very evident. When Peter and John had seen the evidences of the resurrection—for they "saw and believed"—they "went away again unto their own home." They had a home. "But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping." She had no home in a world, that had cast out her Lord. It was empty for her. The world was henceforth characterized, for her, by the sepulcher where they had laid Him, where she last had seen the body of her beloved Lord. It was no place for her, now that He was not there: the light had gone from her life. She was bereft and comfortless, and stood weeping. She was deeply attached to Christ. Are you? God beheld in that woman a heart that beat very true to the person of His Son. Do you think He was an unobservant witness of those tears which fell so copiously? Did He look on that scene complacently, and without interest? I think not. I believe the Father watched it with deepest interest, and the Lord likewise. What was the result? Angelic comforters appeared. God sent them, we may be sure, of kindly purpose, and Mary, through her tears, saw "two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

Angels had been ministers to the blessed Saviour all the way along, and what joy they must have felt in going to the spot where He had lain, after accomplishing redemption, not for them, certainly, but for man. But though so interested, observe that no sound of praise, no notes of joy, or paeans of thankfulness, arise from these angels, and for the simplest reason. He did not die for angels. He died for sinners, hence angels could not fully appreciate a moment like this, nor raise a note of worship equal to the occasion. If I may so say, they were silenced, by the knowledge that they could not sing a suited song—the glad thrill of joy that an emancipated, saved, blood-washed sinner delights to raise. I think they must have been amazed that they did not hear this song of thankfulness then; but they have oftentimes heard it since, sung by those who have learned the truth of redemption. They saw only a weeping woman, and to her they addressed the words, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She simply replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

Now note what follows. Mary evidently had turned her back upon the angels, but that only shows how absorbed her heart was. I believe, that if you, or I saw two angels, we should have a good look at them. Her eyes are blind, however. Her heart is absorbed with Christ, and indifferent to them. The truth was this—the heart looking for Jesus can be satisfied with nothing but Jesus. She then turns herself back, and sees a man. She supposes this man to be the gardener, and she is not attracted by him, either, as he says, "Woman, why weepest thou?" But He goes a little deeper—"Whom seekest thou?" Blessed Lord! how He knows what the heart wants. "She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Look! in the energy of her affection she offers to do that which her womanly weakness would not have permitted, and more than that, she gives no name. "If thou have borne him hence." The reason is so simple. She thought everybody in the world was actuated by the same desire as herself, and thinking only of the same object; there was no need to give Him a name. You have a friend dangerously ill. You go to the door to inquire his state, and when it is opened, you do not mention his name. You simply ask, "How is he?" That is

the way of affection.

Here it is the same with Mary. She thought that, necessarily, everyone was thinking of the One she was occupied with. And was not this grateful to the heart of Jesus? Sure am I that it was, for He is never far away from a heart so attached to His blessed Person, and therefore, in a moment, and by one word, He reveals Himself, as He says, in tones that she had often heard before—"Mary!" "She turned herself." She had evidently turned away from Him, supposing that He was the gardener. Neither angelic nor human influences affect her. "She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master." The shepherd's voice had been heard by the sheep. She knew the tones. The light was there. The darkness was gone, and she is just going, doubtless with deep reverence, to embrace Him, as the Galilean women, in the twenty-eighth of Matthew did, when He stops her with, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (vs. 17).

What is the special truth unfolded here? The Lord Jesus is here seen as the last Adam, the second Man. Mary had hitherto only thought of Him as her Lord, about to have an earthly place, and an earthly kingdom, and her heart was filled with hopes that He was now going to establish that kingdom, and rule in it as King. One can conceive, therefore, a pang of new sorrow entering her heart, as He says, "Touch me not." I think I can understand Mary feeling, if not saying—Lord, I lost you before, and my heart was broken, and now that You have again come back from the dead, am I to lose You once more? He, as it were, says—No, Mary, you had Me once on earth, and lost Me, You shall have Me forever, now, in a new way, and in a new place, in an intimacy of relationship, that never could have been yours before. This is involved in what He then adds, as He says, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He has taken up new ground. The true "corn of wheat" has risen from the dead, and is now about to bring forth much fruit. What is the fruit? Those whom He calls "my brethren," and whom He can bring into full association with Himself, in the new place He has taken. He had never before spoken as He does now—"I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Up to the twelfth of John He speaks almost invariably of "my Father." From the thirteenth to the Seventeenth chapters He speaks a great deal about "the Father," to His disciples, in a certain sense, putting them on transitional ground, and paving the way for what comes out here. Now the full truth comes out. Death had closed the history of the first man, in the cross, where the second Man, the Lord from heaven, in grace, and substitution, died for him. He rose from the dead, and now there is the beginning of a new era. He is the Head of an entirely new race, as the second Adam—the last Adam, and now He delights to say, and loses no time in saying, to this devoted woman, whom He will accept as a fitted messenger to bear such wondrous news, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He, as it were, says to Mary, I had from all eternity, a place which was peculiarly My own. But I was alone there, and, in love, I have come down into this scene (alone in it too because of His very perfection as man), and have died, for those who were under sentence of death, and, on the ground of accomplished righteousness, I am enabled to carry back with Me, to that spot whence I came, those whom I call My brethren, and to associate them with Myself, in the place, to which (though not new to Me) I am going back, in a new way, as Man, alive from the dead. You go and tell My brethren, that the place, which was always Mine, in the enjoyment of the Father's love, of His favor, and of His presence, I am now going to bring them into with Me. My

Father is their Father, and My God their God. The disciples are to be brought into the position, and according to the relationships, of Jesus Himself, with God—and with the Father. He had accomplished a work that placed Him, as Man, before God, and the Father, in glory, and His own were redeemed according to His work, and set in the same glory, and in the same relationship as Himself. Never was there a message so marvelous, so precious, or so deeply fraught with spiritual blessing, committed to any living soul on earth, as that which this deeply devoted woman got that resurrection morning, and do not forget that it was her devotedness that won for her this unspeakably glorious commission. But why may she not touch Him? He let the Galilean woman hold Him, as we are told in Matthew 28:9, where the point is the resumption, in another day, of His relationships, with a remnant of His earthly people, though on the ground of resurrection. Why, then, will He not let Mary touch Him? The truth is simple. Here He is going to heaven. He is in a heavenly condition, and the saint, of this dispensation, is in Him there, in that new place, and on new ground altogether. Not by sight, nor by touch, is He to be known thenceforth, and in order to know that, there must be what comes out presently. There must be life, according to the position, in which Jesus now was as risen, and about to ascend. This life was to be by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was, however, not yet come.

Mary carries her message to the brethren, who thereby are gathered together. In the nineteenth verse it says, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." There is the fruit of His work. He sees of the travail of His soul, in measure. Alive from the dead, He comes into their midst, and the first word He speaks is, "Peace be unto you." The Prince of Peace, He has made peace on the cross, by the blood of that cross. He rises from the dead, and becomes Himself the first witness of the peace that He has made. He goes amongst His loved ones, and how beautifully must these words, "Peace be unto you," have fallen upon their ears, and troubled hearts, that evening. "And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Happy gathering! And, oh! has not your heart been thus gladdened too, as you have seen the Lord? It is only as you see the Lord that you will be made glad. And now you will find the truth in proper sequence. You have Christ's death, and the finishing of His work, in the nineteenth chapter; the resurrection, as a proof of the value of that work, in the beginning of the twentieth chapter; and now you have Him coming, and proclaiming peace to the disciples, in the upper room, and, as a result, immediately on seeing Him, they had it, and joy of heart follows. His death and resurrection, really apprehended by faith, invariably carry with them peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart. I get peace from His work, and joy from the knowledge of His person. Now see what follows. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." They were now to go out, as His commissioners, into the world, bearing the testimony of the peace He had first made their own. It is not, you observe here, an apostolic company. I know some will say, If they were not the apostles, who were they? They were the disciples generally, the brethren and sisters, the assembly of God in principle. If there were any doubt about this, the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke makes it clear. When the two disciples, one of whom, I think, was a woman, came back from Emmaus, where they had seen the Lord, they "found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:33-34). The Holy Spirit is most careful, for a specific object, to show that it was not only an apostolic company, who were thus together this first

evening. One of the apostles was not there.

Thomas was not present, as we are told (vs. 24). It was the general company of believers in the Lord, the assembly, that became, on the descent of the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2:1-47, the nucleus of the Church. It was Mary's message that really gathered them, and so gathered, what have they? Jesus in their midst, and, consequently, peace and joy. A happy company they were, I need not say, and now the Lord gives them a commission. It is a commission common to every child of God. In verse 21, Jesus says, "As my Father hath sent Me; even so send I you." The Father had sent Him into the world, to be the expression of His own perfect love and grace to it. And now, He says, I am going out of the world, but I leave you behind, to live in it for Me, and to show Me forth.

How is this produced? Because, you see, the Christian has the life of Christ. What is a Christian? He is one who is born of the Spirit, and is now indwelt by the Spirit. He has his sins forgiven, and blotted out by the work of Christ. What he was, in the flesh, as a responsible child of Adam, has been ended on the cross. He is now in Christ, and Christ is his life. He is quickened with the very life of Christ. It is preeminently resurrection-life, and on the other side of sin, death, the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. It is life in victory! I can now better understand the meaning of what the Lord says in the tenth of John, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (vs. 10). I do not deny that the disciples had eternal life, as they walked with the Lord, here below, before the cross. Undoubtedly they had it objectively in Him who is the Eternal Life. Now they were to have it subjectively, and consciously in their souls, by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Christian has it now. I do not deny, that men, in Old Testament times, were quickened with the life of the Son of God, but they knew nothing about it—it was not revealed. All apprehension of the liberty and freedom of it, could not be, till redemption was accomplished, the veil rent, the Son of Man gone on high, and the Holy Spirit come down. Till then life was not known "abundantly."

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." There is another part of Scripture, that the spiritual mind instinctively turns to, in connection with a statement like that, and you will find it in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. There we are confronted with the record of Scripture as to the way in which man was started on his course in this world. You have the detailed history of the creation of the first man, the first Adam. We learn, in Genesis 1:1-31, that God had simply caused other creatures to be produced, as the result of the fiat of His word—the mere expression of His power. He had said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so" (vs. 24). He had also said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (vs. 21). Thus creation was furnished with the lower animals, by the simple expression of the word of God—the power of God. But when man was to be placed on the earth, over which he was to be lord, God goes into solemn counsel over his creation. "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27). In chapter 2—where the Lord God comes into relationship with His creatures—fuller details are given. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living

soul” (vs. 7). God breathes the breath of life into his nostrils, and man is immediately a responsible creature. I know very well that there is a theory abroad that man has been developed from a lower organism. Such a theory is truly dishonoring to God, and equally dishonoring to man. Far be the thought. It is but the sophistry of the devil, using man’s unregenerate heart to introduce a theory that will account for man’s progress, and get rid of God altogether.

Let us turn from man’s theories, and listen again to the inspired record of how man was formed. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” That is why, in Scripture, man is called the son of God. Here you have the source of his immortality. Man, as the offspring of God, is immortal. Wicked man is immortal. Immortality is connected with the origin of man. Eternal life is that which can only come from, and be found in, the Lord Jesus Christ. I know perfectly well about another fatal, latter-day theory, called “the larger hope.” It is only infidelity, gilded infidelity if you like, but sheer infidelity, and an attempt to blot out the testimony of God, as to the immortality of man, and the eternity of the punishment of the wicked.

Any who have been led aside in this way, have failed to see the analogy between Genesis 2:1-25, and what the twentieth of John brings out. You have in one passage the perfect analogy of the other. In Genesis 2:1-25 you have the first man starting in life here below, where he was to be head and lord, but where he has failed, sinned, and fallen. In the twentieth of John you are introduced to another, the second Man—the last Adam—God’s eternal Son, come into this scene, and become man. In His death, and grave, has closed, for God, and for faith, the history of the first man. The history of the first man ended in the cross of the Saviour, and now the ground is cleared, for the display of “the last Adam, a quickening spirit,” as the fifteenth of 1st Corinthians puts it. As risen from the dead, “he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

“He breathed on them” His own resurrection life, communicated by the Holy Spirit. Although symbolizing the gift of the Holy Spirit, He was not yet sent, for Jesus was not yet ascended on high, but He was communicated as the power of life by the risen Saviour. They live in the life of the risen Saviour. The divine life that had been communicated to them, by the action of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, as the new birth, now takes its full Christian character. The Holy Spirit is here viewed as life. It is as if the Lord had said, You have come to, and have Me, for your life. You are quickened with Me. You have life in association with Me. You are alive from the dead, in association with Me, in all that I am risen into, and are to possess it in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the unfolding of the true character, and position of the Christian, who is a man in Christ, through the energy, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let me now ask you to turn to a scripture, which undoubtedly greatly elucidates the truth contained in this passage. It is in the epistle to the Romans, where you have detailed the way in which man is brought to God, in righteousness. There we read, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). Why no condemnation? Because the condemnation, due to the believer, has already been borne by Christ. It does not say, There is no condemnation for those whose sins are forgiven. It is careful to say this of “them which are in Christ Jesus.” And where is Christ Jesus? On the other side of death, on the other side of condemnation; of the cross, and of the grave! Condemnation must reach Him before it can reach those who are in Him. Notice, it is with a victorious, triumphant Saviour we have to do. Then we read, “For the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. You have in this chapter the Spirit of God presented in two ways. Up to verse 11 the Holy Spirit, in the believer, is the Spirit of life, of liberty, of moral power in Christ. Thereafter—that is from verse 12 to verse 27—it is the energy of the Holy Spirit, personally indwelling the Christian, and, as a Divine person, acting in him. It is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our life. As the Apostle Paul elsewhere says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Again, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 2:4). What is the Christian’s life? Christ. And where is Christ? He is in acceptance, and in favor. And where is the Christian? In the same acceptance, and in the same favor and relationship, because He says, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” The point is this, Christ has taken this new place, as the risen Man, before God, and now He can bring those into that place, who belong to Him. And those who belong to Him are those who believe in Him. If you believe in Him, you belong to Him.

Again, turning to Romans 8:1-39, we read, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (vs. 3). I am not waiting for the judgment seat, by-and-by, to bring out sin in the flesh. No, God has already exposed, and condemned it, in the cross, and the believer is in the position of knowing, that instead of still being a child of Adam, responsible, and open to judgment, he has, by the death of the cross, met his judgment, and died out of the place, and state, to which he belonged; and Christ being risen, he is risen in Him. He, risen from among the dead, is therefore my life, and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. God has “condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness (the righteous requirement) of the law, might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Hence it is a new life, a new character, a new order of things altogether! “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,”—you cannot get anything out of flesh but flesh—“but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” You may ask the meaning of this? It is the Spirit of God, acting characteristically as the spirit of life, and liberty, and moral power in Christ. Observe what follows: “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded”—is what?—“life and peace.” “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace.” It is the normal Christian state, in which the one “in Christ,” is set by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” If I am “in the flesh” I cannot please God. You will find two things are in contrast here, namely, being “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit.” I was “in the flesh” as a child of Adam. I am “in the Spirit” now, as being a believer, a child of God, and in Christ. Again, being “in Christ” is in contrast with being “in the flesh.”

If I am not in Christ, then I am still “in the flesh,” as to my state before God, but if I am “in Christ” I am “in the Spirit.” It is not, mark you, at all a question of progress, or experience. It is the true Christian position, in which I am, as surely as I have received the Holy Spirit. Christ is in me, and I in Christ, therefore the mind of the Spirit is “life and peace.” This the next verse fully states, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (vs. 9). If you have the Spirit of Christ, you will delight in the things that are Christ’s, and “if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but

the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Here it is the Spirit as life. It is a new life, a new position, a new place altogether, in which we are set now, as Christians, before God, and of which the Holy Spirit is the power. This chapter supposes you to have received the Holy Spirit. In the seventh chapter you have brought before you the man, who has not the Holy Spirit, and therefore groans in bondage. In the eighth of Romans you have the truth of being in Christ, as the new standing before God. While finding help thus in the two ways in which the Holy Spirit is presented to us in Romans 8:1-39 to illustrate the difference between John 20:22, and the gift of the Holy Spirit personally at Pentecost, it is important to observe, that though historically one was before the other, that is the Holy Spirit as the power of life, before He was given to dwell in us, yet now that Christ has actually ascended, and the Holy Spirit has been given, one cannot be without the other in our case.

There is only one word more I will add as regards the twentieth of John. The Lord follows up what we have been considering with “Whose soever sins ye remit they shall be remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” I know a great many Christians are troubled over this passage. There has been great warfare over the meaning of the verse, but I think it is as simple as daylight. Of course, I am well aware, that it has been thought to give ground for the figment of an apostolic succession, who shall have power to remit sins. Bear in mind again, that it is not an apostolic company to which the Lord is speaking. It is the general Christian company. It is not an apostolic company, and therefore, you see, such a thought is at once refuted by that statement. While Ritualists and Romanists have drawn out of this verse, that man has the power to forgive sins, Protestants, on the other hand, have been frightened at it, and have declined to admit the thought of men forgiving men in any shape or form. I believe the latter have erred on one side, as the former on the other. What then are we to learn from our Lord's words? The Lord is going away, leaving a little company, that love Him, behind, and He says to them, You go on with My work, and whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, shall be retained, Fifty days after this, Peter, the beloved fisherman, had a wonderful haul of fish, on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand souls were converted in one day, and what did the hundred and twenty, who were that day baptized with the Holy Spirit into One Body (though the revelation of this came not yet, nor till Paul was raised up to bring it out), and formed God's assembly on earth, do, as they were gathered in the Lord's name? They remitted their sins. They allowed these three thousand to join them, and take their place in the bosom of the assembly. They did not, of course, remit or forgive their sins eternally—that God only could do—but the three thousand, knowing they were forgiven, sought admission to the assembly, and by them were administratively forgiven. This forgiveness, be it observed, is only a matter of administration in Christ's name.

Again, in the eighth of the Acts, Philip was baptizing many already converted souls at Samaria. Peter and John came down, and prayed that they “might receive the Holy Ghost,” and when Simon the sorcerer, who professed conversion, saw that the Holy Spirit was given, through laying on of hands, he wanted to purchase this power, and offered them money. Peter said to him, however, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.” His sins were retained on him. The assembly in Samaria refused to receive him. The next case of this administrative forgiveness is that of the terrible persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, turned, in a moment, to the Lord, in Acts 9:1-43. Three days of deep exercise follow, and Ananias is sent by the Lord to him. He says to him,

“Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way, as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” What is the next scene? Saul stops certain days with the disciples, but afterward goes to Jerusalem, and wants to join the assembly, but the brethren are “all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple” (9:17,26-27). Hereon Barnabas takes him up, and brings him to the apostles. What next? “He was with them,” we read. What does the assembly do there? They remit his sins, they receive him into their midst, as a man pardoned of the Lord. It is only a matter of administration upon earth.

It is the responsibility of those who are Christ’s to thus act for Christ, and observe, in the assembly, there ought not to be an unsaved person. In God’s assembly are found only the saved. The Christian assembly is to be composed only of really saved persons—not a mixture of converted, and of unconverted people together. Further, those who walk unworthy of the Lord are bound to be put outside. In the fifth chapter of 1st Corinthians, we read of one whose ways were ungodly, and the saints were instructed by Paul to put him from amongst them, and they did so. What was that? It was simply the assembly doing what the Lord enjoins in John 20:23—the man’s sins were retained on him. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we find, that this same man was utterly broken down, and the apostle advises them to forgive him. They then let him in again, and thus “remitted his sins.”

Many people have a little difficulty about this, but depend upon it, the wisdom of the Lord is manifest in this instruction; and it is an immense comfort to the soul to have the judgment of others about itself. It is the responsibility of the assembly—acting in the name of the Lord—to receive everyone who has received His forgiveness, and we ought to be able to recognize those who have been blessed of Him. I know people will say, You may be deceived. True, but the Lord can give us His mind, and will, if we are only humble, and wait on Him for it. I know a real sovereign when I hear the ring of it. So too can we learn the ring of a true soul. We may be deceived, but in the main we are not deceived. We are told to receive the brethren, not the unconverted. And what about the unconverted? Get them converted! For if you remain unconverted, my friend, you will be damned. If you go on, unconverted, there is nothing but eternal condemnation before you. Be sure of that. The storm of divine wrath overhanging this world, will soon burst, and the man who goes hence unconverted, is only going to meet judgment. You had far better go to Jesus, and be saved, and get forgiveness, and receive the Holy Spirit, and the Church of God will give you the right hand of fellowship, with the greatest joy. The outcome of this twentieth chapter of John, then, is this—the Lord is a living man at the right hand of God now, and to that Man, alive from the dead, the believer is united, in life, and by the Holy Spirit, and the place of Christ, the privileges of Christ, and the position of Christ, are those of the Christian. Likewise the Holy Spirit has come down to make his abode in the believer, and to give him, experimentally in his heart, the knowledge of what he possesses, and of the place where he will soon see Jesus face to face.

07. The Day of Pentecost

The Day of Pentecost In the Acts of the Apostles we reach a totally new day, in the ways of God with earth. It is the day of the Holy Spirit. There was the day of creation; there was the day of law; and there was the day of testing, culminating—with the presence of the Son of God on earth—a Man in lowly grace, as the gospels record His history. Earth did not want that Man. It refused Him. It condemned Him to death, and gave Him a place with malefactors. It slew Him. Earth thought a borrowed cradle, a borrowed cross, and a borrowed tomb, were enough for Him, and to get quit of Him was all man wanted. But God raised Him from the dead, and put Him into glory. He ascended to heaven, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Two paths were open to God—to draw the sword of His vengeance from its scabbard, and let retributive judgment fall upon a godless, and Christ-rejecting world, or, on the ground of the Son of Man having glorified Him in death, to open the floodgates of His heart to the utmost, and give the most wonderful gift that He yet had to give, for, already, He had given His only begotten Son. God chose the latter alternative, and gave the Holy Spirit.

Now that is a fact, the gravity of which cannot be exaggerated. It is absolutely impossible to exaggerate the importance of that which I am justly entitled to call, The day of the Holy Spirit. There is another day coming, when the Lord Jesus will appear in power and glory, and when all will be in subjection to Him. That is called “The day of Christ,” but during the time of His absence, which Scripture designates by the remarkable title of “the night,” the Holy Spirit is come to bring light into the darkness, which the world has really created for itself. Remember that the Lord Jesus was “the light of the world.” He says, in the eighth of John, “I am the light of the world”; and, again, in the ninth chapter, knowing that His rejection was decided on, adds, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” But the world cast out, yea, extinguished—as far as it could—the light, and thus rejected on earth, He is claimed anew by heaven, and “received up into glory.” Who replaces Him here? The Holy Spirit—One whom the world cannot see, because it knows Him not, nor believes in His presence. But the Christian knows Him, for He comes not only to dwell with him, but to be in him. He is Light, for He is God, and God is Light, and He brings divine light to the hearts of the saints. In the second of Acts we reach the moment, when this day of the Holy Spirit is inaugurated. If you take the trouble to search the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, you will be struck by the great number of times the Spirit of God, as a Divine Person, here on earth, is spoken of therein. Certainly above fifty times is the Holy Spirit spoken of, in this way, in this book. The first chapter opens with it, as Luke reminds Theophilus, that his gospel was a record “of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” This interesting book opens with the history of Jesus, in resurrection, giving, through the Holy Spirit, commandments to His loved ones. Everything in Christianity takes its color and pattern from Christ. In the gospels we have already seen that Jesus received the Holy Spirit, at His baptism, personally for Himself, as the expression of God the Father’s infinite delight in, and favor towards Him, as Man, and in the Acts we shall find that He receives the Holy Spirit, anew, in order to give it to those who are His

own, and, by His indwelling, to bring them into the enjoyment of the position, and place that belong to Himself, by right and title, and which He now shares with His redeemed ones, on the ground of redemption. In the second chapter accordingly we find the record of the coming of the Comforter, "the promise of the Father," the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person, coming into this world. What precedes His descent is exceedingly interesting, and beautiful. In the first chapter the Lord is seen commanding His disciples, "That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (vss. 4-5). John the Baptist had thus marked Jesus out—"The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). Now, the Lord Himself, in answer to that character given Him by the Baptist, says, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." Furthermore, in the eighth verse, He says, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Three things mark the Acts—pardon, power, and prayer. Pardon, through the Saviour's blood; power, by the indwelling Spirit; and prayer, as the normal attitude of the saint. Written by the same pen, the Acts develop that character of the life of Christ, which Luke's gospel so strikingly depicts. There He, the truly dependent Man, is seen in entire dependence—praying seven times—the perfect number (see Luke 3:21; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:18; Luke 9:29; Luke 11:1; Luke 22:41). Similarly, divine life in the disciples, and, as in Jesus, energized by the Holy Spirit, is seen, when in its normal state of freshness untarnished by the world, continually dependent in prayer (see Acts 1:14; Acts 1:24; Acts 2:42; Acts 3:1; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:4; Acts 7:60; Acts 8:15; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:40; Acts 10:2; Acts 10:9; Acts 10:30-31; Acts 11:5; Acts 12:5; Acts 12:12; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23; Acts 16:13; Acts 16:25; Acts 20:36; Acts 22:17; Acts 28:8). What a lesson for all our souls!

"And, when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He is to come back in power and glory to this earth. The character of the Lord's second coming given here, is that of the appearing, not the rapture. It is in power He is to come back to the Mount of Olives, according to Old Testament Scripture, and His heavenly people will be with Him in that day of His glory.

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." This is a change from the seventh chapter of John's gospel, where we read, "For neither did his brethren believe in him" (vs. 5), but, thank God, His brethren appear to have been converted by this time, and are found in the circle of blessing in the second of Acts. And what are they doing here? It is very blessed to see that "they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." There is a lovely moral state of soul evident here, preceding the wonderful manifestation of the grace of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which the next chapter records, and I may surely say that this moral state is of vast importance for all God's children.

Although there cannot be now a new baptism of the Holy Spirit, there is such a thing as the Christian being “filled with the Spirit.” We are exhorted to be so filled; and the disciples, in the book of the Acts, are often seen to be so filled, and are but anticipating what is urged on the Ephesians—“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18); and I am sure it is just in proportion, as there is the true spirit of dependence, of prayerfulness, and of waiting on God, that the Christian is, nowadays, “filled with the Holy Ghost.” But now, coming to the second chapter, we read, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” What is the meaning of the expression “Day of Pentecost”? For the explanation of the term I must ask you to go to the twenty-third of Leviticus. There we are told at the ninth verse, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it” (vss. 10-11)—that is, the first day of the week. Now this twenty-third of Leviticus is a chapter full of the deepest profit and blessing for the believer, because it gives a divinely perfect picture, of the ways of God in grace. It is a chapter that gives us the solemn feasts of the Lord. Omitting the first—the Sabbath—which stands by itself, you will observe that Israel’s first great feast was the passover, and their seventh the feast of tabernacles; atonement, and glory; redemption, and the millennium. Between these two points we have the feast of unleavened bread (vss. 6-8); the resurrection of Christ (vss. 9-14); the gathering out of the Church—Pentecost (vss. 15-21); the awakening of Israel (vss. 24, 25); and their repentance and reception of Messiah (vss. 27-32). Nothing could be more complete, or morally lovely and instructive. The blood of the Lamb, practical holiness founded thereon; Christ’s resurrection and ascension to glory; the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to form the Church of God, the blessing of the “poor” and the stranger (vs. 22); the awakening of the Jews—their repentance and national restoration; and, finally., the appearing of the glory, and the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

We read, “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord’s passover.” The passover is the basis of all that follows, and is a figure and type of the death of Jesus, The passover, as we have already seen, when speaking on John 7:1-53, has its antitype in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit distinctly says in First Corinthians, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” That is the basis of all God’s dealings with us. And what is the basis of our relationship with God? The death of His Son, and here, in the figure of the passover, it comes out. Then there is the feast of “unleavened bread,” the practical holiness, founded on redemption, which is to mark the saint. Then in verses 10 and 11, which I have read to you, we have another wonderful typical truth. When Israel had got into the land, and had reaped the harvest, what were they to do? They were to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits to the priest, “and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you; on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” We were looking at the antitype of the wave sheaf last Lord’s Day evening. We saw then that the Lord Himself, having risen out of the grave, immediately said to Mary, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.” Yes, the true wave sheaf is Christ risen from among the dead, and ascended to God, a sample of the harvest, that the “corn of wheat” brings forth, if it die. The Holy Spirit gives us the most distinct interpretation of the passage, when He says, “But now is Christ risen from among the dead, and become the first-fruits of them

that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Death had ruled over man, but there has gone into death One, upon whom death had no claim, and He has risen out of death, the first-fruits of them that slept.

Now we are going to look tonight at the other "first-fruits." The Lord said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And now as we read on in the twenty-third of Leviticus, the fourteenth verse says, "Ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the self-same day that ye have brought an offering unto your God." There cannot be the possibility of having peace, or rest, or the enjoyment of real blessing before God, unless you get, not only the assurance that Christ died for you, but, that Christ has risen, and is presented before God, and accepted for you. And now see what follows in the fifteenth verse: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days." There we have Pentecost. The Greek word Pentecost means fifty. On the fiftieth day they were to present what we now read of, "And ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord." All Israel were to present two wave loaves on that day. What is so strikingly prefigured in Leviticus 23:1-44 found its fulfillment in the second of Acts. First of all look at the figure. "Ye shall bring out of your habitation two wave loaves, of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first fruits unto the Lord" (vs. 17). Oh! but, you say, "the wave sheaf" was "the first-fruits," how can these two baked loaves be "first-fruits"? Remember that Christ and his people have the same life, as now set forth in Him risen; the same nature, the same place, the same relationship before God; and just as He first, as Man, received the Holy Spirit, so His people, on the righteous ground, that He has provided an atonement effected in death, likewise receive the Holy Spirit, as the second of Acts unfolds. Of the two wave loaves it is said, "they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven." Is it not very remarkable that leaven, which always in Scripture is the symbol of a corrupting, ever-spreading principle of evil, here comes in? What are we to learn from this? I have no doubt that the truth typified by the two wave loaves, presented to the Lord, on the day of Pentecost, is the Holy Spirit come down to form, and present the Church—the assembly—before God, in all the acceptability of the work and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But although we be forgiven, through His name, and have our sins all washed away in His blood, and although we know we are justified through faith in His name, as all our sins were borne by Him, and our sin judged in the cross, is there therefore no evil left in the believer, or in the Church? Scripture says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Our sins are all forgiven, but the existence of the flesh, as yet being in the believer, is always recognized, though its existence does not give a bad conscience; only when it acts is that the result. The fact that the evil of the flesh is yet existent in the Christian, is illustrated by the type of the leaven, which, as already observed, means only what is evil, in Scripture. But observe—that it was baked. Every woman knows, that if she puts the yeast—the leaven—among the flour, it will go on working, and rising, until she does one simple thing. What is that? Fire it—put it into the oven, and bake it. Then it stops working. Herein is a great practical truth for us. God has judged the evil of the flesh, in the cross, and put it from His sight judicially, through the work of His Son. We are to judge the flesh in ourselves, that it may not work. In the eighteenth verse you read, "And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish, of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams they shall be for a burnt offering unto the Lord, with their meat offering, and their drink offering, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the Lord. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin

offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.” Thank God, the evil which the leaven typifies, as existing in the loaves, though baken and not working, is divinely and perfectly met by the value of the sin offering—the figure of the death of Christ, that death which He died for us. Yes, the truth is this, the atoning death of the Saviour has been accepted by God, and that atonement absolutely clears the believer, and the Church, from all possibility of imputation of guilt, and though the existence of sin in the flesh is still recognized, as being in the believer, still it is under control. Its presence is divinely and perfectly met, and answered, by the sin offering which Christ has already presented. The wave sheaf, then, has been presented before the Lord—Christ risen from the dead—and accepted; and the two loaves “baken with leaven,” I have no doubt, figuratively represent the Church, accepted in all the value of Christ’s acceptance. There are two component parts of the Church—the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew is introduced in Acts 2:1-47, and the Gentile in Acts 10:1-48, and I would not say that the two loaves do not hint at this, but when we come further on in the New Testament narrative we find, not two loaves, but one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:17), expressive of the unity of the Church. In connection with the chapter in Leviticus, I would refer to a striking passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle Paul says that grace is given to him of God, “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” The connection of the “wave loaves,” and Pentecost with this, is apparent.

Pentecost, then, prefigures the descent of the Holy Spirit, coming to form and present the Church before God, in all the acceptability of the Person, and the work of Him, who has glorified God absolutely in death, and whom God has brought out of death, and put at His own right hand in glory, and then “gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). That Church is composed of sinners, taken from Jew and Gentile, quickened by His Spirit, washed in His blood, and now indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Here then, in Acts 2:1-47, Pentecost, the day for which the Saviour longed, had come. He had gone up after being seen for forty days. Ten days were spent by the disciples in prayer, and then the promise of the Father came from the glorified Man at the right hand of God, put there by God Himself, on the ground of the work, by which He had infinitely glorified God, having, through redemption, obtained the right to take into glory all those who are now led to trust in His name. This truth, however, could not be known until the Holy Spirit came down, of which we will now read. “They were all with one accord in one place, 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 they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Observe two things here. All the house was filled, and the disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” In verse 4 you have the absolute fulfillment of what the Lord says of the Comforter in the fourteenth of John. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (vs. 17). When He filled the house, He was with them; when He filled them, individually, He was in them. When Jesus was upon earth it was “God with us.” When He died on the cross for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead, there came out the blessed truth of “God for us.” But now we get the essential truth of Christianity. What is that? “God in us.” God, the Holy Ghost, dwelling in us—a truth, beloved friends, of incomparable importance. This must have been a wonderful scene. A company of a

hundred and twenty believers are seen bowing in prayer before the Lord, and all of a sudden, there comes the sound of this rushing mighty wind. The sound is heard, but as far as the house is concerned nothing is visible. God attests the presence of this new Person—new, I mean, so far as His being on earth, after this kind, is concerned. A divine Person, in a totally new character, and manner, is on earth. God attests this first of all by “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” that made itself everywhere felt as “it filled all the house where they were sitting,” and then, “there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” You have thus the unique truth of the Holy Spirit, personally dwelling in the bosom of the assembly, and next you have Him resting on each individual.

Why have we here the Holy Spirit, taking the form of “cloven tongues, like as of fire.” When the Spirit came down upon Jesus, at His baptism, it had “a bodily shape like a dove” (Luke 3:22), sweetly in accord with the character of the Lord, and His mission. He was personally, pure, and holy, and sinless, and His ministry was to be, if I might say so, of a non-aggressive character. You would naturally connect the thought of the dove with Christ. He was gentle, and quiet, and you know His voice was not to be heard in the streets. He was not to strive. The bruised reed He would not break, and the smoldering flax He would not quench. On the other hand, the “cloven tongues, as of fire,” indicated testimony, bold, firm, unflinching, universal, worldwide testimony. I think that the tongue of fire which was seen on the head of each, was not merely a divided flame, or forked, as we should say, but that tongue of fire had a good many divisions. That is what the Greek would signify. Until now the testimony of God had been confined to one nation, and to one tongue. Now by the Holy Spirit, the testimony of God was to go to the ends of the earth, and to every nation thereon. But why “cloven tongues, as of fire?” Many people believe that fire means power and blessing. That is never the thought in Scripture. Fire is always symbolical of the searching action of God’s holiness. Here it would seem to be the testimony of the Word of God, and nothing can burn a man, like the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you have been a convicted sinner you know that. Every saved man can go back to the time when God’s Word, driven by the Holy Spirit, went like a red-hot iron through his conscience to the depths of his moral being. If, my friend, you evade the “fire” of God’s Spirit on earth, you will know soon—ah! far too soon—in the depths of hell what fire means. You must know “fire,” here or there. You must feel the fire of the Holy Spirit that breaks you down, convicts you of sin, and burns up your pride now, or the eternal fire, that is never quenched, and into which the impenitent sinner must go for his folly and sin, must be yours forever. Mark you! you must meet “fire” somewhere. God grant that you may meet it in the day of the Holy Spirit—the day of grace—now. There is nothing but grace in this chapter. The disciples, we read here, “were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Spirit came to dwell in them, as the Spirit of power, and the Spirit of testimony. This is the grand point of the second of Acts, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” The believer really has no power until he receives the Holy Spirit, and, mark! he does not receive the Holy Spirit to become a believer. He comes to him after he is a believer. No doubt the Holy Spirit it is, that first convicts you, and leads you to judge yourself, to repent, and to believe the gospel, but that is in a different character of operation altogether, from His coming to the believer, to dwell in him, as the gift of God. The Apostle Peter thus puts the matter, “Repent, and be baptized 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” (vs. 38). Again, in the eighth chapter, you remember Peter says to Simon the sorcerer, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (8:20).

The great point of the passage is the personal coming of the Spirit. The power to speak with unknown tongues, the power to do miracles, and the power to preach, were but the signs, and effects, of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The reception of Him personally, is the grand thing in the second of Acts. The gift itself is infinitely greater than any effect it could produce. They received Him then, and were "filled with the Holy Ghost."

We will now look at the effects. First (vs. 4) "they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This marvelous effect of the Spirit's presence soon gathers the multitude, and you have such a testimony as you find nowhere else in Scripture. The mercy of God is now about to reach multitudes, in the very tongues to which, in His just displeasure, men of old had been doomed. It is remarkable that people were present from all quarters. If I might say so, God rings the great bell of the universe, to gather together this varied company, to hear about His Son. "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." Most of them were Jews, or Jewish proselytes. All kinds of speculations filled their minds, for "they were all amazed, and marveled, 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....We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." What do you think the Lord's servants spoke about? About Jesus, and not about themselves. That day "the wonderful works of God" formed their glorious theme, as, in many languages, they unfolded the truth of His love, the wonderful death of His Son, and the way in which God was glorified by that death. Have you ever contrasted this scene with a remarkable chapter in the Old Testament, the eleventh of Genesis? I must ask you to turn back to it, because the contrast is so beautiful. There we read, "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.... And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." They never got there. They were wanting to get there by brick and mortar. How does God take us to heaven? He puts Christ there first, and then sends the Holy Spirit to link us with Him in heaven. Some people think today that they will get to heaven by "brick and mortar," that is by hard work for salvation. Works, rites, and ceremonies, take the place of Christ in their struggle to get to heaven. By "brick and mortar" friend, you will not find yourself in heaven for eternity, but in a very different place. Christ is God's way to heaven. Faith, not works, can alone take you there. But these Babel builders further say, "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." (In passing, just let me say to you, my friend of "brick and mortar," you had better leave off building too. You had better just come to Jesus, and let Him save you.) "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:1-8).

Now, what has all that to do with the second of Acts, you ask? In one sense nothing, but in another sense a great deal. The confusion of tongues in the eleventh of Genesis, was the just judgment of God on the pride of the first man, but the Holy Spirit's coming down, and indwelling the one

hundred and twenty, and enabling them to speak in every language under the sun, about Jesus, was the just answer of God to the lowly pathway of that humble Man, who went down to death, not to make Himself a name, but to make God a name, and to give God righteous title to take a new name altogether, that of "God our Saviour." Therefore, you see you have in Acts 2:1-47, if I may say so, the reversal of the eleventh of Genesis. You have the action of the second Man—the Lord Jesus—weighed, and valued, and appraised by God: and as the result of His obedience, and lowliness, and of His glorifying God, even in death, the scales of the sanctuary, in which man is weighed, are turned in favor of man, and the Holy Spirit comes down to overcome the difficulty, which the sin of the first man had brought in. For the moment these unlettered Galileans are empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak, in all these languages, of the love, and glory, of the second Man, the last Adam, now gone into heaven, He having first of all accomplished redemption. Wonderful testimony to God's estimate of the life and death of Jesus!

Returning now to the second of Acts, we find that the effect of this reversal of Genesis 11:1-32 was that "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine" (vss. 12-13). But Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, says, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Observe that Peter does not say this is a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, in its full and complete force. He says, "This is that which was spoken," and not any other kind of agency or power. That which is spoken of in Joel will have its larger, and absolute fulfillment, in a day yet to come. What they saw was what Joel spoke of, that is it had been foretold in a certain sense by Scripture. The very first service the Holy Spirit does is, if I may so say, to shake out and hoist aloft the flag on which is emblazoned, "WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." Salvation through the name of Jesus is what that means. It is the Gospel in its simplest possible form. Whosoever, therefore, desires to be saved may be. There is salvation, for anybody who will have it, through the name of Jesus.

Peter then passes on, and tells them of the life of Jesus—of God's delight in Him; how man refused Him, put Him to death, and put Him in a grave. He also tells them how God raised Him, and put Him into glory. In verse 32 it says, "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." There was indisputable evidence, that there was now upon earth a divine Person, who had come in a totally new character. And whence had He come? He had come from the exalted Man in glory. On earth once, this Son of Man had received the Spirit of God for Himself, and in the power of that Spirit He lived, and walked, and "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." Now, alive from the dead, as Man, He passed into glory, carrying manhood to the very throne of God.

Now I pray you carefully to look at the expression, "And having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." Jesus has received the Holy Spirit twice. Once for Himself, personally, on earth, and the second time, when in heavenly glory, and on the ground of redemption, He receives the promise of the Father. Who for? For us. The 68th Psalm indicated, and anticipated this, when it said, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men (or, as it may be more literally rendered, in man); yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God

might dwell among them.”

Peter lets his hearers distinctly understand that now had come the fulfillment of what is spoken of in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John. It was “the promise of the Father” actually come. As Son of Man, Jesus had gone up, and was with the Father. Earth had lost Him. The Father had received Him back again. He had said, “If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you” (John 16:7). Now the Holy Spirit had come, as the promise of the Father. To do what? To bring the believer into the Father’s presence, and cause him to live in the atmosphere of the Father’s house. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). It is by the Holy Spirit that the believer is now brought into relationship with God consciously, so that he says, Father!

There is all the difference in the world between having the Spirit, and not having Him. It comes out in the prayers of God’s people. You will tell where a man is spiritually, better by his prayers, than by his general speech. I have heard some of the children of God pray, as if they were but poor beggars. Suppose a beggar comes to your house. You hear his knock. By its very character you learn who it is, and say, That is a beggar! You know it is a beggar. He gets a crust, or a copper, and goes his way. Half an hour goes by when the bell rings violently, then a loud knock, and if there be any delay in opening, perhaps even a kick at the door follows. “Ah!” you say, “that is my boy come home from school.” The boy knows he is perfectly welcome, and he is in haste to get in, where love waits to receive him. I believe that many of the children of God do not know what it is to be thoroughly at home, in the presence of the Lord, with this sense, I am a child, as near to the heart of God, as Christ is; I am welcome there, and He loves to hear my voice. The wave sheaf is accepted for me, and the Holy Spirit is dwelling in me, to lead me into, and keep me happily occupied with, the love that has brought me near to itself. The eighth of Romans says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (vs. 16). The Holy Spirit has come to put the saint in the enjoyment now of what belongs to him for eternity. Well, you say, I shall be very happy in heaven by-and-by! Why are you not now on earth? If somebody left you a fortune in the funds, would you say, I will draw the first dividend when I die? I do not think you would. You would rather say, I wonder when I shall get it, I should like to know when the dividend warrants are to be paid.

You see the Holy Spirit has come down to put the soul now, into the enjoyment of its heavenly relationships, with the Father, and the Son, and to lead it into abiding communion with the Father and the Son. That is Christianity. But, alas, Christendom has forgotten that the Holy Spirit is here. That is why you so frequently hear the prayer that the Spirit of God might be poured out. If ever you hear it again, you would do the petitioner a true service, by asking him if he ever read the second of Acts. The Holy Spirit has come. The Spirit of God is here. What would the Lord have thought, when on earth, if one day while He, and His twelve disciples were passing along, one of them had turned, and prayed to God fervently, that He would send His Son? I think one of the eleven would have turned on him, and said, “What are you talking about? He is already here.” Similarly, what inconsistency is it to pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out! Ah! you say, we thought He was only an influence. I know it. But I want you to see that He is a Divine Person come here, and abiding here, in the name of Christ—here to act for Christ, and here to put the soul in the enjoyment of communion with the Father and the Son. The peculiarity of the way in which the Holy

Spirit fell on the Jew at Pentecost, I will reserve until later, as it will come in more naturally with the subject then to be before us. It may now suffice us just to read what Peter says. "Repent and be baptized, 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." What he proposed to that quickened multitude was repentance, baptism, and the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (these are undoubtedly the Gentiles; they have a claim upon Christ's love, as well as the Jews), "even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly (the expression "gladly" is doubtful) received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Why are souls not similarly converted now? It is not a question of the vessel, or the preacher. The reason why we do not see similar blessing is that we do not expect it. I meet you, and remark that last Lord's Day, at a Gospel meeting, six souls were converted. "Ah! you don't say so!" is your reply, in these words, giving expression to the unbelief of your hearts. Look at this Pentecostal scene—no less than three thousand! Is there an unconverted man here this evening? You had better not go away unconverted. If you do, you are surely going to hell. You are going to your doom, and that the lake of fire. You are once more turning your back on Christ; you had better bow before Him, and get saved now. If three thousand were converted that day, may you not well be saved tonight? Surely. The contrast between the day when the law was given, and broken, and the day when the Holy Spirit was given, is very striking. You remember that when Moses came down from the mount with God's law, written on the tables of stone, and reached the camp, he found the people, instead of obeying that law, dancing round the golden calf—"And Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (Exodus 32:19). "Who is on the Lord's side?" is next his query and Levi buckled on his sword, "and there fell of the people that day three thousand men." Three thousand men were cut off from Israel, and destroyed on the day that the law was broken, whereas three thousand souls were saved, and added to the Church, the day the Holy Spirit came down to tell men that there is a Saviour in glory. Delightful thought! There is a Saviour in glory for me! for you, and, if still unsaved, you may be saved just now. Well, it is a lovely sight that of three thousand souls being converted. What a scene to the eye and heart of the Saviour! What joy was there too in that vast multitude! Look at the hundred and twenty! How their hearts would be fit to burst for joy. Three thousand! What congratulation! What greetings, as, Thank God I am saved! were heard among these thousands. Fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters there may have been among the three thousand one hundred and twenty now believing in the name of Jesus, and all receiving the Holy Spirit. And what do they do now? We read in verse 42—"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." They were filled with the Gospel of the exalted Christ. They then received the doctrine the apostles proclaimed; and that produced fellowship. Yes, "fellowship, and breaking of bread," was the order of the day. Breaking of bread once in six months? Oh! no. They were far too deeply touched by the love of Christ for that. They could not put it off for six months in those days. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The breaking of bread was the expression of the one body, into which they were now baptized by the Holy Spirit, though they had not got the revelation of that truth as yet. Further, they continued steadfastly "in prayers." And I have no doubt the prayer meeting was as crammed as the meeting for the breaking of bread. The brethren used to pray in those days. Now they come to prayer meetings, but oftentimes

you hear but few voices? How is this? Will you say—They have not “the gift of prayer.” God forbid that any should have what you call “the gift of prayer.” Such a gift I find nowhere in Scripture. Fluency in public prayer is oftentimes a snare to the possessor, and a distress to all that hear him. Its lack is no loss. True prayer is always simple. The reason why real prayer is often lacking is that the heart is full of the world, or under the influence of the presence of man, and “the fear of man bringeth a snare.” They continued steadfastly in “prayers,” not prayer meetings. Oh for the steadfastness of those days! We are, alas! so half-hearted, so worldly, and so unspiritual. The Lord stir us all up to be more like these early Christians!

Now, note what follows. “They continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.” How true is it, when a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Here then, was the Church formed, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and we find, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” I do not doubt He worked quietly and blessedly, but He had 3,120 red-hot witnesses of Christ that day in Jerusalem, and if today there were as many, and as bright, for Christ, what a stir there would be. If you go with your heart full of Christ, and tell somebody else about it, and others did the same, depend upon it there would be a great stir. “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” But you say, These were Pentecostal times. True, but what does the Pentecostal time mean? It means that the Holy Spirit had come down, and is He not here still? Thank God, He is: the same faithful Spirit of grace, and true servant of Christ’s glory. The Lord give us to believe in His abiding presence, to count on His power, and to seek His guidance, each step of the way, and in all that concerns the work of the Lord.

08. The Gift of the Spirit

The Gift of the Spirit

These scriptures present to us a series of four occasions, in the Acts of the Apostles, in which the reception of the Holy Spirit, by men on earth, is distinctly detailed. This book is emphatically the one that details not only the coming, but the abiding personal presence, and varied actings of the Spirit of God upon earth. As I pointed out, you will find the Holy Spirit spoken of in this book over fifty times, and manifesting His presence in various ways. But the most important point, that could possibly be pressed on the soul, is this, that He personally is here. That is the burden of the Acts of the Apostles. From chapter 2 onwards we are constantly reminded of the fact, that there is a divine Person here on the earth, and that He makes His presence felt, and heard, in manifold ways—I do not say seen (John 14:17)—but nevertheless His personal presence becomes an indisputable fact, brought out in many ways. Not only does He dwell in the body of the believer, as the seal of faith, but as a divine Person He is abidingly present, in the house of God, and makes His presence to be felt, and felt not only by those external manifestations of power, which we get recorded in this book, because these signs and gifts of tongues have passed away. Were they the only proof of His presence, any person might fairly say, Is He still here? Where are the tongues? Where are all those miraculous interventions—those extraordinary dealings of the Spirit of God—which were so abundant in the past, for example, healing the sick and raising the dead? They are not found—therefore the Spirit of God is gone. Such a thought is an utter fallacy.

It is important to see that what we find in the Acts of the Apostles, is the perfect counterpart of that which you find in the early part of the Lord's ministry, where He does miracles in abundance, not alone as being the natural outflow of the grace of His heart, to meet man in his need, misery, and sorrow, but to be the attestation of the glory of His person—the attestation that He, the sent One of God, yea, God Himself in human form, was walking through man's earth. Now, it is but meet, that, as the presence of the Son of God among men, was attested then by the miracles to which I have alluded, so should the presence of this unseen Person of the Trinity—this Holy Spirit that was of God—yea, that is God—God the Holy Spirit—should be attested in the same manner. I say it was but meet that there should be, when He first came into this scene, out of which the Son of God had been cast, a testimony to His presence, that should convince the most gainsaying, that a new presence, a new power, a new Person was here amongst men. You have, therefore, the gift of tongues, and the miracles recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The former are alluded to by the Apostle Paul, and their object signified, as he says, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Corinthians 14:22). But the gift of the Holy Spirit, I repeat, is infinitely higher than any effect that that gift may produce in the way of power; and although the signs and manifestations, and tongues, and miraculous interventions have disappeared, in the wisdom of God—their necessity no longer existing—we may rejoicingly be certain of this, that the Holy Spirit, not merely as an influence for good, but as a Divine Person, is still upon the earth today, and as active as ever, in leading the soul into the enjoyment of heavenly things. The very last page of the New Testament, yea, almost the last verse, records, spite of the sin and failure of

the Church, His faithful abiding presence, as we read, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come,” to the yearning Bridegroom—the Lord Jesus. God is faithful, however unfaithful man may have been. The Holy Spirit is faithful, however unfaithful the Church has been, and therefore what obtained in the Acts of the Apostles, obtains now. I say boldly, that for any man today to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is an insult to the grace of God, as shown to us in the gift of the blessed Comforter, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. I know such a statement may seem a little strong, and may possibly awaken questions in some minds, but I adhere to it. To look then for a continually renewed outpouring of the Spirit of God is, to put it in plain language, a positive denial of the wonderful truth which the Acts of the Apostles records.

There are two ways in which I desire with the Lord’s help, to look at this book. Firstly, to review the four great occasions on which the Spirit of God came to, and indwelt, those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, the ways He took to affirm His Presence, apart from external manifestations, or sign-gifts. Of the four occasions referred to, the second of Acts is the chapter to which I first turn. There you have the fullest and the most comprehensive expression of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Not only does He fall, first of all, upon the hundred and twenty, and they are filled, and the Church, the house of God, and the body of Christ is formed, but, as the result of Peter’s preaching, three thousand souls, without doubt, received the Spirit of God.

Now you will find that on these four interesting occasions, where the Spirit of God comes—upon the Jews in the second of Acts, upon the Samaritans in the eighth, upon the Gentiles in the tenth, and upon the Ephesian proselytes in the nineteenth—while they are all alike in the glorious fact of the Holy Spirit personally coming to them, each scene differs as to its antecedents, and in the way in which the Holy Spirit was received. This difference, we may be sure, is of God, and not to be lightly esteemed, or overlooked by any one who fears God, and seeks to know His ways. When we look at the second of Acts, what do we find? Peter’s beautiful testimony to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, “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.” Tongues of fire, on the heads of the disciples, and miraculous testimony to Christ, in every known language, by unlettered men, who had never learned the same, were what they saw and heard. Peter’s testimony to the One whom they had refused, and slain, but whom God had exalted, had the most powerful effect—namely this, “They were pricked in their heart “; that is they were convicted. You have there the very first effect of the action of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men. They were convicted of their sins. Their consciences were reached. These men were confronted with their guilt. They were so to speak, arraigned by the Lord, and brought into the presence of God, and their sin not only charged on them, but they were made conscious of what that sin was. There was a distinct breach between them and God. God had delighted in Jesus. They had slain Him. God had raised Him, and put Him into glory, and the Holy Spirit had come down to declare this wonderful fact. Thoroughly convicted, they now say, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Note the apostle’s answer: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized 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.”

What Peter says in effect is this—If you repent, and are baptized in the name of the One, whom you refused and murdered, seven short weeks ago, you will receive like blessing with us—you will receive the Holy Spirit. Why is the truth put in this way? I think there cannot be the shadow of a doubt as to the wisdom of the Lord in guiding His servant to put it this way. He does not tell them

to believe in Jesus. That may be needful when you come to Acts 10:1-48. He does not tell them to trust in Jesus. No, He peals out the clarion note of John the Baptist—unheeded in his day—Repent. There must be repentance. No man ever yet had to do with God unless there was repentance. I do not deny that faith is a requisite to blessing also, but faith is the reception of a Divine testimony. These men had faith. They believed that Jesus was exalted. What was the result? “They were pricked in their hearts.” What next? “Repent,” says Peter. You may ask, What is repentance? I believe it is the judgment which the soul passes on itself, as, in the light of God’s presence, it learns what the truth is—the truth about God, the truth about Jesus, and the truth about my sins, and my sinful state. Repentance is taking God’s side against myself. Repentance is the teardrop in the eye of faith. I would to God I saw that teardrop in every eye before me tonight. It was in the eyes of those Peter addressed. Repentance holds a large place in the preaching of the apostles. It would be well if, nowadays, it were more pressed. There must be the judgment of what I have done, and what I am. It is a blessed moment in his history when a man repents—when he judges himself. It is my accepting the testimony of God as to the state of my heart, and owning my utter ruin, in truthfulness and uprightness.

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,” is the counsel of God to those awakened hosts, now deeply convicted of their guilt in the murder of Jesus. Peter, so to speak, says, If you are really repentant, you will own your guilt, and, in as public a manner declare your repentance, by being baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, as you publicly, and all together joined in the cry, “Away with him—away with him—crucify him, crucify him.” The truth of their repentance would be manifested by their action. I do not doubt there may be spurious faith, and that there may be spurious repentance, but such was not the case here. All were deeply convicted of their sins, and they wanted to know what was to be done. The Gospel put before them was, “Repent, and be baptized 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 why? “For the promise is unto you, and to your children.” Thank God for that! It is not only on myself, but on my family, that God has His eye. “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort.” Peter was undoubtedly led to expound, and enforce what he had said, so that they might then get God’s blessing; and I would press upon you to get blessing this night. Peter concluded with, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” It may seem a remarkable thing to say, “Save yourselves.” But I advise you, my friend, to save yourself. Come clear out of the world, now under judgment, and cleave to the Saviour, who has gone through the judgment, and is now at God’s right hand in glory. That is the way to save yourself. Go to the Saviour.

“Then they that gladly” (the word ‘gladly’ is perhaps doubtful; I do not think there was any great gladness at the moment: the sense of their sin made them sad, not glad) “received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” What a beautiful triumph of grace! That, then, was the way the Jew—the haughty, proud, rebellious Jew—got blessing from God on the day of Pentecost.

Let us pass now to the second occasion, which we find recorded in the eighth of Acts. In the seventh chapter of that book you will find that Stephen, “full of the Holy Ghost,” gives a most beautiful testimony to the Son of Man, whom he sees, standing at God’s right hand. His charge against the nation is most solemn—“Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (vs. 51). The guilty

nation, to whom Peter had preached twice, or thrice, since the second of Acts, consummate their iniquity by refusing Stephen's message. They really are the "citizens" to whom the Lord referred when He said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:12-14). Stephen was the man they sent after the nobleman, He was their messenger, and the message he carried up was, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Jewish nation refused their Messiah on earth, and a Saviour in glory. They filled up the cup of their sins. Stephen died like his Master, with all the beautiful grace of Christ expressed in him. "Full of the Holy Ghost," his last breath was expended in saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Stephen could not end his prayer as his Master did in the moment of His death. The Lord on the cross had said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Stephen, full of, and held in check by the Holy Spirit, could not say these words, because he knew, for the Spirit knew, that they were all resisting light, as they did know who Jesus really was. Stephen, then, the first martyr for the truth, died with the image of His blessed Master stamped on him. The result was a tremendous persecution. We see in the next chapter that the whole assembly at Jerusalem was scattered abroad. "At that time there was great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (8:1). It is a remarkable thing that the very men, whom the Lord had told to go unto all nations (see Matthew 28:19-20), contaminated by Jewish ideas, and metropolitan associations, remained at Jerusalem, and would not go forth. Well, says God, I must get others to do the work, if you will not, and lesser brethren are driven east, west, north, and south, to carry the gospel of God's grace far and near. There is a great lesson in this for us all. In Acts 8:5 we read, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Philip before this had been appointed to diaconal work in Jerusalem (see Acts 6:1-6). He was a deacon, and as such he had the distribution of the funds of the assembly, and the happy work of looking after the poor; but as soon as the assembly was broken up, his duties ceased, and now, in the exercise of the spiritual gift, which the Lord (not the apostles) gave him, he started out to preach, having already graduated, not at a college or university, but in the bosom of God's assembly, for "They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." This the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 3:13. With a "good degree" to his name Philip goes forth, but he was also the possessor of a most rare gift. This is proved in chapter 8, and recorded by the Holy Spirit in chapter 21, where he is called, that which I am not aware that any other man is called in the New Testament, "Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven" (Acts 21:8). He did not get that spiritual qualification by apostolic appointment, or intervention, or laying on of hands. He got the diaconal office in that way. His gift as an evangelist he received from the ascended Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus, and he went out in its exercise, and preached in Samaria—a city ripe for blessing.

There were beautiful results. "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35), the Lord had said, as He sat outside this city; and they had been going on ripening ever since. Now Philip comes down and puts in the sickle; and oh! what a harvest! "Many believed," you will remember, because of the word that the woman spoke of Jesus, and when

others came out to Christ, “many more believed because of his own word.” Now, through Philip’s preaching, most of them believed in the blessed Son of God. It was an illustration of the Lord’s own Word, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). Philip “preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which, Philip spoke, hearing—and seeing the miracles.” The whole city was moved by the testimony of the Spirit through the evangelist. “For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” This earnest man—not an apostle, but a simple evangelist—is empowered by the Holy Spirit to do what we read of here. But the Spirit of God had not taken up His abode in that city as yet. So far He was only in the person of that one servant; although there was “great joy in that city” through the reception of Christ, “as yet the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them” (vs. 16).

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.” I think that is a beautiful word, that “Samaria had received the word of God.” The Jews had been trying hard to make them receive the law, but it had been a dead failure. That was the reason why “the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.” What the law failed to do, the sovereign grace of God effected. The whole city received the word. “And there was great joy in that city.” It was one of the triumphs of grace. Hearing of this, the apostles sent down from Jerusalem, Peter and John—two pillars in the Church—“who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (vss. 14-17).

Now, at once you must see the marked and clear difference between this scene, and what took place in Jerusalem. There it was, “Repent, and be baptized, 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.” They repented, were baptized, and received the Holy Spirit. Here, on the other hand, although they had believed, and been baptized, they had not one of them received the Holy Spirit. They had heard the Gospel, and had believed it. Philip had borne a beautiful testimony. There is only one thing stated. He went down and “preached Christ.” That is the way to get at souls. If any of you here are preachers, and wish to know the way to win souls, let Philip teach you, for he “preached Christ to them,” nothing more, and nothing less, and his results were splendid. But although these Samaritans had believed the Gospel, were full of joy, and, furthermore, had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet, strange to say, they had not received the Holy Spirit. Why was this? I think the reason is not far to seek, and it fills the heart with thankfulness when one sees the wisdom of God in that which took place. When our blessed Lord met the poor woman at Sychar’s well outside Samaria, and began to speak to her, she suddenly said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” The Lord replied, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.” Worship therefore was to be of an entirely new order and character. It was to be worship of the Father, in spirit, and in truth, the result of knowing a heavenly Saviour, and being on heavenly ground, in the power of the Spirit. Samaria had always been in the position of the religious rival of Jerusalem. “This mountain” had a very strong hold upon the hearts of the

Samaritans. Now, supposing that consequent upon Philip's preaching, and their believing the Gospel, getting their sins forgiven, and being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them, what would have been the inevitable result? The old religious rivalry would have been perpetuated. Such is human nature, even in saints, that the church in Samaria would have lifted its head and said, "We are the Samaritan church. We have been saved, and we have received the Spirit of God as well as those at Jerusalem," and thus the blessed truth of the oneness of the Church of God—which the presence of the Holy Spirit forms would have been practically denied, God's object frustrated, and there would have been engendered that which, alas, has sprung up since, and borne such sad fruit—the thought of a national Church.

Such a thought as this, I need scarcely say, is absolutely foreign to Scripture. A national church! Where do you as a Christian belong to? Why, you belong to heaven, and not to earth. The thought of independency is nipped in the very bud, in the perfect wisdom of God. He will not let the Spirit of God, which is the bond of union in the Church—He will not permit that which is the absolute formative power of the Church, to fall on the Samaritan believers until the two apostles come down from Jerusalem, and link the work of God there with that which Philip was instrumental in at Samaria. First of all, praying for the disciples, and then laying their hands on them, the Holy Spirit is received. This action is very simple. God would have the Samaritan believers to understand, that what was now going on among them, and the work at Jerusalem, was one and the same thing. One energy produced it—one Head in glory, and one Spirit on earth. God would have them apprehend that He would allow nothing that might seem to falsify the unity of the Church, and therefore, in divine wisdom, the Spirit of God did not come until the apostles, by the laying on of their hands, linked on, and connected the work in Samaria, with that already existing at Jerusalem. This lesson is as important for us as for them. The Church of God is one. We live in a day when the differences among professing Christians are so multiplied, that we are told that there are no less than thirteen hundred different sects in Christendom. That is a shame to Christendom, and a shame to Christians too. What I find in Scripture is this that "by one spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). That was the truth which God would emphasize on this occasion, for the laying on of hands, in Scripture, almost always carries with it the thought of identification. When the worshipper, in Leviticus 1:1-17, offered his burnt offering, he put his hand upon the bullock's head so as to identify himself with the excellence of the burnt sacrifice offered to God. When Aaron, in the sixteenth of Leviticus, sent forth the scapegoat, he put both his hands on its head, to identify the sins of the people with it. It was this identification with His assembly, already preexisting, that God wished should be manifested, and in the manner in which the Holy Spirit was received by the Samaritan believers, the truth is most strikingly taught. The apostles came down and showed that the Church was one, and that God would not have the bare thought of independency, for one moment to be suggested, by the Holy Spirit coming in any other way.

I know that some Christians argue for, and defend independency. All such should carefully ponder this scene, for they will not find such a thought, or such a principle commended, but the reverse, in the Word of God. The great truth of Christianity is dependence, as regards Christ, and mutual dependence—not independence—as regards the Church, and therefore the Lord here in the early days of the Church taught this truth. The Church is one and God would have "no schism in the body."

Passing now to the third crisis, in Acts 10:1-48, we find that which interests us greatly, as here first we have the Gentiles brought into the Church, and the body of Christ expressed on earth. Between the eighth and tenth chapters, Paul, the apostle of the truth of the mystery of the Church, had been called. That remarkable servant of God, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, and the “chosen vessel” for the revelation of the truth of the mystery—the body of Christ, and whose writings develop that truth, had been called, and brought into the assembly, and was beginning to work. Peter, in the exercise of that which the Lord gave him in the sixteenth of Matthew—the keys of the kingdom of heaven (mark, it is not the keys of heaven—it is the keys of the kingdom of heaven)—had in Acts 2:1-47 opened the Jewish leaf of the door, to admit them to the kingdom, and now, in the tenth of Acts, he is led of the Lord to open the other leaf for the Gentiles. I admit he is not brisk at the work. At first he is slow, and it takes some time before he can be brought to do that which God would have him do. Nevertheless he does it; and the circumstances are remarkably interesting.

There dwelt a Roman centurion at Caesarea, a pious, godly man. As the early part of the chapter (Acts 10:1-48) tells us he was “a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” He was a converted man—quicken by the Spirit of God, but he had not received the Holy Spirit, and as yet he had not peace with God. He was a type of thousands of souls today—awakened, quickened souls, with godly desires; devout, generous, benevolent, prayerful people, and yet they are without peace. They do not know what pardon is. While this man is in prayer, God sends an angel to him, telling him to send for Peter. While Peter is on the housetop, also in prayer, the Lord gives him a vision of heaven opened, and a vessel like a great sheet, knit at the four corners, let down to earth; “wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.” Then comes a voice, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat.” This Peter refuses, but the voice says, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” This is repeated three times, and at length, while he “doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean,” the Spirit says to him, as we read in verse 19, “Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.” These men give him their message, and Peter goes with them the next day. Cornelius is waiting for him with his kinsmen and near friends. When he heard from God that His messenger is to come, he immediately desires that others should participate in the blessing. I do not think it is possible for a person to be born of God, and blessed of Him, without a desire springing up that those around him should share in this grace.

Cornelius tells Peter why he sent for him, and closes what he has to say with, “Now, therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” That was a very earnest audience gathered in the presence of God, and little wonder that there was deep blessing that day in Cornelius’ house. Peter now knows the truth: he has learned the lesson of the great sheet, as he says, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted (or, as it should be, “acceptable,” or, “well pleasing to Him”—acceptance is on totally different grounds, as we learn from Ephesians 1:1-23; Ephesians 6:1-24) with Him.” A new lesson entirely was this to Peter.

It is manifest that God’s call had not gone out to a pagan idolater, and Peter only speaks of those who feared God, and wrought righteousness. This is exactly what Cornelius did, and the Lord had signified his acceptability to Himself by sending His angel. His was no mere hollow profession, but

a real state of soul. God-fearing, pious, and prayerful, he was born again, converted, but not yet what Scripture calls "saved" (chap 11:14), a term implying the fullest blessing, in the knowledge of association with a victorious risen Saviour. But in going out to the Gentiles, how wise the way of God to begin with this man, whom not even the most opposing Jew could deny was godly? Thus you see a man might be godly, and yet not know the privileges of Christianity. These he is now to be brought into. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), that word ye know," says Peter. Cornelius was not ignorant of it. He had evidently heard what had gone on with regard to Jesus. He had heard, moreover, that God was preaching peace through Jesus Christ, but it was "to the children of Israel." Now, why did Cornelius not get peace? For a beautiful reason. He was just and upright, and he knew he was not in the favored circle of Israel. Consequently he judged it was not for him. He desired to get peace, but it was for Israel, and he was not in that favored company. While deeply desirous of blessing, he felt himself unworthy of it, and that he had no claim to it. Here it is then, that the grace of God comes in so sweetly.

Peter goes on, and tells how Jesus "went about doing good," how the Jews slew Him, how God raised Him, and how He was seen, after His resurrection, by many witnesses. He concludes his testimony by saying, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." What had they heard? Ah! this is wonderful news for you and me, for we are Gentiles. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." "Do you wish the remission of your sins? You are welcome to it. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Ah! but you may say, what about repentance? God says nothing about it here. I doubt not they had repented. There was no need to press it on those who were so deeply anxious. What they needed was the simple, beautiful Gospel of Jesus. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." If you are here in your sins, and desirous to have them remitted, that is forgiven, let me tell you this good news of the Saviour of sinners, "through His name, whosoever believeth in Him SHALL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS."

Forgiveness of sins is now preached to every creature, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the work which He has accomplished, sins are put away from before God, and whosoever believeth in Him receives forgiveness thereof. But who does he mean by "whosoever"? Does he not mean you? Yes, surely it means you as well as me. If you can truly say, I believe in Him, you receive remission of sins. But I do not feel it, you may argue. It does not say, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall feel the remission of sins." No, it says, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." I forgive, says God, the soul that cleaves to My Son. It is due to Christ that God should pardon and bless the soul that believes in Him.

Undoubtedly the Spirit of God, in the case of Cornelius and his friends, had wrought in their hearts, and had given them the sense of need before God. To have the sense of need produced in the soul, to be quickened by the Spirit of God, and brought low in repentance is one thing, but to get the knowledge of forgiveness, and to receive the Holy Spirit, as the seal of faith, is another. What do we find here, however? "While Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Nothing could exceed this rich and singular display of God's grace. There is no

limitation, nor any question of baptism introduced; and not a word about apostles coming down to pray for, and lay their hands upon them. The greater the distance from God, as was the case with the Gentiles, the freer does the grace come out to those who have no claim on God. The scene sparkles with the brilliancy of the grace of God. The rebellious Jew must repent, and be publicly baptized; the pseudo-religious Samaritan hears the Gospel, believes it, and is baptized in the name of Jesus, but he must wait till the apostles come down, pray for, and lay their hands upon him, before the Holy Spirit come. The Gentile, who was afar off, and had nationally no link with God—and that is where you and I come in—hears the truth, believes the Gospel, and gets the Holy Spirit on the spot, without any of these preliminaries. This is a blessed truth which we do well to hold tenaciously, for we live in a day when there are not wanting those who affirm, that there is no possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit, except through the intervention of man, and man's hand. Scripture, by the record of God's ways in the house of Cornelius, silences all such folly, for I can call it nothing else.

Nothing can be more beautiful than this outflow of the grace of God among this company of Gentiles. They believe the testimony sent them to the value of Jesus' name in the remission of sins, and, as a result, "the Holy Ghost fell upon all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision, which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST." That they had received this incomparable Gift, is proved by what follows: "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." The evidence that they had received the Holy Spirit was patent to the ear, and eye, of Peter, and of his Jewish brethren. He had been careful for his character, and hence took down with him six brethren, that they might take note of what should happen, and join him in testimony concerning it, as they do, before the opposers at Jerusalem, in chapter 11. God had said, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established," and so it was in this case.

Let us mark it well, that it is thus that we, believing Gentiles, receive the Holy Spirit. God is all in this scene, and man nowhere—he disappears in the excess of the grace of God. Had apostolic intervention been necessary to the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, an apostle was there, either to baptize, or to lay on hands, but such was not God's order. If any prefer to go back to Jewish, or Samaritan ground, they must do so, but faith always gladly hails any new departure in the ways of God. The truth is, that when apostles were here men despised them; now that they exist not, unbelief equally thinks they are indispensable, as the channel for the impartation of the Spirit. What grace of God, to make all so clear and certain to the contrary, in His written Word! And now I would ask you, Have you received the Spirit of God? I daresay some may say, That is a very serious question to ask. I admit it, but if you turn to the fourth, and last occasion, where the Holy Spirit is related to have fallen on believers—as given us in chapter 19—you will find the question I have put to you, is that which led to their receiving the Holy Spirit. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" A very striking, and a very important question, and, moreover, it shows that a man may be a believer, may be a child of God, may be converted, and yet may not have the Holy Spirit. They were disciples, and the apostle credits their belief, but nevertheless says, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Perhaps you may inquire—What made him put that question? I think it is very likely they were not quite at ease. From their faces possibly the apostle could see

that there was a want of joy. When a man has received the Holy Spirit he is full of joy. When he has not received the Holy Spirit he is perplexed and exercised about his state before God; he has no settled knowledge of peace, or relationship, or of what it is to be in Christ; for all possession of Christian blessing is the effect of the Spirit's indwelling. Hence he never looks bright and cheerful, and it may have been the look on their countenances that caused Paul to ask the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost be (come)." They did not, as some ignorantly affirm, doubt His existence, but they knew not of His presence. That believers should receive Him was a promise known in Scripture, and proclaimed by John the Baptist, as we have seen. But these men had not heard of the day of Pentecost. They had not heard of the finished work of Christ, nor of the Holy Spirit having come down. Therefore Paul next asks—"Unto what then were ye baptized? and they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." John had only preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). Forgiveness was not preached—it was to be waited for, but now, since John's testimony, Christ had died, and risen again, and been glorified, and the Holy Spirit had come down. John had insisted on self-judgment, and an acknowledgment of their total ruin, without proclaiming the news of forgiveness. Paul preached a Saviour come, redemption accomplished, and the Holy Spirit come down, to be the power in the soul, that leads it into the enjoyment of Christ's victory. "When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." They bowed to Christ, and owned Him Lord. They acknowledged the claims, and authority, and lordship of Him who was raised from the dead. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied." Here again the external signs are apparent, but there is no confusion of THE GIFT and the gifts.

Why, here, does Paul lay his hands on them? As you know, Paul at this moment was dogged by Jewish teachers, who would have the law, and circumcision, pressed on the Gentiles. They were seeking to undervalue his apostleship, and make out that his ministry was of a lower nature, and character, than that of the other apostles, because he had not accompanied the Lord, when on earth. They failed to understand his ministry, his preaching, and his apostleship, or were ignorant of the truth, that he had received his call from heaven. God would substantiate His servant, and took this way of upholding his apostleship. It took Peter and John together to communicate the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans. Paul alone sufficed at Ephesus. It so pleased God, and in the same way as the two apostles linked on the work in Samaria, with that which preexisted, so here does Paul, by his action similarly link the work in Ephesus to that which had gone before. A passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians evidently alludes to this incident. "In whom ye also (trusted), after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). You have there the divine order; the sinner hearing the word of truth, the gospel of his salvation, believes in Him who has accomplished the work. What then? He is sealed "with that holy Spirit of promise." It is the sinner who believes; it is the believer who is sealed by the Spirit. The great point for us to get hold of is this, that the way in which the Holy Spirit fell upon the Jews in chapter 2, the Samaritans in chapter 8, and the Jewish proselytes in chapter 19, is of a different character in each case, God having a special reason for the diverse actings mentioned. When the Gentiles were blessed it was God alone who acted, and it is under this class that we fall.

I will now briefly call your attention to the second point I named at the outset, namely, the frequent way in which in the Acts we read of the Spirit, not as an influence, but as a Divine Person, actually present on earth, and acting according to His own will. Not only is the Holy Spirit in us as believers, but with us. This the Acts strikingly reveals in many instances. When the apostles prayed in the fourth of Acts, “the place was shaken where they were assembled together.” The Holy Spirit was there, and He made His presence to be felt. This had nothing to do with the truth, blessed as it is, that He was in any particular believer, for “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” then. The point is, an unseen Person was there. Again, when Ananias and Sapphira lied before the apostles in the fifth of Acts, Peter said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” To his wife he said, “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” God was present in the Church, God the Holy Spirit. Amazing, but most blessed truth, God was now dwelling righteously, but in the most inconceivable grace, on earth, and amongst those who had been sinners by nature, but were now washed in the blood of His Son, and fit to be His temple. Peter recognized this wondrous fact that the assembly was now the habitation of God, and hence any sin was sin against the Holy Spirit dwelling there.

Again, in chapter 8, we find the Spirit busy with the Lord’s work, as we read, “The Spirit said to Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot” (vs. 29). An angel (vs. 26) had told him what road to go. In this sense the providence of God was manifest to Philip, and even yet to us, for Hebrews 1:14 is still surely true. But it was not an angel, but the Spirit whose voice bade him draw near the anxious Ethiopian eunuch. Guidance of a similar nature although we may not hear Him as Philip did, is surely vouchsafed to us in dealing with souls. The Spirit knows their need, and lovingly works through Christ’s members, and servants, all unconscious oftentimes of what He is going to do. The love of the Spirit is a real thing, as well as the love of Christ.

We have already seen in Peter’s case that “the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee, arise.” (ch. 10:19). He had His eye on the awakened Gentile, and commanded His chosen vessel to go, and do His bidding. This Peter is careful to relate, as being quite conscious whose voice it was that directed him. “The Spirit bade me go” (ch. 11:12).

Passing now to chapter 13, we find the Holy Spirit the direct author of a missionary enterprise. We read, “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (vs. 2). This word was manifestly to the company of prophets, and teachers, in the assembly at Antioch. It was not merely an influence in Barnabas, and Saul, but a direct injunction to others about them, which was obeyed.

Again, in chapter 16, Paul and his companions were “forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” Assaying to go into Bithynia, “the Spirit suffered them not” (16:6-7). Determined to go to Jerusalem, we read of Paul, that “the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city that bands and afflictions” awaited him (ch. 20:23). Nor is this all, for in godless Tyre, the disciples said to Paul, through the Spirit, “that he should not go up to Jerusalem” (ch. 21:4). This command, unheeded by the apostle, is followed, in verse 11, by a detailed statement of the issue of a journey, in which I find he was not led of the Spirit, although God might, and did overrule it for the blessing of His servant, and of the whole Church. It was in Caesarea, and in Philip’s house, that Agabus “took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the

Gentiles.” Now, it is a weighty fact that from that moment, you never read of the Holy Spirit again in Acts, save Paul’s allusion to him when a prisoner at Rome (28:25). History goes on, but the Holy Spirit is not named. Why, I will not venture to say. But is that same divine Person yet abiding on earth, or is all changed, and has He, because so sadly unheeded, disappeared from the bosom of God’s Church on earth? Ah! let us not cast discredit upon the Spirit of truth, and upon the Word of God, by such unworthy thoughts. The Lord had said to His disciples, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER; even the Spirit of truth.... He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” We have seen how Jesus went away, and we have heard also how the Spirit came to dwell with the early disciples, and He dwells with us now. I believe He dwells in the Church today, and what you and I want, is faith in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, at this present moment. God give us, dear friends, to have faith in His presence, because the more we count upon Him, the more blessing there will be for us.

09. In Christ; or, the Indwelling of the Spirit

In Christ; or, the Indwelling of the Spirit That indeed is a blessed condition which commences with “no condemnation” and ends with “no separation.” That is just what we have in this chapter, and I desire with the Lord’s help, to bring before you a little of the absolute, and positive blessing, which belongs to the one, who through grace is “in Christ.” The way in which I am going to look at this chapter is this. Very frequently when we hear of a marriage, the question is put, What is the dowry of the bride? Has she a portion? Now the eighth of Romans is the dowry of the Christian—I do not say exactly of the Bride, because it is the individual aspect of truth here, yet you will find the thought of marriage in connection with the truth in the seventh chapter. In the three previous chapters, 5, 6, and 7, you have three most important truths unfolded, and these three truths are epitomized, by the Spirit of God, in the first three verses of the chapter which I have now read to you. You see the early part of the epistle to the Romans is occupied with showing how the sinner, guilty, ruined, undone, and lost, can be righteously brought into the presence of God, and be justified before Him. That interesting and most important question, which Job put in the ninth chapter of his book, “How shall man be just with God?” was never answered, till the Spirit of God, by the pen of the Apostle Paul, wrote this epistle. But here we learn how man can “be just with God,” that is, be justified before God.

Up to verse 11 of chapter 5, the epistle is occupied in telling how man is justified from offenses, and it is of deep importance for us to learn how this is. It is by the sovereign grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, works being absolutely excluded on the part of the sinner, and faith taking the place of these works, faith, which is reckoned for righteousness, the moment the soul believes on Him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. You have in this section of the epistle our sins, our guilt, our transgressions, and our iniquities dealt with, and they are covered, blotted out, and set aside, by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the righteousness of God, that was against the sinner, in his sins, is now for the one who trusts in Jesus. God is “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (ch. 3:26). Justification flows from the grace of God, for that is the sovereign spring and source of it, but it is based on the work of Christ, as the fifth chapter says, “Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (vs. 9). Then, further, in the first verse of chapter 5 we read, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now there are not three ways of being justified, but there are three parties to my justification, and these three parties are God, His Son, and myself. What is God’s side? To justify “freely by His grace” (ch. 3:24). His loving heart is the spring and source of it. What is Christ’s side? “Being now justified by his blood” (vs. 9). The blood of Jesus is the instrumental means, and basis of justification. That is Christ’s side; and “justified by faith” (vs. 1) is man’s side, my side. Grace proposes, blood secures, and faith receives this justification. Faith is the outstretched hand that takes the blessing that the love of God so bounteously presents.

Thus far, in Romans, you have only justification from offenses; but then, beginning with verse 12 of chapter 5 we hear of “justification of life,” and the Spirit of God takes up another subject altogether.

He treats no more of what I have done, of the sins I have committed, but comes to deal with me, the man who committed them. It is no longer, to use a figure, a question of dealing with the fruit of the tree, but with the tree itself, that naturally brought forth such bad, such evil fruit. Then we learn under three relationship similitudes, the manner of the complete, the perfect deliverance, which the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is entitled to. In the fifth chapter you will find the Spirit of God brings before us the two heads; the two masters in the sixth chapter; and in the seventh chapter the two husbands. The two heads in chapter 5, I need scarcely say, are Adam and Christ. It is impossible that I can be connected, identified, and linked with two federal heads at once—with Adam and with Christ. If I am in Adam, I am not in Christ. If I am in Christ, I am not in Adam. That is perfectly plain, and it is equally so, that Adam did not become the head of a race, a family, until he was a fallen man, a sinner out of Eden; and Christ did not become the head of a race, or a stock, until He was a risen Man, out of death and judgment, which He bore for those who were under them.

Again, in chapter 6, you have two masters—Sin and God. If I am under the domination and mastery of sin, I am not “alive unto God,” nor “become a servant to God;” but I there learn most blessedly that “he that is dead is justified (margin) from sin” (vs. 7). “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (vs. 6). Christ has died, and “in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (vs. 10). Thereupon we are thus enjoined, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus” (vs. 11). The way in which I pass from the headship of Adam, to the headship of Christ, is by Christ’s death made true by faith to me as my death—not now His death for my sins, but my death with Him to sin! And how can a believer learn that he is no longer under the domination of sin? In chapter 6:8, we read, “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” In Christ Jesus the believer who has been brought to bow to the necessary condemnation of the flesh, as nothing but evil, finds that such condemnation has taken place in the death of Him who is his life. Thus he is entitled to take all that happened to Christ, as having happened to him, and knows that his old man has been crucified with Christ. By faith he participates in the death of Jesus for himself, and thus escapes from the condemnation, and power of sin, and is free to live to God. God is the new Master. When you come on to chapter 7, you have the Law, and Christ, as the two husbands. The argument is that a woman cannot have two husbands. The First must be dead before she can have a second. What is the first husband? The law. The apostle puts it so. “Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. For the woman which hath an husband is bound by law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Now mark, the apostle does not say, the law is dead, for verse 6, which seems to say so, really reads, “having died to (or in) that wherein we were held.” The death of one of the parties has dissolved the bond, according to the illustration. What he says is this. You are dead, but have

new life, if you are in Him who is risen from the dead. You are “married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, having—died to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (vss. 1-6). I repeat, the law is not dead, but the man to whom the law applied, and vainly sought to govern, is dead, and now you see his life is in another. The life of the Christian is Christ’s life. The life in which the Christian lives before God is Christ’s life. And if he has Christ’s life, he counts himself to live no longer before God in Adam’s life, nor ministers to it. He lives in the new life which is his in Christ Jesus. What is the result? Liberty, peace, joy, and blessing, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we get the two husbands in chapter 7, we have the power and blessing which the believer has in connection with the new husband—the Lord Jesus Christ—in chapter 8, and, in the first three verses, we have epitomized, what I have been bringing before you briefly, from these three preceding chapters. Chapter 8 unfolds the new position, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Nothing could be more absolute. It does not say there is no condemnation to them that believe in Christ Jesus. It is perfectly true one must believe in Christ Jesus, but that is not the way in which the apostle puts it. The whole point is that the believer is in Christ Jesus, and if I be in Christ Jesus, then I must be in Christ Jesus where Christ Jesus is; and where is that? On the other side of death—in life, in righteousness, in resurrection, in acceptance. Have you ever got hold of the wonderful truth of being “in Christ Jesus”? for “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Why? Because there is nothing left to condemn. Well, you say that is a bold statement. I do not deny it, for I know the blessedness and joy of it! There is nothing left to condemn. Nothing in me to condemn? Nothing, if you are in Christ Jesus. The truth of the Gospel is this, that when the Lord Jesus was upon the cross, not only was He bearing our sins, but He was there made sin by God, and stood identified with all that the first man was, and underwent the judgment of God upon the first man; and thus, you see the end under the judgment of God of the first man. The history of the first man, terminated before God and for faith, in the death of the second Man. Everything was condemned in the cross, and now there is no condemnation left, nothing left to condemn, as Paul puts it here, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” God has not made light of sin. Christ has borne our sins, and put them away, but more, He has been made sin, and gone down into the depths of the judgment due to sin, and risen up from those depths. He has become my life, and the only measure of my new place before God. I am in Him, and therefore in all the impossibility of condemnation for Him. Sin in the flesh has not been forgiven. God condemned it. God never forgives sin. He forgives sinners, and pardons sins, blotting them out in Christ’s blood, but the evil principle of sin, sin in the flesh—an intolerable and incurable principle of opposition to Himself, God can only end in judgment, either in the lake of fire for the impenitent sinner, or in the cross of the Saviour, for the one, who through grace, believes in Him.

If a believer, you are in Christ before God, and hence there is, and can be, no condemnation, because your very place is in the One who has come out of, and left behind, in the judgment He came out of, all that pertained to your sins and you. That is the argument at the close of the chapter, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (vs. 34). And is He going to condemn those for whom He died, for whom He agonized, and for whom He Himself was condemned? Never! Blessed be His peerless name. We may well say, Hallelujah! “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The latter clause of verse 1, it is important to note, is an interpolation, and is omitted by all competent editors, as the expression, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” comes, in its right place, in verse 4. Evidently some monk, copying the Scriptures, thought the grace of verse 1 far too free, so qualified it by putting in this clause, which robs it of all its force, for if I am only “in Christ” if I walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, my being in Christ is made conditional, and not absolute, which, thank God, it is. All the older manuscripts have it, not in verse 1 but, in verse 4, where it comes in rightly. But now we come to another reason why there is “no condemnation.” “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The law never could produce righteousness. It could dictate God’s claims on the sinner, and condemn him for not doing what it demanded, but it could never produce righteousness. The law never gave life, power, or an object. But the Gospel gives all three. It gives you life in the Son of God, an object in the Person of Christ, and power in the Holy Spirit, who comes, and dwells in the believer, to set him in the true Christian state. Hence we read, “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The history of the first man, and sin in the flesh, which describes his state before God, are terminated by the cross. To what end? “That the righteousness (the righteous requirement) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” You have here a new order of being. You have a new life, a new nature, and a new power. You have an order of being with a new nature that is of God, and that orderly being delights in what suits God. The law could never produce what the Gospel immediately, instinctively, and naturally produces, for it says, we “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and now you will find every verse bringing in the truth about the Spirit of God, either as life, nature, or power. This latter is what is characteristic of this chapter, and I may repeat at this point, for the sake of helping souls, that the first eleven verses of the chapter present the Spirit of God in life, or as the power of the life we have in Christ. It is the Spirit of God, viewed as life (see vs. 9), which the believer possesses. From verse 12 you have the Holy Spirit personally indwelling the believer. In the first eleven verses you have the characteristics, or moral features of life in the Spirit, or, as it is put here of those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded (or the minding of the flesh) is death; but to be spiritually minded (or the minding of the Spirit) is” what?—” life and peace.” That is the true Christian state—life and peace. Many a dear child of God is in doubt, and uncertainty, and trouble, just because he does not know what this blessed truth of deliverance, and of being in Christ, before God, is. But God exercises these souls, to bring them out of bondage into liberty, and to realize the position, before Him, in which they stand, in Christ.

How blessed is it to learn that “to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then “they that are in the flesh”—the flesh is flesh, it cannot be anything else—”cannot please God.” What does he mean by saying “they that are in the flesh”? My being “in the flesh” is my condition, and

state, before God, as in Adam—a responsible being, going on to death and judgment. That is being “in the flesh.” The flesh being in us is perfectly different. We have still the flesh in us, and it is apt to break out, unless we are walking in the Spirit. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Now it is absolutely true that the believer is “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,” if the Spirit of God dwell in him. It is equally true that the flesh, the principle of evil, is in him, and it is apt to break out, unless he walk in self-judgment before God. But it is deliverance from the flesh to learn the truth that I am not “in the flesh,” as I am entitled to reckon myself dead with Christ, and that I only live before God now in the life of Christ.

Ponder these words, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” I do not doubt that there is many a Christian who has learned distinctly that the Spirit of God dwells in him, and yet, if you were to ask that person, Are you in the Spirit? and is that your condition before God? he would have difficulty in saying Yes, because, in himself, he is conscious that he has sin, and faults, and these would almost lead him to say, I am not in the Spirit. Now mark, “in the Spirit” is opposed to being “in the flesh.” When I speak of being “in Christ,” I think of the place where Christ is, as the Man who is alive from the dead. If I be “in the Spirit,” I think instinctively of my state as alive down here, inseparable from that place. “In the Spirit” is that which really expresses the true state of the Christian now. When I think of “in the Spirit,” I bear in mind that I am viewed as being in a state, or standing, or existence, or condition before God, marked by the Spirit’s indwelling, and characterized by Him, as on the ground of redemption, and it is the complement of the previous expression, “in Christ.” If I look heavenwards, I am “in Christ”; if earthwards, I am “in the Spirit”; “if so be the Spirit of God dwell in me.”

I was saying last Lord’s Day evening, that the great truth of the Acts of the Apostles was, that the Holy Spirit fell upon the believer. It was the privilege of all those who believed, and received the forgiveness of their sins through the Lord Jesus Christ, to receive the Holy Spirit, and there we found also that they were to know if they had received the Holy Spirit. Here again the apostle adds a somewhat similar statement. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (vs. 9). This statement some people are afraid of. Why should they be? If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. It is what is characteristic of the man who has Christ. If I am in Christ, as my place before God, the Spirit is in me as the power of it, and I am in the Spirit, and it is indeed the Spirit of Christ, He, in the power of whom Christ lived, acted, spoke, yea, offered Himself, and by whom also He was raised from the dead. His whole life was the expression of the Spirit. If any one has not the Spirit of Christ—has not the energy of spiritual life which was manifested in Him, and which was by the Holy Spirit, he is none of His, is not characteristically of Christ. But “if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” What a wonderful thing! The Christian now has his life before God “in Christ.” Again, as being “in the Spirit,” he has the Spirit as the power of life. What is characteristic of him now? He is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in him, indwelling that nature in which he now lives before God. And now see what glorious consequences accrue to the believer. “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” I do not think there is anything more beautiful than this—that the possession of the Holy Spirit is the pledge of resurrection. You will find that what marked the Lord Jesus, is that which marks the believer. The Lord Jesus, as a Man, was filled with the Holy Spirit. He lived in the Spirit. He acted in the Spirit, and walked in the Spirit. He cast out devils by the

Spirit. He offered Himself “through the Eternal Spirit, without spot to God.” He died, and was buried, and was quickened by the Spirit, as it is written, “being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). The resurrection of His body was but the answer in power to all He was characteristically in His path here according to the Spirit of holiness, for I read that He was “declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). I need not say, He Himself was God, and as God could lay down His life, and take it again, and did so, but, viewed as a Man, it was by the Spirit that He was taken out of death. So also will it be with the saint, if he die. I do not know that I am to die, for I look for the Lord to come, and change this body, but if God, in His sovereign wisdom, allows me to go down into the grave, I shall rise again, because the Holy Spirit is in me now. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Quickening, in Scripture, is almost always used in connection with the body, and not the soul. It is the raising of the body of the believer out of death, and the domain of death.

What glorious fruit flows from the death and resurrection of Christ! The Holy Spirit comes down, and indwells the believer. Yes, the humblest, the feeblest believer, no matter how little the faith. If you believe in Jesus, and in the work which He has done, not only are your sins forgiven, but you receive the Holy Spirit—the seal of your faith; and that the Holy Spirit, dwelling in your body, is the pledge on the part of God, that if you go where Jesus went—into the grave—out of that grave, like Jesus, you will rise. It is noticeable that we here have the Spirit spoken of in three ways: the Spirit of God, in contrast with natural man—sinful flesh; the Spirit of Christ, the formal character of the life which is the expression of His power; and the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead, as connected with the resurrection of the body that completes our deliverance.

We pass now, in verse 12, to the truth of the personality of the Spirit, actually dwelling in the believer, as power. In the first eleven verses of the chapter we have had the Spirit of life, and liberty, in connection with Christ. Beginning at verse 12 we have the Holy Spirit, as power, in the Christian, and what do we find—“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh”? We owe the flesh nothing. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Are we debtors to the Spirit? Not so! That would be to bring in the thought of legal bondage, whereas all here is the atmosphere of grace. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” This is one of those solemn finger-posts in Scripture which are so useful. If you go on in the flesh, the end is the lake of fire. If you go on in the Spirit, the end is everlasting life. Each principle of living bears its natural fruit. We see this in the sixth of Galatians, “He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (vs. 8). Do not be afraid to look at scriptures like these. You know what a finger-post is, and when you are on a journey, and come to cross roads, you are uncommonly glad of it. It is an upright post, with two or more arms pointing in different directions. The arms bear the names of the towns to which they respectively point. If doubtful of your road you look, are guided, and I should suppose are also thankful to those who erected the finger-post. This is one of God’s finger-posts (vs. 13)—“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” I know where I am going by it. If I am living after the flesh, I know the end of that road is the lake of fire; but if I, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the

body, I shall live. I do not object to the finger-posts of Scripture, and I will tell you more, the man who does object to them is, usually, the man who needs them most of all men—he is almost certainly on the wrong road. The man who is afraid of a scripture like this is the man who is living in sin. The godlier the believer is, the more he welcomes a scripture such as this, because it pulls him up, and makes him say, “I must take care how I walk.” But there is another side of the subject, namely, the relationship which this presence, and operation of the Spirit, gives us to God. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God.” That is, God introduces them into the position, and dignity, and glory of the sons of God. What was Jesus in this scene? The Son of God, as Man; and the Holy Spirit gives you the sense now, that you are a son of God. You have the place and dignity of a son of God, because the Son of God, who had it ever, has sent the Spirit now to bring you into it, on the ground of redemption. The Holy Spirit has come down, and indwells the believer, to let him know, not only that Christ brought salvation, and that he is pardoned, and his sins all washed away, but that he is even now a son of God. I grant you the world may think men who take that ground presumptuous; but let us listen to Scripture: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (vs. 15).

Now, going on, the apostle adds, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (vs. 16). The Holy Spirit is in us, a Spirit of adoption, for He sets us in the truth, according to the mind of God, and according to the relationship in which we are placed in His grace, in Christ. He produces in our souls all that pertains to that relationship. He becomes the source of our being, our thoughts, our feelings. He acts in us, producing affections, and actions, suited to Himself, as He instills Himself into our whole moral being. The Spirit is thus, practically, a Spirit of adoption. Our position before God is that of sons, in contrast with servants under law: our proper relationship is that of children, implying intimacy with the Father. The Spirit leads us to enjoy both. The law never brought anything into man’s heart but fear. What does the Holy Spirit bring? In the fifth of Romans we read “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us” (vs. 5). What is it that gives me the sense of the love of God? The Holy Spirit! When the Holy Spirit comes in, and sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, then fear goes out. “We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Only the child of God can say that truly. It is the language of the child. You may hear a man talking to his neighbors, and though a Christian, he may talk so uncertainly about his relationship to God, that you would not know, from the way he speaks, whether he be a child of God or not, but if you were to hear him, alone upon his knees, and he prayed, “Oh! my Father,” then you know that he is all right; his prayer shows his real state before God. He has received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he is able to cry, “Abba, Father.”

It is indeed a wonderfully blessed thing to be a Christian, for a Christian is a man “in Christ”—he is “in the Spirit,” and has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. The Spirit is in him who believes in Jesus, and gives him an experimental sense of that which is now his, and what will be his. Nay more, the Spirit being in him, the next thing is his mouth is opened, and he cries, “Abba, Father.” But more than that, the Holy Spirit ministers to us, and shows the things of Christ to us, and brings us into the enjoyment of the Lord’s love, and the Father’s love, and ministers to us the comfort of the fact that we are the children of God. More still—“If children,” then we are “heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (vs.

17). Co-heirs—co-sufferers—co-glorified with Christ—that is really the word here. We are side by side with Christ. We are sons of God, even as He is the Son of God—not in His eternal Sonship, but in the place He took in grace as Man, and which He brings those into who believe in Him; as He said to Mary, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.” The Holy Spirit comes down, to give us the sense, and knowledge, that we are co-heirs, co-sufferers, and that we shall be co-glorified with Him.

Later on in this chapter we read of the whole creation groaning, while waiting for the liberty of the children of God (verses 19-23). There is also a groan in the Christian’s heart, in fellowship with creation. It is in every one who is Christ’s. You could not be a Christian without suffering with Christ. Just as Christ felt what ravages sin had produced in this Satan-ruled, and death-governed scene, you and I must feel as we go through it. The Spirit of Christ in us will be the source of the sentiments that filled the bosom of Jesus. Possessing a moral nature that is opposed to all that is around us in the world, we are pained by it and groan. Therefore we read, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We feel the misery, and sin of creation. You see, the Christian is still linked to the old creation, and the link with it is his body. Alas! he is often governed by it. It is a sad thing how oft times we are governed by our body. What, then, is the Christian’s link with the new creation—with heaven? It is the Holy Spirit. Consequently Paul says, “Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” You must not understand by “first-fruits” that we receive a little bit of the Spirit, and then have to expect more to follow. We have the “first-fruits” of the scene, and land, to which we are going, before we get there. We know the atmosphere of the country, the color, the taste, the goodness of the fruit that grows there, long before we reach it. We are like the Israelites in the wilderness, when the two men returned with the grapes of Eshcol. It was a wonderful bunch that needed two men to carry it. The grapes of Eshcol are the enjoyment of heavenly things, the “first-fruits” of that land, which the Holy Spirit gives us to know, while we are here in this scene, yet on our way to glory, and waiting for the redemption of our body.

Elsewhere we read, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). This is a very full presentation of the result of the reception of the Spirit—established for power, anointed for intelligence (see John 2:20, 27), sealed for security, and having the earnest for enjoyment. In Ephesians 1:14 also, we find the Spirit by which we are sealed is the “earnest of our inheritance.” He is the “arles,” to use a Scotch word. This illustrates the point. When a farm servant is hired at a fixed wage, his employer gives him a silver piece, as the foretaste of what is to come, and the bargain is concluded. But furthermore we read, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). There is a very great difference between the groan of the man in the seventh chapter, who is not delivered, and of this one who groans because he is delivered. One is groaning in bondage, the other is groaning in grace. The latter is in this position, “I wish everybody else was as happy as I am,” and he groans because people are not in the enjoyment of that which he has. There is the greatest difference possible between the groaning in bondage, “O wretched man that I am!” recorded in the seventh

chapter, and the groaning in the eighth chapter. And why is the man of chapter 7 so wretched? Because he talks forty times about himself, and never once about Christ. He has a good right to be wretched, and this very self-occupation is the source of the unhappiness of hosts of believers, yet is the needed experience by which the flesh is learned out in its hopeless evil, and its judgment in the death of Christ bowed to, in order to enter by faith, into our place in Christ, with all its liberty and power. When a man gets to Christ, however, he is perfectly free and happy, and wants others to know what he has, for the Spirit of God gives him now the enjoyment of what is his for eternity, and ministers to him in this life, of the things of Jesus. These first-fruits are most sweet to the taste of the soul that has enjoyed them. If you say that you have not got them, then all I can say is, that you have missed a great deal of blessing, and I hope you will be stimulated from this hour, to desire to know what these "first-fruits" really are.

Let us now turn to the First Epistle to the Corinthians (ch. 6:19), where the fact of the Spirit of God dwelling in the believer, is developed for very practical purposes as regards the use of the body. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." The indwelling of the Spirit is here given as the reason why we should consecrate ourselves to the Lord, and keep the body pure as being His temple. Passing to the fourth chapter of Galatians, you find that which we have had in the eighth of Romans, presented from another point of view. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." The point is this, that being no longer in bondage, but being in the liberty of sonship, the Holy Spirit leads the heart to take that place of enjoyment, and full relationship before God. In the same epistle we are exhorted thus, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Again, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." And further, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:16; Galatians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23).

Let us now glance, for a moment, at Ephesians, and see how a golden line runs through that epistle, in connection with the Spirit of God, which is of the deepest importance for each Christian to trace. In every chapter the Spirit of God is spoken of. In the first chapter, at the twelfth verse, we read, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Spirit is the seal of the faith which the believer has in Christ, when he has received the glad tidings of his salvation, "and is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." You see it is the blood of Christ that cleanses the temple. It is the blood of Christ that purchases the soul, and the Holy Spirit comes as the seal of that purchase. To use a figure, I may buy a hundred sheep at two pounds a head. I lay down the two hundred pounds, but I do not at once drive my sheep away. No, I put my mark upon them. The mark does not make them mine. It shows to me, and others, that they are mine. My own peculiar marks are known to me. It was the money that bought them, it is the mark that shows them to be mine. It is the blood of Christ that redeemed, cleansed, and brought me to God. It is the Holy Spirit that makes it manifest that I am

the Lord's.

Again, in chapter 2, at the eighteenth verse, we have, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The first thing the Holy Spirit does is to lead the believer into the enjoyment of the Father's love. The humblest child in the family of God knows the Father. "I have written unto you, little children," says the Apostle John. Why? "Because ye have known the Father." Through Jesus, then, we, both Jews and Gentiles, have access "by one Spirit unto the Father."

Again, the apostle prays, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (ch. 3:16-18). The Christian is a complex being. He has the old nature in him, the old object, the world, without him, and the old power, the devil, at his back. What has he besides? He has a new nature, the inner man; a new object, Christ in glory, with all that new sphere of which He is the center; and a new power, the Holy Spirit within him. That we may be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," is the apostle's prayer. That is our source of strength.

Passing on to chapter 4, at the twenty-ninth verse, we have, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This last is our deliverance out of this scene—our being conformed to Christ in glory. If we walk carelessly, letting corrupt communication come out of our mouth, to wit, we shall thereby grieve the Holy Spirit. If we do so, then He in His infinite mercy brings a cloud upon us, and gives us a sense of our folly and sin, with distress of conscience as a result. The normal work of the Spirit is to unfold the beauty of Christ to us, occupying our hearts with Him, but if we grieve that Spirit, then He must occupy us with ourselves, and our sin, till confession leads to restoration.

Now look at the fifth chapter and the eighteenth verse, "Be not drunk with wine"—mere natural excitement—wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Filled with the Holy Spirit! What a privilege! Then it is that you find a man always rejoicing. You may say, That was instruction given to Christians in early days. True, but equally is it for us in these days. If you read in the Acts, you will repeatedly hear of individuals being "filled with the Holy Ghost" (see 2:4; 4:8; 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9-52); and what was the result? You may be sure they were bright and happy. You remember when Paul and Silas were cast, bruised and bleeding, into the jail at Philippi, what they were about. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God" (Acts 16:25). Joy is ever the fruit of being filled with the Spirit.

Now coming to the last chapter of Ephesians I find, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." That which really fully furnishes the Christian—fills up the total of his armor—is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Scripture does not say, that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It says, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Satan knows how to use Scripture against the truth, and many a saint has been

kept in bondage, sorely pressed, and wounded, by some bit of Scripture taken out of its connection. That is not the sword of the Spirit. The Word of God is therefore not necessarily the sword of the Spirit, but the sword of the Spirit must ever and only be the Word of God, and if the Word of God is used as the sword in the power of the Spirit, then Satan will be always defeated. Our only weapon in the contest, in these days of infidelity, is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. May the Lord give us to know more how to use it. The apostle closes his instruction by urging us to buckle on the armor in the prayer, "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." There are other operations of the Spirit, did time permit me to touch on them, but enough surely has been said to suffice, and to lead out our hearts in thankfulness to God, for the possession of that blessed Spirit, which gives us the sense of the joys which now are ours, and yet lie before us, all the results of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we have grace, each and all of us, to walk in the Spirit, and be filled with the Spirit, that so the fruit of the Spirit may come out—that true fruit which God looks for, in us who believe. If this be so, we shall understand what is said of the Churches in early days, namely, that "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," they "were multiplied." Jesus called Him, "Another Comforter." The saints then, and since, have proved Him to be such.

10. The Baptism of the Spirit

The Baptism of the Spirit That which has been before us on previous evenings, in connection with the Holy Spirit, has been, as I daresay you will all remember, of an entirely individual nature. Nothing that is collective has been before us, but now truth, which is distinctly collective, is our subject. We shall look at the assembly, the Church, in its various aspects, formed by the Holy Spirit, come down to earth on the day of Pentecost. That which is individual must always—precede what is collective, and unless the soul is distinct, and clear, before God, as to what it possesses individually, and as to the blessing which belongs to it individually, it is never at liberty, is never free, to contemplate that which belongs to it in connection with others. In the New Testament the assembly, or Church of God on earth, is presented to us in a fourfold way. Four figures are used to express its nature, object, and destiny. These four are a body, a house, a candlestick, and a bride. Each figure has its own peculiar place, and teaches its own lesson. The Church is seen to be each of the four, and, save the bride, all belong to its present place. The Church is the body of Christ, the house of God, and the candlestick as the responsible vessel of testimony to the world; but as the Bride, she is seen only in view of the millennial day, and of eternity (see Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 21:1-27). The first two of these figures will engage our attention this evening. Both are the direct result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ, and the habitation of God, are distinct relationships in which the Church stands to Christ, and to God, but nevertheless are intimately connected with each other, because both are by the Holy Spirit. We become members of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and the Church becomes—and it is a wondrous thought—the habitation, the dwelling place of God by that same Spirit. The formation of the body of Christ is dependent on the fact that the Lord is the ascended, glorified, Son of Man, in the presence of God, because it was not till He was risen from the dead that He could be the Head of a body, and therefore I boldly say, and it may help some person to the truth if I do say it, that the Head of the body was never dead. What? someone says, Christ was never dead? I did not say that. I repeat, the Head of the body was never dead. He, who now is the Head of the body was dead. As Messiah He lived, presented Himself to His earthly people, Israel, was rejected, and slain. The moment of His rejection was the occasion He seized to fulfill the purposes and counsels of God, and the cross with all its wondrous fruits for God and men is before us. God then began a new work—the Church—but it was not until redemption was accomplished, the veil rent, and Christ risen and glorified, that He could be the Head of a body. Then the Holy Spirit came down, as we read here, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The thought of the body, I repeat, connects us with Christ in glory. On the other hand, in the truth of the habitation of God through the Spirit, which we read of in Ephesians 2:1-22, the scene clearly is the earth. The Church—the body of Christ—is the habitation of God, through the Spirit, but what God means us to learn by the figure of a body united to the Head is, that we belong to the spot where the Head is, namely, heavenly glory. As the habitation of God, the Church is seen, both on earth (Ephesians 2:22), and in glory (Revelation 21:2-3). We Christians, now passing through this world, are Christ’s body, and God’s house—wondrous truths!

Before developing, with the Lord's help, these two sides of the truth, I should like to say a few words about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for, I am persuaded, that in the minds of many dear children of God, there is great confusion as to that which God would have us glean from this expression. If we turn to the first place in Scripture, where the statement comes in, I think we shall get light. I ask you therefore to turn back to the third chapter of Matthew, and there from the lips of John the Baptist we first hear about it. In the eleventh verse, addressing those who had come out to him, repentant, and to be baptized, he says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The Baptist predicts of the coming One—the Lord Jesus—that He would have a ministry of a double character. He would baptize with the Holy Spirit, that is blessing, and with fire-judgment. Now, many people think the fire means power. Not so! A fire has no power except to destroy, and that is not what you want. You do not want destructive energy. Fire is always the symbol in Scripture of judgment. You have the two sides of the Lord's ministry here. He was to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that is the richest and deepest blessing possible. He was also to baptize with fire. That is in a future day, yet to come. The Baptist explains his words as he goes on to say, "whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The distinct thought, in Scripture, as to fire, is testing, and destroying that which cannot stand the fire. For instance, we get in the third chapter of the 1st Corinthians, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (vs. 13). All is to be tried by fire, and the gold, and silver, and precious stones—doctrines as well as men, wrought in by God's grace—will stand it; while the wood, hay, and stubble—what is false, those who are, though professors of Christ, still only in the flesh—will be burnt up. But the Baptist tells us, The Lord is going to "gather his wheat into the garner." Who are the wheat? All those who are His—all those who through grace are of, and in Him, who is the true corn of wheat. Did He not say to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"? Yes. What a blessed fact that Peter was wheat. If he had not been, Satan would never have sifted him. He never sifts the mere chaff I do not deny that the chaff is among the wheat, but, with the chaff—the unsaved, unconverted sinner—Satan does not waste his time—he has no need to sift him—all is chaff. The sinner he leads blindfold to eternal ruin. It is only the child of God, the one born of God—the one who is what the Lord calls the wheat, that Satan will tempt, and try, and seek to trip up. Let us not forget, in this connection, that the Lord also says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" and depend upon it, that the light God has given to a converted soul can never be quenched. I have no doubt the devil may be allowed to sift, and try him, that the chaff may be got rid of, and Satan may be used of God in that way, as a winnowing machine to clear away the chaff in us. We must learn our own weakness, and good-for-nothingness, and if we fail to learn it in communion with God, we learn it in the company of the devil, as Peter did, in the high priest's palace, when he denied his Lord, whom he had boldly avowed, before all, that he would die for. But this is a very different thing from the deep and terrible judgment that comes on those who are not wheat. "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," therefore it is a serious question for every soul—Am I wheat or am I chaff? I ask you solemnly, Are you wheat or chaff, my friend? Are you born of God, or are you still a poor sinner in

your sins, though you be professedly religious? If you have not been born of God, have not been washed in the blood of the Son of God, and have not received the Holy Spirit, you may depend upon it—whatever you think of yourself, and whatever anybody else may think of you, your true state, and future destiny, are described here. “The chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.” A solemn truth for unsaved sinners!

Let us now pass on to the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There, again, we hear about this baptism of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus, in resurrection, is, through the Holy Spirit, giving commandments to His disciples, and “being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (verses 4 and 5). The thought of the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” carries nothing but blessing with it. There is deep, rich, blessing to the soul individually, carrying with it truth, to the renewed nature, of the most precious character. We have seen on previous occasions the way in which the Holy Spirit came. I dwell not, therefore, upon that here, but I simply inquire, If the baptism of the Holy Spirit has taken place at Pentecost, does Scripture carry the thought that it is ever to be repeated? I believe distinctly not. The Holy Spirit has come, He is here. The baptism of the Spirit has been received, and there is, consequently, no fresh baptism to be looked for. Nevertheless many earnest souls are looking for, and earnestly seeking it, forgetful of the precious fact that the Holy Spirit has come. What they desire is to know fuller joy and peace, and that is all right, but this baptism, having taken place, cannot be repeated.

It is of the last importance to get hold of the truth, that it was by the descent of the Holy Spirit, personally, that the Church was formed, and then you will see that the baptism has taken place. I know very well what many souls want. They want freshening up a bit, and thank God for that. They want brightening, more joy, and to be happier. Let them so be by all means, but let us use the language of Scripture, and seek to learn what God would graciously teach us by its statements. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, many times over, of the disciples being “filled with the Holy Ghost”; and in Ephesians 5:1-33 I read, “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.” That is quite right. But there is a difference between being filled with the Holy Spirit, and the baptism of the Spirit. If we get hold of God’s meaning, and the thought specifically connected with being “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” it will be easily apparent, that this baptism cannot be repeated.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” You understand the figure. The human body is one, but has many members, and all the members in that one body, being many, are still “one body,” so also is—what? The Church? No. The Christ. We should have said, The Church; but what God says here is “so also is the Christ.” I do not know anything that more beautifully expresses, in a word, the intimacy of the union between the believers on earth, who form the body, and the Saviour in heaven, who is the Head of that body, and yet this form of truth is not altogether new to Scripture. The truth of the body is new, but I mean that the union thus expressed by calling the Church Christ, is not exactly new in Scripture. If you turn back to the book of Genesis, which is the seed plot of the Bible, and contains the germ of almost every truth, we read, “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called” his name, no, “their name Adam, in the day when they were created” (Genesis 5:1-2). Just look,

the woman loses her identity, and her individuality is merged in her husband, as God here calls their name Adam.

I have been trying on previous nights to show that the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has Him for his life: he has the place, and the position, and the relationship, which the Lord Jesus, as the ascended Man, has now before God, and, further, is united to Him. One is therefore quite prepared when we come to a scripture like this, to hear the Holy Spirit saying, as He speaks of the members of that one body here upon earth, "So also is Christ." God calls His Church upon earth by the name of Him, through whom it gets life, and existence, and every blessing, and to whom it is, by the Spirit, united: He calls it, Head and members together, Christ. How perfectly beautiful Scripture is. The thirteenth verse of 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 is the explanation of the statement in the twelfth verse. The thirteenth verse expounds the nature and origin of the marvelous truth of the twelfth verse, which is this, that, being many members, we are one body, and that body is called Christ. The Head, in glory, and the members here on earth are called by the same name. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many." Now you see that the baptism of the Spirit carries with it the thought of the formation of a body, of which Christ is the Head. All who have received the Holy Spirit are members of this one body—the body of Christ. It was formed by the descent of the Spirit, still exists, and, as the Spirit yet abides on earth, no fresh baptism is to be expected.

I sometimes meet true earnest Christians, and on conversing with them, find that they are members of such and such a "body." I have met half-a-dozen different people in a day, and found, on inquiry, that they belonged to half-a-dozen different religious bodies. What an anomaly! Look at this The Holy Spirit says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." This is very simple, and very practical, too! The moment a person really gets hold of this truth, if he wishes to be faithful to his Head, he must drop association with, and refuse to own membership of, everybody but the "one body," of which Christ is the Head. That will be a tremendous wrench. But surely it is better to be cut off from everything that is not the truth; and the truth is, that every Christian is, by one Spirit, baptized into one body, the body of Christ. Now, if you admit the thought of many bodies, each claiming Christ as its Head, you are shut up to one of two things, either that Christ has many bodies, or you are a member of a body without a head, and that is a corpse. There is no possibility of escaping that. As soon as I admit the thought of an ecclesiastical body upon earth, not the body of Christ, I admit rivalry to the truth of the "one body," and the Lord has not His right place. Our only, and sure, way of getting blessing is to bow to Scripture. If I learn by grace that I am a member at all, then I am a member of "the body of Christ," for the truth is, that the only body Scripture recognizes, is the body of Christ, and every believer in every city, in every country throughout the world, every believer in the Lord Jesus, born of the Spirit, and having received the Holy Spirit, is a member of that "one body," and ought to be ashamed to own membership of any other body. You will forgive me for speaking thus plainly, I am sure, for what profits my soul as well as yours, is what I really have before me.

We learn, then, that it is by the Holy Spirit "we are all baptized into one body," and now we may profitably see how the body is presented in Scripture. I have no doubt it is presented to us in a threefold way. Perhaps I may explain what I understand by "the body of Christ." I apprehend the body of Christ to be formed of all believers, who, from the day of Pentecost onwards, receiving the

Holy Spirit, are thereby united to the living Saviour, the Head in glory, and each one should learn that he is a member of His body here upon earth. How was this truth brought out? The truth of the mystery of the body of Christ was first revealed to Paul. He was the vessel of that special truth. I do not doubt that the other apostles learned it, but we know it was first revealed to the Apostle Paul, whom God took up, and used, in His grace, to unfold the special truth I am speaking of now—the body of Christ. He learned it on the very day of his conversion. He was on his way to Damascus, to persecute the saints of God, and, as he went on his murderous errand, there suddenly burst upon him a great light, and he fell to the ground. But the very light that shut his eyes to this world, became the means of opening them to see the Lord. Then he said, “Who art thou, Lord?” He had heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He was persecuting the saints, yet he heard a voice from glory which said, “Why persecutest thou me?” “Who art thou, Lord?” he asked, and the answer came—“I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” It was in that moment, and by the form of the question, he learned, that the Saviour in glory regarded every believer in His name upon earth, as part of Himself—a member of His body, and that was why He said, “Why persecutest thou me?” Paul learned this truth in the moment of his conviction, and conversion. That is why, in the epistle to the Galatians, he says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal his son”—to me, no!—“in me, that I might preach him among the heathen immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Galatians 1:15-16). He got the revelation, at the moment of his conversion, that the saint on earth, and the Saviour in glory, were now identified, and afterward the Lord revealed the mystery of Christ and the Church to him, which he unfolds fully in the epistle to the Ephesians.

First of all, Paul preached that Jesus is the Son of God, which none of the apostles had done. They had preached that God had exalted His servant Jesus, but Paul at once proclaimed the glories of His person, as Son of God, and then revealed the truth of the body of Christ, to which I ask your further attention for a moment. In the epistle to the Ephesians, and in the third chapter, you find the apostle saying, “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).” Let me say, in passing, that the word “mystery” here, does not mean something very mysterious, or occult, and not to be grasped, except by a peculiarly intelligent mind. “Mystery” in Scripture refers to something hidden, till the moment when God is pleased to make it known. And now he adds, “the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel; whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,” not even hidden in Scripture! for you cannot find “the body” in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Paul, you will thus observe, was the vessel of this revelation, and then you find in the next chapter he tells us, in the third verse, to endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one

faith, one baptism.” It is the same thought, that by the Holy Spirit this wonderful body is formed. And for what? That Jew and Gentile believers, quickened out of their common death in sin, may be brought together, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, indwelt by the Spirit, and formed into “one new man” as he calls it in the second chapter. If you look there you will see Paul is speaking of the Jew and Gentile. In the fourteenth verse of the second chapter, he says, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;”—between Jew and Gentile that is—“having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make (or ‘create’ as the original really means) in himself of twain one new man”—a brand-new man, if you like, one never seen before, for that is the meaning—“so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off”—these are the Gentiles—“and to them that were nigh”—the Jews. We are confronted by this beautiful truth, now for the first time revealed, and unfolded by the Apostle Paul, as the special vessel of God’s revelation, that there is a new thing on earth, from the day of Pentecost onwards, called “the body of Christ,” formed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and united by that same Spirit to the Saviour in glory. And let me say this in passing, no one is in union with Christ, except by the Holy Spirit. By living faith, you say, you are united to Him. Not so. Such is not the way of Scripture. You may be connected with Him by faith; but that falls short of the truth of union. Union is a great truth! The union spoken of by the apostle is the perfect identity of life and nature, and place, and position with Christ, in which the Church is set by the Holy Spirit. What is Christ’s is yours, and you are to know that you are brought into that, by the Holy Spirit. This being the truth as to the believer’s relation to the Lord Jesus, as Head of the body, we are prepared to hear the apostle say (ch. 4:3), “Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” It is an immense point gained when the soul sees it is a member of the body of Christ. It carries with it such wonderful blessing, and such corresponding privileges. I know nothing more marvelous than the thought of being a member of the body of Christ.

If you study the way in which Scripture presents the body, you will find that it speaks of it in a threefold manner. You may have a local expression of the body of Christ, or again you may have a time expression of the body of Christ, and furthermore you have the eternal expression of the body of Christ. If you turn again to the first Corinthians, twelfth chapter, you will find the local expression in the twenty-seventh verse—“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” He speaks of the Corinthian assembly as being the body. That is the local expression. All who were in Christ, in Corinth, were united to Him, and were responsible to walk in relation to one another. Just as the members of the human body, which is the figure used, answer to the volition and will of the head, so ought they, as members of Christ’s body, to do. My head ought to govern every movement of my body, and if it does not, then there is something wrong. We sometimes meet with a disease in which the members of the human body act independently of the head. There is a want of controlling power. That is not a right condition to be in. Again, we meet with a disease, where a limb may be fixed, motionless, in a cataleptic state. I sometimes think that the Church is both cataleptic, and epileptic, nowadays. It takes its own way, and the members thereof do what they like, instead of being subject to the Lord, by the Spirit. The control of the Spirit, in the assembly, is the great thought in the chapter in which occurs the expression, “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,” which gives us the local aspect of the body.

Now, when we come to Ephesians 4:1-32, we find that the Lord, in ascension, gave gifts to the Church, and that these were “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (vs. 12). It is the Head of the body who gives these varied gifts, which He considers necessary for His body on earth. The time condition of the body is before us here, and you may well ask, What do you mean by the time condition? There was never a moment when the body of Christ did not exist in its unity, since the Holy Spirit formed it at Pentecost, and yet those who form the body of Christ today, upon earth, are not those who formed it in the day of the Apostle Paul. I will give you a figure which you will all understand. The 42nd regiment of foot, the Black Watch, bears its name, and character, and history, and has its full complement of men today, but there is not a man in it today, who was in it a hundred years ago. Every member who first formed it has gone, still it remains the same, the 42nd regiment; the thing exists, though its component parts have altered. So with the Church. There is never a moment when, as the body of Christ, and seen on earth, in its time condition, it is not perfect, and it ought to walk in unity as does the human body, in the sense of being “one body.” The Lord gave these gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the edifying and building up of His body. It is a great thing to bear in mind that these gifts belong to the body, the body of Christ, not to this, that, or the other body, as men, and even saints of God, alas! often speak. No! no! such a thought carries its own condemnation. The Lord is the Head of the body, and has given gifts, for the edification of His body, and, consequently, I claim every servant of Christ, and every gift for it today.

All human rules and regulations, and the putting of the servants of Christ in this place, and that town, as is the order of Christendom, and its organizations, today, simply dislocate the servant from his Lord, and hinder rather than further the work of God. How beautifully perfect Scripture is, and how definitely is it stated in Scripture, that the gift is to be only at the control of the Giver, for true ministry is that which alone flows from Christ. Would that all the members of His wondrous body would learn their relation to their Head, and their relation to one another likewise. There is work for all, and each has need of all. What would the four fingers be without the thumb? That all the members of the body are necessary to each other is what the twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians specially brings out.

There is yet another, the third and larger, namely, the eternal aspect of the truth of the body, brought out in Ephesians 1:1-23, where the apostle prays that the saints may know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (vss. 19-23). The Church is the complement of Christ. Christ, looked at in this aspect as the Head and the body, would not be complete without every member in that assembly, which He has bought with His own blood. I believe here you have the eternal view of the body, because it embraces clearly every saint who, at any time, has been a member of that body, and Christ would not be complete without that one. In this scripture, therefore, the relation we have to the Lord Jesus, though known here upon earth, is an eternal relationship. I mean that, though being members of His body is a figure used for our condition in

time—that we might walk rightly—we shall never cease to be in that relationship, although the Bride is more the thought of the Church in eternity.

Let me repeat, then, that, not by faith, but by the reception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ was formed on the day of Pentecost, and that baptism, having once taken place, is never repeated, though each added believer is embraced by it, and gets his place in the body of Christ. Perhaps I may explain this to some by an illustration. Did you ever stand at the side of a lake, not a very large one, with the water as smooth as glass? While there some one has picked up a pebble, and flung it into the center. What was the result? A circle was formed, and it widened, and widened, and presently it came to a solitary rush, and it got into the circle; then it came to another rush, and it too was embraced in the circle, and so the circle went on till all the rushes in the lake were embraced in it. From the day of Pentecost till now, every soul born of God is brought, sooner or later, when he receives the forgiveness of his sins, and the Holy Spirit, into that unity which is made by the Spirit, and which cannot be broken by man. That is the thought. It is a unity of the Spirit's making, and each believer, on receiving the Holy Spirit, is thereby incorporated. There is no fresh baptism, but He, who at Pentecost first baptized the disciples, and yet remains on earth, by indwelling the believer, for his individual comfort and joy, at the same moment puts him in his place in the body of Christ, which, as we have learned, is formed by Himself, for "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

We come now to consider the "habitation of God, through the Spirit." The body is formed, and simultaneously the habitation of God is created, by the descent, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You will find this truth developed in Ephesians 2:1-22. Let us turn to it. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built"—you have the building now—"upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." I take these prophets to be New Testament—as is quite apparent from chapter 4, where they are seen to be given by the ascended Christ—not Old Testament prophets. Apostles were not then known, and the prophets of that day had not the truth of the Church, which was then "hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9). We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is their written ministry, which we have in New Testament Scripture. We have the writings of the apostles, and prophets of the New Testament, and our souls are built thereupon. Our hearts and minds rest upon that which has been brought to us by the Holy Spirit through the pens of these writers. By their ministry the Church was administratively set in its place on earth. They were at the foundation. You can easily understand why there are no apostles now. There is no need for them. I know it is claimed by some, that there is still apostolic succession, but that is most solemn ground for any man to take up, for in Revelation 2:2 the Lord says to Ephesus, "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." These are solemn words, you may say. Yes, but they are not mine. They are God's. There is no need for apostles now, because the foundations are laid, in the revelation of the truth which God gave to them, and which they have, by the Holy Spirit, recorded. If you are building a house you would not think of laying more than one foundation. You would say he is a poor workman who has to lay a foundation more than once. If it be once laid, it is then only a question of going on with the building. That is where the evangelists and the teachers come in. The evangelist goes out to win the soul for Christ, and bring him into the Church. When he is brought into the assembly the pastor

looks after him—sees that he is all right, helps him in his difficulties, and comforts him in his troubles. Then the teacher instructs him by the fuller unfolding of the truth.

This, then, is the order in Scripture, and here we find that it is the apostles and prophets we are built upon, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.” It is yet to be seen in its blessed perfection. That you have in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, where John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” (vss. 2-3). There the holy temple, with every stone put in, is seen, in eternal glory, as God’s habitation. In the meantime the building is going on, is growing, and I trust that many in this hall, who hear me, will be attracted by the truth, and brought to Christ, and will become living stones in this building. That is what took place at Ephesus, for the apostle says, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” You observe that when the truth gets hold of a man, he becomes a stone in this building. He forms part of the house in which God dwells. But more, he comes to Him who is “the living stone,” and thus himself becomes a “living stone.” He recognizes the Lord as supreme in the assembly.

I quite admit that this truth of God having a habitation on earth is not altogether new in God’s ways, although the form that it takes is new, and I ask you, therefore, to turn back to Old Testament Scripture, and see where you first have the thought of God having a dwelling place among men on earth. Exodus 15 presents it, where Moses and the people of Israel sing the song of redemption on the sunny banks of the Red Sea, in resurrection liberty, and joy. “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea, The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” They caught the blessed thought that had long filled the bosom of God, namely, that He wanted to dwell amongst them. Now it is remarkable, that the book of Genesis, which we have called the seed plot of the Bible, and in which almost every truth is found, has not this thought. Neither the truth of the body, nor of the habitation of God, is to be found in Genesis; and why? Genesis is the book of creation, and creation being ruined by man’s sin God could not dwell in it. Exodus, on the other hand, is the book of redemption. No sooner is redemption accomplished, than God comes down in the cloud to dwell amongst His people. But this could not be until, in type, the death of Christ, in two aspects, had been fulfilled. In the twelfth chapter the blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled upon the lintel, and two side posts of the doors. That sheltered the people from the judgment of God—kept Him, as a judge, outside. The fourteenth chapter—the passage of the Red Sea—also a figure of the death of Christ—gives an added truth. No soul will ever grasp, and enjoy the truth of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, unless he learn what the three previous chapters bring out. In the twelfth we have the shelter afforded by the blood of the Lamb, and the thought is this, I am screened from the judgment of God, and that is a great thing for the soul to know. When you come to the thirteenth you read, “Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast: it is Mine,” says God. The blood that shelters me from the judgment of God, is the blood which separates me to God. What do you find in the next chapter? That the Israelites pass through the Red Sea, and all the hosts of Pharaoh are overthrown—the complete power of the enemy is

broken. There we read, for the first time in Scripture, of salvation, in its full sense. They are saved by God. In the thirteenth verse of chapter 14 Moses says, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever." "The salvation of the Lord" is a grandly comprehensive expression. And what is this salvation? You say—I have come to Jesus, and my sins are pardoned. True, and thank God for it, but there is more than that in the type of the Red Sea. You say, I believe in the Lord, and therefore I hope I shall be saved. That is hope, not salvation. The salvation of the Lord involves that the hostile hosts of Pharaoh—type of Satan, god of this world—are crushed, and there is not an enemy left to touch me. He has brought me to Himself; as Exodus 19:4 so beautifully expresses it.

There is not a single foe left to interfere with my enjoyment of the One who has saved me. That is what the fourteenth chapter gives us. The Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry land, but the waters returned and destroyed all their foes, and, when the morning appeared, "they saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore." They saw that every enemy was gone. Now you see shelter is one truth, sanctification is another, and salvation is again another. The truth of the fourteenth chapter is salvation, and he that is in Christ has not an enemy left. Salvation is an accomplished fact, and then satisfaction follows. Hence, the Israelites began to sing, and what do they say? "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation," and then again, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation" (vs. 13). Further they celebrate in praise the full result—for us the heavenly glory—"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established" (vs. 17). They are a holy people now. It is a remarkable thing you do not get holiness until this chapter is reached. In the eleventh verse we have, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" You do get the thought of holiness implied in the Sabbath, in the second of Genesis, but here the thought brought out is, that the moment His people are redeemed, they have to do with a holy God, and they learn that holiness becomes the house of the Lord. It is the holy One they have to do with, and who is going to dwell among them. In Ephesians we have, "In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord," and in the Revelation John saw "the holy city," the new Jerusalem, come down from God out of heaven.

Redemption puts God's people upon the ground where Christ is, puts their souls into the very presence of God, to dwell there in the enjoyment of His love. But then He is holy, and His temple must be a holy temple likewise, because there dwells therein the One who is holy. I ask you, beloved friends, when you come into the assembly, is the thought before your mind—I am in a spot where God dwells? Gathered in separation from what is unsuited to His presence, in His house we can enjoy His presence, though that presence is an abiding fact in Christendom since Pentecost. Nothing can be more blessed. Nothing can be more solemn. I think it is an exquisite thought that God has a house, and He comes and dwells in it by His Spirit. What for? To make Himself known! He dwells in His house. He is not only the builder, and owner of the house, but it is a sweet thought that He is also the dweller therein, and there only is He, as we say, at home in this world. It gives the assembly a character that nothing else could, and it surely should impress us with a sense of gravity, which I fear is not always present in all our hearts, When I go there, whom

do I go to meet? My brethren? Yes! thank God, but not primarily. The blessed truth is, that the Lord is there. It is God's habitation through the Spirit, and it is Himself I go to meet.

There is another side of this truth, in the epistle to the Corinthians, which I just refer to. In the third chapter of the 1st Corinthians the Apostle Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which ye are" (vss. 17-18). It is a holy temple. It is a wonderful thought that believers here upon earth are the habitation, the dwelling place of God by the Spirit, and, I need scarcely say, if such be the case, how careful ought we to be not to defile it in any way, and further, to let the Lord have His way in His own house. I need scarcely add that we should leave God to manage His affairs in His own house, yet man thinks he can manage the house of God; he can arrange, order, and appoint who shall minister, and all that shall take place. He can fix who shall read or speak, better than God Himself. In Christendom today, when the Church so-called assembles, it is almost universally prearranged how God is to speak to His people, and that is by the mouth of one man, whom men have put in the place that belongs to the Holy Spirit. I do not deny ministry, for here I am myself, seeking to help your souls, but I am not doing it at the bidding of the Church. God forbid the thought! Every servant of Christ has his own individual responsibility to exercise his gift. I am talking now about the Church—the assembly. When the Lord's people go to worship, what usually takes place? They listen to the ministry of some man, more or less gifted, as the case may be. That is not the order of the assembly according to God. The Church worships God, the servant ministers from God to the Church. Worship goes up, ministry comes down. The difference is vital. If you read carefully the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of 1st Corinthians you will find this brought out. In God's house every arrangement must be of God, and the Holy Spirit is distributing to every man severally as He will. His action, and it is always independent of man's arrangements, is paramount, The presence of the Holy Spirit is above all to be recognized in the assembly, when gathered to worship God, and I believe there is nothing in which Christendom has more failed before God than in this—in not yielding itself to the control and leading of the Spirit of God. We should enter into the assembly of God with the feeling that He will order, He will arrange, He will take care of Christ's glory, better than we can, by any arrangement of our suggesting. Everything in the Church of God must be left to the action and guidance of the Spirit of God, who dwells in the bosom of that assembly. By making creeds and confessions, rules and regulations, you are trenching on the action, the liberty, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable thing that every creed, every confession—no matter by whom made or penned—is marked by the omission of any adequate testimony to the personal presence in the House, and the indwelling in the individual, of the Spirit of God. I do not say that such creeds deny His existence, or being, but I repeat—it is a remarkable thing that all the creeds, and confessions, that were ever formulated, and propagated, omit the thought of the personal presence of the Spirit of God, as dwelling in the House of God, and in the individual, for all that relates to the order of the former, and the comfort of the latter. That kernel truth of Christianity is conspicuous by its absence, in every such creed or confession.

Christians have forgotten that the Holy Spirit is here. His aid may be invoked, and His influence besought, but His actual presence is ignored, by the fact of prayer being offered for His coming. What is the result of this? That man makes his arrangements for the so-called worship of God, after a sort that renders him independent of the necessity for the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is

left out of these arrangements, as if He were not here at all. These arrangements provide for so-called worship in the Church, nowadays, without reference to the actual presence, and direct guidance and action of the Spirit of God. As you are aware, a formula takes the place of the unhindered action of the Spirit in some quarters, and the intervention of men—appointed by man—in others. Now the Church has, in all this, departed from the truth, and not listened to the words of her Lord, so clearly uttered in this respect. I feel sad when I speak of it, but I dare not shirk the truth, for the blessing and growth in grace of the Lord's children depends so on this grave matter. It is in direct ratio, as we give the Holy Spirit His place in our lives, individually, and in the assembly, that we advance spiritually. I believe the crying sin of Christendom today is this sin against the Holy Spirit, namely, infidelity as to His abiding presence in Christ's name. The Holy Spirit has not had His right place in the thoughts and hearts of God's children. But I hear some saying—If you do not make arrangements, then you will be sure to get into confusion. I will ask these good people one simple question, Who orders matters in your house? You or your servants? I order my own household, is the reply. I think God can keep order in His own house better than we can. Do you not think so? Let us remember that the Church is the habitation of God, and has the real, and ever-abiding presence of the Spirit of God. The presence of that Spirit is a real thing, and if there be only two or three who care to own the truth of the body of Christ, and the truth of the habitation of God, there will the Lord Jesus be, and the ever-present Spirit will greatly bless them. God always honors faith, and you may be certain of this that the very best arrangement man can make, is contemptible folly, if it displace the arrangements God has made. But there is another aspect of the House of God, to which I must briefly allude, namely, its responsibility. Hitherto we have been regarding it as the sphere of infinite privilege, as having God's Spirit taking up His abode in it. When this first took place the body and the house were practically the same; they were coextensive in the day of Pentecost. But the house that Christ builds, in grace (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5) is one thing, as being permanent and eternal, whereas what man builds, in responsibility, is another thing altogether. The one is unailing, the other utterly failing, and therefore will be judged. This solemn side of the truth we get in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 where the apostle says, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Paul laid the true foundation; none other could be laid; other builders might build "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." Fire would test all, and the enduring of the work depended on the materials. The teaching of the servants brought in souls according to its own character. The superstructure of the building was raised on the foundation of Christ in this world. Man builds, his responsibility is in play, and the result depends on the materials. He has built badly, and the result will be judgment.'

What was at first God's house, and composed only of real saints, has now become "a great house" to God's dishonor. This is unfolded in 2 Timothy 2:17-22. God's foundation standeth sure, having a seal with two devices—1st, the Lord knows His own; and 2nd, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This is the responsibility side. Thus we get the actual condition of the house—the Lord's house—as confided to men. "But," says the apostle, "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The path of the saint amid this evil, is not to leave the house—for this he cannot do—but to purge

himself from the evil, and “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” But the end of the house of God is judgment. Its course is given in 2 Timothy 3:1-17, where a form of godliness, but not the power, is seen—a condition at the end of Christianity more sad than existed before its revelation. (Compare Romans 1:26-32, and 2 Timothy 3:1-8.) This state culminates in the apostasy, and “the man of sin,” which 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 describes. That such is to be the end of the house of God, in responsibility, is manifest from the testimony of the Apostle Peter. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17.)

It is this view of the Church, in responsibility, that is brought before us in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, where the Lord walks among the candlesticks; in a judicial character. Laodicea gives the final character of the Church, as the responsible witness for God on earth. It is to be spued out of Christ’s mouth as nauseous, and judged by Him whose name it has falsely borne, and grievously dishonored.

It is most important to bear in mind that it is only the Church, in this aspect of responsibility, that is judged. As the body of Christ, every member is eternally secure. Grace has given us our place there, and will perfect its own work. Christ’s building—which answers to the body—will be complete, and perfect, and will be manifested in glory. What man has built has been badly built, has become corrupted, and will yet come under the deepest, and most severe judgment of God.

What an infinite mercy to be a member of Christ’s body, and a “living stone” in the building that He raises! Let me ask you, my friend, are you this?

11. The Gifts of the Spirit

The Gifts of the Spirit

It is important to note the marked distinction which appears in Scripture, between the gift of the Spirit, which we have been considering on previous evenings, and the gifts of the Spirit, which, with the Lord's help, we will look at a little this evening. The gift of the Spirit is universal to every child of God, in his normal state now. That is, everyone who, through grace, has been born of God, and been led to believe in the Son of God, who knows what redemption is through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, every such one has received the promise of the Father—the gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he is not a Christian, in the full sense of the term, if he has not the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit therefore is that which, when received, sets the soul in the true Christian place. Now it does not follow that everyone who has received the gift of the Spirit is, necessarily therefore, a participator in these gifts of the Holy Spirit, some only of which are enumerated in the part of Ephesians 4:1-32 which I have read this evening. I am careful to say some only are enumerated, because you do not find anywhere, in the New Testament, a complete list of these spiritual gifts, which the Head of the Church has been pleased, by the Holy Spirit, to bestow on certain members of His body here upon earth. We hear about these gifts in Romans 12:1-21, in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and again in the chapter which I read this evening. The reason, I think, is very simple. If they were all in one list the veriest child, so to speak, could sum them up; but God has put them in many parts of His Word, hence the inquiring soul must search that Word to learn, and thus know His mind. You will find, furthermore, according to the place and position in Scripture, in which these spiritual gifts are spoken of, and unfolded, there exists a distinct difference in the aspect in which they are presented, as well as in the source from which they spring. In Romans 12:1-21 all flow from God; in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 all flow from the Holy Spirit; and, in the fourth of Ephesians all flow from the ascended Head of the body, the exalted Man at God's right hand, the Lord Jesus. Such a difference is, of course, of importance, and is instructive. But first of all tonight we will look at the verses I have read (Ephesians 4:7-16), which beautifully unfold, and present to us the grace of the Lord Jesus to His people here upon earth. In the epistle to the Ephesians the Church is presented in the fullest way, as being the body of Christ, united by the Holy Spirit to Him, where He now is in glory. It is therefore as to its origin, nature, and destiny, a heavenly body. The Head is in heaven, and the body is upon earth, and consequently needing all the varied sustenance for growth and blessing, which the Head alone can supply. The body is one, as the apostle tells us in verse 4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." All which that body needs, as it passes through this scene, is supplied from Him, who is its Head in glory—the One who loves, with a deep and inextinguishable love, His assembly, His body here upon earth. In order to nourish and cherish that assembly, He gives what is here presented. Now, the fact that the gift of the Spirit must not be confounded with the gifts of the Spirit, is very manifest in the seventh verse, where the sovereign, and absolute choice of Christ, in disposing of the gift, is stated plainly, even when the universality of the grace given is seen, for, "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The

Lord, in His sovereignty, is pleased to deposit these spiritual gifts where He will. He chooses, and fits certain vessels, for certain work, according to His own will. It is not a question of the will of man, or of the choice of man, but of the sovereign grace of Christ, and, consequently, it is evidence of the utmost folly to quarrel with what is, or is not, in a certain vessel. You are quarreling with the Head of the body. You ask, Why has not that man so and so? It is a question of the sovereignty of Christ. He makes one an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and rarely combines all in one man, as Christendom would fain universally have, in its ministerial appointments. He gives spiritual qualifications, and usually physical suitability for the special service; giving "to every man according to his several ability," as we read in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:1-46).

Now see whence these gifts flow, because it is a matter of deep importance to be quite clear thereupon. That ministry, which is the exercise of a spiritual gift, has its source only in Christ. You cannot manufacture ministers. If already gifted of Christ, such need not man's help or instruction to make them ministers. He has made them such in sovereign grace, in view of the need of His body. If they be not gifted by Christ, human learning, and even human ability to speak, will never make them true spiritual helps. Ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift, which has come from the Lord Jesus, and certain members of His body, are made ministers, through the exercise of His own sovereign grace and choice.

Now, I repeat, where does this ministry flow from? Nothing can be more beautiful than the next verse. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." You have here three things said about the Lord as Man. He is the ascended, glorified Man; secondly, as Man, He ascended after He had led captivity captive, when He had overthrown the power of Satan; and thirdly, when ascended, as Man, He received and gave gifts unto men. As you know, this verse is a quotation from the 68th Psalm, and I will read it, because the way in which He is presented in the Psalm is a little different. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (vs. 18). That He is Man gone up, the second of Acts shows, Let us turn to it. At the thirty-second verse we read, "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 Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." As the ascended, victorious, triumphant Man, He received gifts in person. First of all He received the Holy Spirit, in this new way as Man in glory for us, but He received Him for a special and twofold purpose, not alone to give that Spirit to all His own on earth, as the indwelling Comforter, but likewise to make some of them the depositories of spiritual power by that Spirit, to be exercised in bearing testimony to His glory. He makes those vessels which have been hitherto the slaves of sin and Satan, henceforth the vessels of His own grace to others round about. "Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Truly it is beautiful to see the place whence ministry flows, namely, the Lord Jesus, as the ascended Head of the Church, in glory.

Christ has been down here, has seen the misery of man, and the malignity of Satan, has defeated the one, and delivered the other, and then gone on high to carry on His work of grace. That is what the next verse of our chapter brings out—"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that

ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things” (vss. 9-10). He has been in this scene, as Man, and met man’s victor and captor, Satan. Morally He overcame him in the wilderness, where as you know, when tempted to the uttermost for forty days, He completely defeated the enemy, by dependence, and obedience, so that he left Him. He then came out, and, having bound the strong man, He rifled his palace, the world, spoiling his goods—in other words, delivering his captives, and setting them free. Still there remained work to be done. The question of sin before God had to be taken up, and Satan’s title over man, as a sinner, had to be met. Further, He Himself must pass back into glory, and on the ground of the work He was to accomplish, He would have those who are His, with Him. When therefore He descended into the lower parts of the earth, I apprehend that the descent there spoken of, is not His coming from heaven to earth, when He assumed manhood, but the cross and its consequences. The Lord Jesus goes down to death, as the judgment of God upon man, and, in death, which is the power that Satan can use over man, He annuls him, and becomes the complete victor. In death He conquers. If I may say so, in the very center of Satan’s kingdom, the domain of death, which has overcome every other man, He is victorious, for He rises out of it, and then goes on high, and fills all things in the love, and power, and glory of the redemption He has wrought. He goes to heaven! What for? Not to demonstrate His victory over Satan, as the humble, dependent, obedient, self-emptied man, but He goes up that He may take up with Him those whom He has delivered by His grace. “When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive.” When the Lord came to earth what did He find? He found the devil the master of the situation, and man a poor willing slave, bound to the wheels of Satan’s victorious chariot, But oh! what a difference Christ has made. All is changed. It is not now Satan the victor, and man the captive. It is Man, in Christ, that is the victor, and Satan who is the captive, completely annulled as to his power, for faith, by the obedience and death of Jesus. The very first thing the Lord does, as He passes into glory and receives the Holy Spirit, is to send Him down. What to do? To use those who had been Satan’s captives, but whom He has delivered and saved, to spread the tidings that would set countless myriads of poor captives free, and this is the only present proof of the bringing to naught of Satan’s power. Ah! it is a wonderful thing to be the recipient of any gift from Christ, gift not to be used for our own glorification, but for the spread of the testimony to the Son of God, in a way that carries blessing with it to others round about us. That is the way ministry is presented in this fourth of Ephesians. In the eleventh verse, where some of the gifts are enumerated, we read, “And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.” I apprehend this to mean, not that the Lord gave special spiritual capacity, or spiritual power to certain persons, but, rather, that having already endued these persons with spiritual power, and made them the possessors of a special gift, He gave them in this characteristic way to His Body, the assembly. Pastors and teachers are what you may call a conjoint gift. They appear to be coupled in the same person, as I shall show you presently. One is of very little value without the other, and as a matter of practical interest we find they are generally united in the same individual. The man who is only a teacher, without being a pastor, rarely sees very much good of his labor; and the man who is only a pastor, without being a teacher, has not the same sphere of usefulness that he would otherwise have, if he had also the power to teach. The Lord puts them together here.

Let us now look at these gifts for a moment—gifts given through the love of Christ to His assembly on earth. First observe the object. “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for

the edifying of the body of Christ” (vs. 12). It is beautiful to see the way in which the Spirit presents the Lord’s objects in giving these gifts. First of all, we have their ultimate aim, “the perfecting of the saints,” that is, that the saints individually should really be brought into the appreciation and enjoyment of what belongs to them in Christ. Truth is always for the individual first. If we are not right individually, how can we be right collectively? If we are not happy individually, how can we be happy collectively? If we are not rejoicing in the Lord individually, how can we do so collectively? Therefore, here, as always, the individual state is first brought before you. Then comes, as the intermediate means by which this object is carried out, “for the work of the ministry.” The gifts go out into the work of the ministry, in various aspects and directions. This, as I have already said, is the fruit of Christ’s gift, and is not due to human intelligence, or human knowledge. A man might be a brilliant speaker, but, in the midst of the assembly, unless he have spiritual power, he has not the ability to minister to real profit. You may find men able to talk to any extent, but unless they possess gift from Christ there is never any grace, unction, or power about it. One is reminded by such of the proverb, “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain” (Proverbs 25:14). You wait in vain for refreshment. On the other hand, you might have a man who has no eloquence, and yet whose ministry—fruit of Christ’s gift—may be most precious, valuable, and useful to the saints. The Apostle Paul, speaking of himself, says, others judged “his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible.” Yet no man would say his ministry was contemptible, not even his enemies could say that.

There was also for this object of perfecting the saints, “the edifying of the body of Christ”—the building up, the growth of the body of Christ. This gives us the distinct object of the Lord in giving these gifts. He continues to give them, and we learn what the use to be made of them, what His wonderful thought in bestowing them, is, “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (vs. 13); so that which the saints need here will be continually supplied by the Head of the Church, so long as the body remains on earth. There will not be a moment of the Church’s passage through the world, when you will not find these gifts existing; whether they are fulfilling their functions, in due order, is entirely another matter, that should exercise the possessors thereof. Whatever gifts, however, are necessary for the blessing of souls, for the growth of the saints, and for the edifying of the assembly, will continue to be given by the Lord, so long as the assembly is in this scene, that is until He comes to take His bride home, to dwell with Him in glory, where these functions are no longer necessary.

Let us look for a moment at the different character of gifts spoken of here. “He gave some apostles; and some prophets.” These come together in the New Testament, and are frequently in the same person. Paul, notably, was a prophet, as well as an apostle (see Acts 13:1). What the special functions of these were, we find in the second chapter of Ephesians, “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (vs. 20). You have not here the prophets of the Old Testament referred to, as some would be inclined to think, and the apostles of the New Testament. If that were so the order would be reversed. Scripture puts it thus, “apostles and prophets”; and of the New Testament undoubtedly, because the prophets of the Old Testament did not know a bit about the Church. They were neither of it, nor in it. They might, and did prophesy of the sufferings of Christ, and of the coming glories of the kingdom, and as one part has been fulfilled, so the rest of their prophecies will come true, but the

apostles and prophets here spoken of were those who were to bring out the mystery, the distinctive truth as to God's assembly, the body of Christ, founded on redemption, the death, resurrection, and ascension to glory of the Lord Jesus. The Church of God is based upon the truth of the death of Christ, who, as Man, has gone into death, and come up out of it, and from whom, as ascended, the Holy Spirit has come down. Again, these apostles were not the twelve. I do not think the twelve, sent out by the Lord, are so much as alluded to in this scripture, for none of them reveal the Church, as the body of Christ, in their written ministry. I judge it alludes to the Apostle Paul, and to the others who were with him, in bearing this testimony. Barnabas, his fellow worker for long, is called an apostle, and I have no doubt there were others. In Ephesians 3:1-9, and Colossians 1:24-27, we are distinctly told, that the revelation of the mystery was first of all given to Paul, and, as unfolded by him, it was doubtless carried and preached by others also. It is, therefore, to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament that this scripture refers undoubtedly. The apostles and prophets in their ministry, oral and written, lay, and are the foundation upon which the Church of Christ is built. Have we then still abiding such gifts as apostles and prophets? Clearly, we have them in their writings, and in the truth as unfolded by them, but we should know perfectly well, that their special functions having been exercised, there is now no longer any necessity for their repetition, and for this reason. They laid the foundation, and you know when the foundations of a house are laid, all you have to do is to go on building. Consequently, every man who professes now to have the apostles' office is in a very awkward position. Apostolic succession is claimed, but I venture to say to those who claim it, Look at what the Holy Spirit says of those who shall come as successors of the apostles. In the twentieth of Acts you read, "After my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (vs. 20). And what He said has turned out perfectly true. Again, in the second chapter of the Revelation, we read, "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (vs. 2). So that any man who now assumes to occupy the serious ground of apostolic succession, is committing a grievous mistake, and placing himself in very reprehensible company. You say, That is very serious. It is very serious for the man, because it is so plain in the Word of God. When God speaks, His word should surely be heeded. The apostles and prophets, then, of the New Testament unfold the truth, bring out the mind of God, and lay the foundations, and the faith of the saints is built upon that which God has revealed by their testimony in early days. There is a passage in the last of Romans which will make this quite clear to every subject mind. There we read—"Now to—him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets [prophetic writings], according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25-26). Clearly you have here the prophetic writings of the New Testament referred to, which, thank God, we hold in our hands.

Then, in the next place, you find, He gave "some evangelists." I need not say much about them, although the gift of the evangelist is a most precious one. I know perfectly well it is thought to be simple, and is sometimes looked down upon for that reason. Still it is remarkable that here, where it is a question of the Lord giving that which is for the blessing and good of the assembly, evangelists are spoken of, because if you had no evangelists the assembly would not grow. The evangelist is full of the Gospel, and what is the Gospel? It is the revelation of the heart of God, and what can be higher than that? It is the unfolding of the testimony about His Son, and the object of

the evangelist is to bring souls to Him, and thus, as a consequence, into the assembly. The evangelist is a man who busies himself with souls. He has a burning love for them, and an unquenchable thirst for their salvation. His object is by all means to win the soul for Christ, yet, mark you, he is, if laboring rightly, working out from the bosom of the assembly. He is of the assembly. His work, therefore, though in no ways in, yet goes out from the assembly, and the soul that is laid hold of, and led to Jesus, becomes a member of His body, and, when all was in its normal order, would be found amongst the gathered ones; and nothing else is still His order. The evangelist should be like a pair of compasses, one leg is fixed, and the other is to sweep all round as far as it can reach. If his work is to be successful not only in conversion, but really in edifying the body, he must have a fixed leg, that is he remembers he is of the assembly, and works out from, and returns to it. In a certain sense it is his Gilgal. Too many evangelists look upon their work as a sort of guerilla warfare, They are spiritual sharpshooters, free lances, delighting in being "unattached." In all such, will is working. They are like a man who brings out a lot of stones from a quarry, and having got them into the road, has no place to build them into—no building to fit them in. You would surely say of all such that they are loose, careless workmen. I ought to have a definite object before me in preaching the Gospel; first, to bring the soul to Christ, and, secondly, to put it into its right niche in God's assembly on earth. It is not that the evangelist may always be used in this. Others have to be satisfied as to the reality of the fruit of his labor. The wise evangelist will not in any way press the apparent fruit of his labor into the assembly; and I am speaking now of those gathered in the principles of it. He would be very lacking in wisdom if he did so, in my judgment, because the evangelist, from the very nature of his gift, is a warm-hearted, sanguine man, led much by his own fervency of spirit. Look at Philip, who is the first, and only man in the Bible, as far as I know, who is called "the evangelist." In Acts 8:1-40 what is he doing? Preaching Christ, getting numbers converted, turning the city upside down, and longing for the apostles to come down. He was admitting many outwardly to the house of God on earth, by baptism; had baptized Simon the sorcerer, on a confession of faith, and would doubtless have let him into fellowship with the saints had it not been for Peter. I have no doubt Philip thought he had caught a great fish when he heard that "Simon himself believed also." But as the result showed he had not got him. It needed the calm discernment of Peter to show the real position of Simon, and very sad it was "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (vs. 21). The Lord's care for His assembly, and for His evangelist, is very touching in this scene. What a cheer is it to know that He is still the same; so one can joyfully say, The Lord help all the dear evangelists, cheer them, and encourage them, and increase their number a thousand-fold. If you are wise, and really walking "in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost," you will help them by every means in your power.

Now, what should the evangelist do when he gets the soul converted? He should introduce him to the assembly, not necessarily bring him into it. Others should do that. It is well to let others judge of the reality and soundness of God's work in the soul. They are responsible to do so. Perhaps you say, he should now teach him. No; the teacher should teach him. I quite admit that, owing to the ruin of the Church, the evangelist often has to seek to do it, but it is not his work. Owing to the ruin and failure of the Church, practically speaking, many of the gifted servants of God do not do the part for which they are fitted. The reason is this. Many of those who really possess gifts, and are themselves gifts of Christ to the Church, are buried. Yes, I believe untold numbers of them—to use a figure—are buried under the ruins of Christendom. Hampered, hindered, and restrained by

ecclesiastical systems, that necessarily prevent the exercise and development of gift, they are not exercising the gift the Lord has given them. They have been dislocated from their true functions by the purely human organizations with which, alas! Christendom abounds, and in which the free activity of the Holy Spirit, in the gifted members of Christ's body, is hindered by that which man calls "the ministry," but which God cannot so account, as, in principle, it is opposed to the direct and plain directions, nay, the commandment of His Word. The place of the Holy Spirit has been usurped in Christendom by man, which has this serious effect, that numbers of those, who are really gifted servants of Christ, are silent, and are not exercising their gifts, because, from the very constitution of the ecclesiastical associations in which they find themselves, there is not liberty for the exercise of their gift. Many again are, in their timidity, which one cannot but admire, afraid lest they trench upon the office, and work of those whom they may regard as specially called to minister in the things of God—a ministry, be it observed, to which these silent ones have also been called, but to which they are not, from what is called "order"—man's order—responding.

How beautiful is the divine order in God's assembly! First, the evangelist reaches the soul, and brings him to the gateway of the assembly, and leaves those who are therein to test him, and, if confident of him, to receive him, for it cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is the assembly, as a whole, that receives. Each and all composing it are responsible—not only the laborers, or those who may commend souls that seek admission. When the young convert, judged to be born of God, and indwelt of the Spirit, is admitted, he is to be instructed. Let us beware of keeping souls out of the assembly until they have as much intelligence as those within. Such a thought is very common, and some saints have the idea that all such should be kept outside, until they have got a certain amount of intelligence. That shows how little intelligence they possess who would act on such lines, and how little they really know the mind of the Lord, because, you see, when a child is born, it needs a great deal of nursing, attention, and care. Now the assembly, if walking rightly, is just the place to find all this, and is the spot to which the newborn soul is rightly led by the evangelist, in the expectation that there, if anywhere, will be found plenty of nurses, glad to foster, and help the infant life given of God. Would that we saw more of this.

Then come the "pastors and teachers." Now a pastor is not less important than a teacher. The pastor occupies himself with the state and growth of the soul. The teacher is more occupied with the Word of God, seeking to unfold that which God has therein given. The two foundation gifts, of apostles and prophets, abide permanently in the Scriptures, but the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers exercise their gifts, as given by the Lord, in their living ministry until there be no more saints on earth to be perfected. The apostles and prophets give us the truth. The evangelist carries out to the world its special portion thereof—the Gospel—and brings in the young souls. Thereon the pastor begins the exercise of his gift, looks after them, and sees how they are going on. His work is most beautiful, if by no means prominent, because the pastor is more of a shepherd, and it is not a question of preaching with him. His voice may never be heard in the assembly at all. He goes in and out, and looks after the need of souls. I believe his is very much house-to-house work, and happy work it is. The teacher is he whom God specially prepares to unfold His Word, already given and recorded in Scripture. He is busy with the book—digs out its treasures, and feeds the saints thereby. His work, for the most part, is in the assembly. Of necessity God is careful of them as to temporal things, for in another epistle it says, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6). These teachers might be men who have

no means of livelihood, and the Lord is careful for all such—even as the evangelist is not forgotten, for we read, “Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14). It is noteworthy however, that while Paul lays down this principle, he immediately declines its application to himself (vs. 15). The true shepherd thinks only of the sheep, not of his own support. He thinks of their spiritual need. They should think of his temporal necessity, but all must be a matter of grace, not law. When ministry is reduced to a “bread trade,” than which nothing could be more dreadful, it savors sadly of Balaam and his ways (see 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11); nevertheless it should be the joy, as it is the duty, of the taught one, to communicate with him that teacheth, in all good things.

We get, then, in this chapter the heavenly aspect of the source of ministry in the assembly, flowing from the Lord Jesus on high, and it is perfectly plain that these qualifications for ministry can never be communicated by man, nor can they even be fostered by man. They only grow by exercise, like the blacksmith’s biceps. Therefore you cannot make a minister of Christ. It is Christ alone that can make him, and if he be made by Christ, it is the privilege and responsibility of the saints to receive, not to remake him. All that the servant of Christ has to do is to find out the nature of his gift, and then steadily and unhinderedly to go on, in the exercise thereof, in his right niche, in the body of Christ—the One body—of which he is a member.

Let us turn back now to Romans 12:1-21, not that I shall dwell on it, but that you may see there how the gifts are referred to, as belonging to the whole body. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching” (vss. 4-7). We have very simple and distinct instructions to those who have any gift from the Lord for special work; they are to use it “according to the proportion of faith,” or “according as God,” who is the source of the gifts, and all else in Romans, “hath dealt to every man the (or a) measure of faith” (vs. 3).

We will pass now to the first epistle to the Corinthians. The epistles to the Corinthians are remarkable, in this respect, that the receivers are the only company, or assembly, in the New Testament, that is addressed as “the Church of God.” Both first and second epistles are addressed “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth.” The subject is all that pertains to the order of the Church on earth, and you are brought in this first epistle very distinctly upon Church ground, and therein receive an immense amount of instruction as to the assembly, and the manner of its conduct. It is, in fact, the object of the epistle. What you have in 1st Corinthians is the assembly in function here upon earth, and you find that it is endowed by the Lord with all that it needs. People are fond, sometimes, of talking about Church endowment. I believe the real endowment of the Church you have recorded in the 1st Corinthians. The assembly is endowed by Christ with all that she needs in her pathway on earth. In chapters 12, 13, 14, we get profound and detailed instructions as to spiritual gifts, and also as to the assembly. I think you will find that the three chapters must be taken together to learn their true import. They have been dislocated very often, by taking out chapter 13, which is so full of love. In another part of Scripture we are told that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Now I believe that these three characteristics, power, love, and a sound mind, are just what the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of 1st Corinthians bring out. In the twelfth chapter it is

the spirit of power, the Holy Spirit as power, in the assembly, “dividing to every man severally as He will.” In the thirteenth chapter it is the spirit of love, and in the fourteenth it is the spirit of a sound mind. Everything there must be for profit. The twelfth chapter gives in much detail the varied operations and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in different members of the body. We learn further that, no matter what the magnitude of the spiritual gift may be, of which you read in chapter 12, it is of no real value, in chapter 14, where the assembly is before us, in function, for worship, unless it be baptized into, permeated, and regulated by the spirit that governs the thirteenth chapter. And what is that? Love! And what does love do? It never thinks of itself. Love always thinks of others, and the apostle taught these Corinthians this lesson. They were proud of their gifts. They were like children with so many new toys, which they wished to show off. They spoke in different tongues, and did so, though nobody knew what they said. And the apostle corrects them. “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (ch. 14:26). They were all anxious, and seemingly determined, to get the gift displayed which they thought they possessed, and the apostle in the plainest way corrects them.

Time fails to deal at length with chapter 12, but this may be said, it is a description of the varied spiritual manifestations which are to be found in the assembly. They all flow from the Spirit, as down here in testimony for Christ as their source. Verse 4 says, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” That is the keynote of the three chapters, “to profit withal.” In passing, let me say that this verse has been most mischievously misinterpreted. Based on its supposed meaning, has actually gone forth the idea that every man, Jew, Turk, infidel, believer, and unbeliever promiscuously, has the Spirit. I shall not wound the feelings of any one in mentioning that the Society of Friends holds that every man has the Holy Spirit in him. They call it by various names, “inward light,” “divine light,” or “a ray of eternal wisdom,” but it is supposed to be the Spirit, and they think they find support for the theory in this verse, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” But manifestly it is not a question of man, as man, here. It is in the assembly, where you have the saints of God, all of whom possess the gift of the Spirit, and some of whom have different gifts for ministry by the Spirit. And for whose benefit are these spiritual manifestations? Not for any one’s own private use, but for the benefit of others. That is the point, and when you come to chapter 14 you have instruction as to what would be profitable for the assembly.

You find, in the plainest language, that edification is the keynote of all these chapters, whilst the Spirit of God was the source of these varied gifts. “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit,” and so on. “But all these worketh that one, and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (ch. 12:8-11). It is the Holy Spirit who acts for God, and He it is, who is the source and spring, in the assembly, of these varied manifestations. At the close of the chapter the apostle says, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles; secondarily prophets; thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” And why does he put them in their normal order? The reason is this? The Corinthians were so inflated with the power they possessed of

being able to speak in unknown tongues; they were so inflated by possessing these gifts, which would pass away, that the apostle brings out what their relative value is, and where does he put this gift of tongues? Last. They put them first. He puts them last. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease" (ch. 13:8). The only value of the tongues was to be a sign to those without—not within the assembly, as he says in the fourteenth chapter, "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (ch.14:22). The gift of tongues was, as I have said before, God ringing the bell to the inhabitants of earth, so to speak, that they might hear about His Son Jesus. It was a valuable sign, the gift of tongues, and it was not inappropriate if those were present, who, knowing the language, could interpret; that failing, the tongue was useless, and the possessor was to be quiet. But, notwithstanding, they were to covet earnestly the best gifts; "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." What is that? Love certainly. It always seeks the good of others. "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God; for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Prophesying was not only the unveiling of future events, but it brought the conscience into the light of God's presence, and was for "edification, for exhortation, and for comfort." How different this from merely speaking what no one could profit by. In the fourteenth chapter Paul says, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." You see the truth was working practically in his own heart. The only thing he thought of in the assembly, was the profit of others. This subject of profit is equally true in the matter of prayer and singing. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? for thou verily giveth thanks well, but the other is not edified" (ch. 14:15-17). If I sing, if I pray, if I speak, what is the good of doing so unless the rest are edified? I once said to a friend of mine, "I never say 'Amen' to your prayers." He looked surprised and asked, "Why?" "Because," I replied, "I never hear what you say. You mumble so much in your prayers, that I am unable to hear what you say, and I am not going to say 'Amen' to a promiscuous number of words, which I do not hear." Everything should be done for the profit of others, and to this singing is no exception. Everybody thinks it is a very easy, and most simple thing to give out a hymn. But I must "sing with the spirit," and, as Paul concludes, "with the understanding also." Thus it is that a hymn, when given out, in the assembly, ought to be the expression of that which is at the moment felt by the assembly. It is therefore a very serious thing to give out a hymn there. A person may say, "But I had that hymn laid on my heart." That is no indication for giving a hymn out, because a woman might have a hymn on her heart, yet she is bidden to be quiet and not give it out. One never should give out a hymn, or do aught else in the assembly, unless with the distinct sense—I have the leading of the Lord in doing this, and, I know that I shall express His will in doing it. In the close of chapter 14, the apostle speaks of the very important point, of direct subjection to the Lord, by the Spirit of God, and of how God's assembly should behave when gathered together in the Lord's name. We read in verse 23—"If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one

unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (vss. 23-25). There is an immense difference between the value of the gift of tongues, and of the prophetic gift, if used in the Spirit of God. Then he adds—"How is it, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation?" that is, every one when he came to the assembly had something on his mind, and gave it forth. No man who has the sense of what it is to be before the Lord, and believes in the presence, and guiding of the Spirit, would so act. What may or may not take place must be unknown till we are there, and then "Let all things be done unto edifying" is the injunction. But notice, Paul does not correct disorder by prearrangement, and putting all into one man's hands: nor, to those who had the power of speaking in different tongues, does he say, You must not speak. No, he says, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret." Very simple are these instructions, and much better than saying, No man should speak with an unknown tongue. That would be to quench the Spirit. You see, to prevent the Holy Spirit acting, by any allowed member of the assembly, is to fall into the snare that we are warned against in the fifth chapter of 1st Thessalonians, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings" (vss. 19, 20). How do we quench the Spirit? you ask. The individual may grieve the Holy Spirit, but in the assembly, and only in the assembly, can you quench the Spirit. In the assembly there is to be every scope for all possible activity of the Holy Spirit by every member whom God permits to speak. This can refer only to men, as "Let your women keep silence in the assemblies, for it is not permitted unto them to speak," is the injunction regarding these latter. If this liberty be not allowed, He is quenched, a solemn charge I am bound to bring against every congregation, that does not give Him the fullest scope to use any and all. The Spirit of God is not to be quenched, and it would have been quenched, had the apostle sought to rectify disorder by silencing the tongues. So far from that, he says in verse 39, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to SPEAK WITH TONGUES." But he also adds, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course (separately); and let one interpret." There must be an interpreter. "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge." This is God's distinct instruction, and revealed mind and will, for His assembly, when together. Nothing could be plainer, and, with sorrow be it said, nothing has been more unheeded by the Church. The rule in almost all ecclesiastical bodies has been to place all, beforehand, in the hands of one man. Thus is the Spirit quenched, and as a consequence all suffer. But why, in the midst of the assembly, do you think, has the Holy Spirit said two or three prophets, and two or three only, may speak? Why not four, five, or six? I think it is a practical proof of the unerring wisdom, and tender care of our God. If, when gathered in assembly, we have listened to two or three addresses from our brethren, we have received about as much as we can well take away, and if we had more, it is very likely there would be little profit therein, as bodily weakness would in some, if not all cases, assert itself. God knew very well what our life here would be, and consequently He knew there would be claims, and calls at home, that in due course must be obeyed, and, therefore, He would not have the meeting of His assembly so indefinitely protracted, that some would be under the necessity of running away from the assembly, before the meeting was concluded. Everything was to be of such a nature that all would be done "decently and in order," therefore he says, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If

anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” I do not say that the first must finish speaking before the other rose, There were not to be two or three speaking at once, as was sometimes the case, so determined were they to be heard. If the Spirit of God made a sign that He wanted to use a certain vessel, then “let the first hold his peace.” He was to be subject to the Spirit. “If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” Even the wisest prophet may learn from his brother.

Today we have this curious state in Christendom, that the whole capacity and function of the assembly, both in worship and ministry, is supposed to be wrapped up in one man, who is to go to God for the people, and to the people for God. This is not after the pattern of 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, You meet a Christian man on Lord’s Day morning, and ask him where he is going? He says, I am going up to worship. On further inquiry, you will usually find he is going to hear someone, more or less gifted, preach. Is that the conception you would draw from the fourteenth of Corinthians? No. The thought in your friend’s mind is not so much worship, which is what flows from the gathered saints to God, as that of ministry, connected with some individual who will address, and possibly help, and comfort him. No doubt there is warrant in Scripture for teaching, but we ought to call things by their right names, and not label ministry, which is a precious privilege, with a name—worship—that carries a totally different idea, at least in Scripture. You have come to hear me speak, but this is not the assembly, and hence not a meeting for worship. This is a mere gathering, of those whom I take for granted are the children of God, to hear what an individual servant of Christ, in the exercise of any little gift he may possess, has to say. How different a matter is it to be gathered before the Lord in the assembly. There I read,” Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” At this point, and because he had just said, “Ye may all prophesy,” there comes in a qualification, “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” This verse might as well be taken out of Scripture altogether, for of what avail is it to bid women be silent, when the almost absolute rule in modern Christendom is that all the men, save one, shall be. Ah! here is where the Church has grievously failed. She has not had faith in the Holy Spirit. That there is something seriously wrong is plain, for this scripture is absolute in its statement, as to what the Lord would have in His assembly, and if I am not walking with the saints according to the principles of, and in absolute subjection to the commands, and instructions, of the fourteenth of Corinthians, I am really throwing away my mercies, and going directly in the face of my Lord’s command.

Paul knew very well that what he was saying would not be acceptable to all in the assembly at Corinth, and, therefore, he says, “What! came the word of God out from you? or, came it unto you only?” What does he mean by that? As I have said, he knew very well that what he was bringing out was not acceptable to many minds, therefore he says as it were, Are you the source of the word of God, or is it God that gives the word through me, to you, to instruct you? Are you going to be teachers or taught in this question? “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord.” Every

Christ-loving heart will now have to ask itself this question, Am I keeping His commandments in respect of 1 Corinthians 14:1-40? Am I gathered to His name where the Holy Spirit is allowed His own way in the assembly.

Then follows a very striking verse, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." I do not think there is much comfort in being ignorant, and there is no credit in so remaining, with such plain teaching before our eyes, as to what the Lord would have. If I shut my eyes to the plain, distinct teaching of the Word of God, then I shall not know the truth. "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," is a caustic that I would fain not have applied to me. It applies to the one who will not see what God enjoins. "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues," is the conclusion of the whole matter, and is pregnant with grace. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (vs. 40), is the inscription graven over the door of God's assembly, and I should ever see it there as I enter; and it is well also to remember that it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Corinthians 3:19), for, if I may say so, when I go to the assembly of God, this verse would seem just to say, This is God's house; if you come in here you will be found out, therefore, "Let everything be done decently and in order."

12. Spiritual Offices

Spiritual Offices

We have looked at the testimony of Scripture as to spiritual gifts, and now we shall see what the New Testament says as to what, for want of a better term, I call spiritual offices, for offices indeed they be, and most certainly, spiritual, that is connected with the Church of God, and only to be rightly fulfilled in the power of the Holy Spirit. These offices are those of bishops and deacons. The function of these is different, as their origin, and mode of appointment is different. We saw that spiritual gifts flow from the ascended Head of the body—the Lord Jesus, whereas these spiritual offices, you will find presently, take rise from the choice of the assembly, in one instance—that of deacons—and by the authority of the apostles, or delegates of the apostles, only in the other. Spiritual gifts can never be conferred by man, but local offices may be. When I say that spiritual gifts cannot be conferred by man, I do not forget that which the Holy Spirit tells us about Timothy. The Apostle Paul bids him “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6); and in another epistle he says, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14). Clearly, then, the reception by Timothy of this spiritual gift was, in a certain sense, instrumentally obtained through the apostle laying his hands on him; but let it be understood that, notwithstanding this, it flowed from the Lord, even as it is called “the gift of God.” That Paul’s hand was the instrumental means, the Greek particle δι, used in 2 Timothy 1:6, makes plain. It is the particle that expresses instrumental means, hence “by the putting on of my hands” is said. When you come to look at verse 14 of the fourth chapter of the first epistle you find Timothy received the gift “with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” The Greek particle there used is μετ—implying association with an act, not instrumental means. The laying on of the hands of the presbytery had nothing whatever to do with the imparting of the gift, save this, that they had full and hearty fellowship with Paul in the act, by which Timothy received the gift, hence, as far as the presbytery is concerned, it was only “with the laying on of hands.” They were merely associated with Paul in his act by which Timothy received his gift.

I take this up because there is a great deal of uncertainty, as well as lack of scriptural information, in the minds of Christians, on the subject of ordination, which is supposed to be such an important and necessary prelude to a man’s preaching the Word of God. Perhaps it may seem a little strong to say, but I say it before the Lord very fearlessly, that you cannot find in any part of the New Testament, an instance of a man being set apart, by man, to preach the Gospel. You can find instances of men laying their hands upon one another, as in Timothy’s case, and in another, which I shall show you presently, in the thirteenth of Acts; and you can find instances of certain men being set apart for local offices in the assembly—all that is perfectly granted—but, I repeat, to preach the Gospel, or as a warrant to minister in divine things, you never find, in all the New Testament, man setting apart man. The Lord reserves that prerogative to Himself.

I daresay some person will at once say, But what about the thirteenth of Acts? Well, turn to it. It is the stock passage for ordination. It is the passage to which Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and many other denominationalists, bid you turn, as giving, what they suppose to be, divine warrant for ordination, and of man being set apart to preach the Gospel. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul," whose conversion, you recollect, took place long before, in the ninth of Acts, and who had been preaching the Gospel for a considerable time, previous to what you have recorded in the thirteenth of Acts. Nay, more, he had been recognized as a teacher for long. This we get in the eleventh chapter, "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." That is to say, that Paul had been preaching, and teaching, long previous to that which you have recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, and, so far from that scene carrying with it the thought that at that moment he was ordained for apostolic work, we have that set aside by his own writings, for in the epistle to the Galatians, he says, "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." His apostleship had nothing whatever to do with man, he says. Nor had his gifts as prophet and teacher, or evangelist, for he was all three, and more.

What, then, does the thirteenth of Acts really mean? "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." Now one thing strikes us immediately here, and that is the independent action of the Holy Spirit. The action of the Holy Spirit, I need scarcely say, is always independent, for He is God. The only Being on earth who has a right to be independent is the Spirit of God. Wherever independency creeps into the Church, no matter in what way, you may depend upon it, it is sin, and not of God. The only one, I repeat, who has the right to be independent is the Spirit of God. Now the way in which He wrought, or what voice He used here, I do not say, but He made His voice heard in the assembly at Antioch, and said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul!" "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." And it concludes, "So they being sent forth"—by the assembly? No!—"by the Holy Ghost, departed into Seleucia." Now, is there any doubt as to what this call of the Holy Spirit was? If there be in any one's mind a doubt, it is at once cleared up by following them, in their special missionary tour of a most interesting nature, the details of which occupy the whole of the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters. When you come down to the twenty-fourth verse of chapter 14 you read, "After they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (vss. 24-27). Nothing could be more simple. The Holy Spirit was leading them to go out to the Gentiles in Asia Minor. The assembly at Antioch found itself in hearty, and full fellowship with that, which the Holy Spirit was leading to, and this led them to place their hands upon them. As ordaining them? No! certainly not, the Holy Spirit had done that, but as identifying themselves,

in prayer and interest, with them in what they were now going out to do. I believe that is perfectly competent for us to do. If any servant of God has a distinct sense that he has been called to go—say to heathen lands—to preach the Word of the Lord, and if his fellow servants, and the assembly generally, are in full accord with him, then if they were to fast and pray, and lay hands on him, as expressive of their identification with him in his service to the Lord, they would be quite within the limits of the example of the Word of God. But if you put your hands on him, bear this in mind, that, should he have nothing, you would have to put your hand into your own pocket to help him: the identification then would be real and practical, not merely formal. The laying on of hands, in Scripture, carries with it most generally the thought of identification, and when you put your hands on any servant of God, you are thereby only identifying yourself with him in the work which he is going out to do. I do not think we should be any the worse, if we had more of this identification with the work of the Lord, in this respect. Ordination, as usually understood, is a mere figment of men's minds. The thought that men can set apart their brethren, to preach the Word of God, as giving them authority, or giving them the locus standi so to do, is nowhere within the covers of the New Testament. If it be there it can easily be produced, but it is not.

Nothing can be more foolish than to seek to base what is usually regarded as, and called ordination, on the scripture under consideration, and for this reason: the Holy Spirit had already classed Barnabas and Saul among the "prophets and teachers." In the twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians we read, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." And are you going to reverse God's order, and say that numbers two and three appointed number one? What could be more foolish? Apostles were made such by the call of God, and they may have acted, and did act, in an authoritative way, but prophets and teachers could not select apostles; and if it be granted that Barnabas and Saul were already apostles—which they were—the ordination theory is blown to the winds. As I have shown you from Galatians, Paul's apostleship was not of men, nor by men, but from the Lord.

It is a great thing to be clear upon this point, because, observe, if there be the possession of a spiritual gift, the only one to whom the possessor of that gift is responsible, is to the Lord. He is responsible to go out in the exercise of that gift to the Lord, and where the Lord may lead him. He is no man's, and no Church's servant, though delighted to serve all, if in so doing he can please his Master. You find abundant evidences in the New Testament, of how the servants were at the disposal of the Lord only, not man. Take Apollos as an example. Paul wanted him to go to Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 16:12), but it was not his mind to go at that moment. One would have thought that Apollos would have bowed to the wish of the beloved apostle of the Gentiles. No! Apollos exercised his own discretion as a servant of Christ, where to go, and when. Paul nevertheless alludes to the fact that he wanted Apollos to go, but that he would not. A smaller man than Paul would have left that out of his letter, but Paul was a man with immense largeness of heart, and he recorded this incident, no doubt, as showing how the responsibility of the servant must always be to the Lord, and that no one has a right to order the servant of Christ, but the Lord Himself. I need not tell you how the Church today, puts this man in this place, and that man in the other place, or how an assembly may call a man, or dismiss him. The whole thing is in the teeth of Scripture, let me say to you with all affection.

I turn now to that which is specially before us—the functions of elders, and deacons, and most useful functionaries they are in the Church. The Lord loves His Church. He is Himself the Head of

the body, and Lord of the assembly, and the Church which is bought with His own blood, and to whom He has given His own Spirit, He ever fosters in the tender affection of His heart, hence He always gives it what it needs. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." "Nourisheth," that is, gives it food. "Cherisheth," that is, provides warmth. Food and warmth are the two things which man most needs to sustain him in his pathway here, and food and warmth are what the Lord gives His Church. He feeds and cherishes it. He takes care of it. Well now, I have no doubt that the nourishing is by the gifts of the Spirit, while the cherishing is in a great way connected with that which is before us—the exercise of those spiritual desires, and functions, concerning which the apostle tells us, that he that desires them, desires a good thing.

First of all let us look at the chapter I have read in 1st Timothy, because it gives us a detailed account of the moral qualifications necessary for these two local offices, bishops and deacons. The office of a bishop, or overseer, as given in Scripture, is a distinctly local office, relating to an assembly in a given place, and not an ecclesiastical prelate, placed over scores of other servants of God, scattered over a large tract of country. Again, the office of a deacon is purely and distinctly a local office. The bishopric which Paul speaks of is not the position of a solitary head over a diocese, but was always a conjoint office with others, equally styled bishops, overseers, or elders, and only conferred by apostolic choice and appointment, or by the appointment of an apostolic delegate. The apostle, in detailing what the moral qualifications of the bishop ought to be, begins, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." What is a bishop? He is an overseer. In the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul was come to Miletus, "he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church." There were a multiplicity of elders in Ephesus, it is to be observed. "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." You have two words in this chapter. He sent for "the elders," and called them "overseers." The latter word, in the original, is the same as is rendered "bishop" in the third of 1st Timothy. Similarly we read of the Lord as being "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). You thus see plainly enough that elders, or bishops, or overseers, not an elder, or a bishop, was the state of matters at Ephesus, in apostolic days, and such as was there the case, was also the case in more assemblies than one. In writing to the Philippians, the apostle addresses the epistle to the bishops and deacons, among others. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Php 1:1). Everything was then in beautiful order, and it is to be observed, that when Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, the Church was in order. The assemblies were then walking in Divine order; and what we have in Timothy's first epistle are the instructions given to that servant of Christ how to behave himself, and to walk when the Church is in order. In his second epistle he gets instructions how to walk, in the day when the Church is all in disorder, which is the day you and I are in. The moral characteristics which are to mark the bishop are many, or such he may not be. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife." This does not necessarily mean that he must be married, but, being married, he must only have one wife. Polygamy was the commonest thing possible among the heathen, and thus one delivered from paganism might find himself with several dependent on him, while one only of them would now, of course, be recognized as his wife. For a bishop or a deacon to be in this position would be a scandal to the Church of God, and

would outrage the spiritual as well as the moral sense of that Church.

Further, the bishop must be “vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach.” He is to be a man able to communicate the thoughts of God. He must have moral qualifications, not necessarily a spiritual gift. If he had it, all the better, as you will find later, in the fifth chapter, I need not dwell on what he was not to be, though I daresay many will think it rather a strange injunction, to tell such, that he was not to be a drunkard—”not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre.” We are apt to forget that the assembly was only just formed, and that these saints had only just been delivered from the degrading and demoralizing conditions that were roundabout them in heathendom. Bearing this in mind, you can easily understand such plain language. The next thing enjoined is, that he must be “one that ruleth well his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” It is impossible. He must have moral weight. He must be “not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” As the devil was lifted up by pride, and fell (see Ezekiel 28:13-19), so a young man might be puffed up with the position, and place of importance, that this official position necessarily gave him, in the local assembly. “Lest he fall into the condemnation of the devil,” I take to mean his having the same judgment as Satan had, that is his being cast down, as he was, for his pride. Furthermore, “he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.” That is a different thing from the condemnation of the devil. If the man had not a good report, he would very soon yield to the enemy somewhere, because he dare not boldly withstand him. The devil would lay a snare, and he would have a tumble, for you may be sure that Satan would do his best to trip up one, who was selected for this position of prominence in the assembly. The elders, or bishops, then, had this position of overseers, as caring for the saints, watching over them, seeking to help them, and looking after them in all spiritual matters. The object was that the members of Christ should answer to His love, and be maintained in happy order, and in the precious unity which was then realized. Wolves were abroad, and the bishops were to protect the flock from their ravages—a valuable office indeed. This position, however, was given to them by the apostles, and by them only, or by their delegates, as instructed by the apostles. It is instructive to note that the wife of the bishop, or elder, is only mentioned. She is not recognized, as having any position. She has no spiritual function. Woman’s injunction is to be quiet. That is her place in the assembly. The deacon’s wife, on the other hand (vs. 11), might have a most important place, and fill a most useful niche in the assembly—as helping her husband—and therefore what she was to be, morally, is indicated. When you come to 1 Timothy 5:1-25, Paul refers once more to the elders. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine” (vs. 17). We have therefore two kinds of elders, Those who merely took the oversight, in affectionate desire for the blessing of the assembly, and sought their well-being, their growth in Christ, and their walk in the ways of the Lord; and, secondly, those who, over and above these qualifications, had the ability to “labor in the word and doctrine.” These were to be accounted worthy of double honor. You can understand the reason for this. The ability to minister the word of the Lord in the person of one, whose office takes him in and out amongst the saints, is very important. This ability partakes more of the nature of a teacher, than that of a pastor. I quite admit that the bishop would be like a pastor as to sentiments and feelings, but it is important to see and hold distinctly, and clearly, that a pastor is a gift from Christ for all the Church everywhere; whereas a bishop was a local officer, made so by the appointment and authority of the apostles,

and was only a bishop in the assembly, where he was locally ordained. Further, their labor was not to be lightly esteemed, but responded to practically, for Paul goes on to say, “The scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the laborer is worthy of his reward.” Set apart in this way for the Lord’s work, the elders very probably could follow no earthly calling, and consequently they would have to be looked after in temporal matters.

Timothy gets another word regarding bishops. “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses,” and then in verse 22 he is enjoined to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” A little word, but very instructive. It has been said that elders were appointed by the laying on of hands. Scripture nowhere says so, that I am aware of, and the only passage that would seem to bear out such an idea is this, where Paul says, “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” It is too vague to build a theory on, but the point clearly is that Timothy was to be very careful as to those with whom he identified himself, by laying on of his hands.

Turning back now to the Acts, you will find the Apostle Paul himself carrying out his own instructions, and himself ordaining elders. “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they (the apostles) had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:21-23). Here clearly the elders were ordained by the apostles, and not chosen by the Church.

If you will now turn to Paul’s epistle to Titus, you will find the latter’s instructions on this point—“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed (or commanded) thee” (Titus 1:5). Then follow the details of the moral qualifications of the elder, in order that Titus might be very careful as to the men, whom he might put in that position. I say no more on this point beyond this, that it is abundantly plain, and clear from Scripture, that although elders were appointed in apostolic ages, they were appointed only by the apostles, or by apostolic delegates—quasi apostles, if you please—such as Timothy or Titus. But you may turn to me and say, Why are elders not appointed now in the assemblies of the saints gathered to the Lord’s name? My answer to that is, If you are an apostle, appoint them. If you are a Timothy, or a Titus, appoint them; but if you be neither the one nor the other, be wise, and do not assume power which you do not possess, and do not perpetuate, formally, an office which God has in His wisdom allowed to lapse, as I think I shall show you presently. In speaking of that I will take the two classes of officers together; but let us first look for a moment at the deacons. The diaconal business was of a very different character from that of the elders. We had perhaps better turn to the sixth chapter of the Acts, where we shall see deacons in function, though not there called deacons. “And in these days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, Prochorus, and

Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:1-6). The appointment of elders was very different from that of the deacons. Both were by apostolic power and authority, but it is remarkable, that the assembly here is permitted to choose the men, who were to be the distributors of its bounty. The case before us is very interesting. The assembly had grown. There were in the midst of it those who were poor, and others who were rich. Murmuring came in to spoil the beautiful harmony of the unity of the Spirit, and the expression of oneness which the Lord desired. What was the cure? Grace. The way to cure the murmurer is to act in grace, and there is nothing more powerful than the grace of Christ. “There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.” These Grecians, or Hellenists, were Jews born in Grecian or heathen lands. They murmured against the Hebrews (natives of Judea) “because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.” They supposed the widows of the latter were favored. In the assembly at Jerusalem there was a common fund, out of which the poor were helped, and the Grecians were neglected, as they thought. The apostles, led by the Spirit, point out to the multitude that it was not for the assembly’s profit, that they should leave the Word of God, and attend on, or serve tables. They would give themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Prayer comes first. It was the expression of their dependence upon God. Then follows the instruction, “Look ye out among you seven men of honest report.” Some would say that we are not to hear the testimony of the world. God’s Word says otherwise. The elder “must have a good report of them that are without,” and so here also. The world is a very good judge of an honest, or a dishonest Christian. It usually gives a very just and good judgment on such a point, and I have no objection to the judgment of the world in a matter of that sort. They were also to be “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” Well, this saying pleased the whole multitude, and whom did they choose? They chose seven men from among the Hellenists, as their names seem to imply, the murmurers. They might have chosen three Grecians, and four Hebrews, or four Grecians and three Hebrews; but it was not so, the whole seven, chosen to be the distributors of the common fund, were selected from the company that had been grumbling about their neglected widows. What could be more beautiful than this display of the energy of the Spirit, and the activity of divine grace in the Church? Another point to observe is that the multitude is allowed to choose. That is perfectly right. You cannot choose a minister. A minister is the gift of Christ to the whole Church, and your ear ought to be ready to listen to him. Many of the beloved servants of Christ have got quite out of the circle of truth. While the Church of God could have no choice of those who should minister to it of the things of the Lord, it had a perfect right to choose those who should minister the things of this life, to any of the community, who had need of help out of the common fund. It was beautiful grace on the part of God to permit and enjoin this. The assembly thereon chose the seven men, “whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.” It was evidently by apostolic appointment that they were put into a position of authority, and responsibility likewise. And now it is very instructive to notice, in passing, that the right and proper exercise of this diaconal function might and did lead, to very beautiful consequences in the history of some of the deacons. Two of these men, Stephen and Philip, are brought before us in later chapters of the Acts—not in connection with their diaconal work, but in connection with the exercise of the spiritual gifts which the Lord had given them. We recognize this, that the official position, the local office and function they exercised in Jerusalem, was the result of their appointment by the apostles, and that, after the discontinuance of their office, there flowed out what the seventh of Acts records of

Stephen, and the eighth of Philip. In the seventh chapter Stephen is the vessel which the Holy Spirit, acting in His own beautiful and free way, uses to give God's final testimony to the Jews, and to bring forth the whole truth of their condition. He is not an apostle. No, the Holy Spirit picks up a man—whose faith and power, independent of his office, we read of in Acts 6:5-8—and makes him His mouthpiece. It is Stephen that gives the magnificent testimony to Christ of the seventh chapter, whom he sees sitting at the right hand of God, and he it is whom the Jews send after Christ with the message, "We will not have this man to reign over us." In the eighth chapter Philip goes to Samaria, and preaching the Gospel, earns the honorable distinction of being called "Philip the evangelist." If you have not noticed it, I ask you to turn to Acts 21:1-40 at the eighth verse. "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, and abode with him." The Holy Spirit gives that beautiful, and characteristic name to Philip of "the evangelist." This is an important and lovely illustration of one verse that occurred in the chapter I read, and to which I ask you to turn again. There you find, in speaking of deacons, in the thirteenth verse, Paul says, "They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree—and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." Before either Philip or Stephen began to preach they had graduated, not at college nor university, nor in any school of human learning or religious instruction, but they had graduated in the beautiful work of caring for the poor, the widow, and the needy. They had graduated in the exercise of their office as deacons in Jerusalem, and they purchased not only what is called "a good degree," but "great boldness in the faith," and if you search the Bible from end to end, you will get nothing to eclipse the bold testimony of Stephen, as he stands before the Sanhedrim, and the rulers of Israel.

Returning to 1 Timothy 3:1-16, it is instructive to notice, in the eighth verse, that the deacons were to be "grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless." There was to be care exercised in their choice. Then observe, "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things," because, you see, the wife of a deacon—a man who was going in and out of houses, necessarily occupied with family details, and circumstances, possibly finding out need in many houses, and ministering to that need—might be a most valuable helpmeet to him. She might be much more delicate and tender in her dealings with need and sorrow, even than her husband. One delights in the wisdom of God, in thus settling the place a woman may have, in connection with her husband's office. Again we find, "They were to be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." But Paul continues: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Beautiful words these! The Church is God's house—the assembly of the living God. Round about us is the world, but God is in His assembly. And the assembly, who are they? In any spot, where I can find God's people gathered upon the ground of the assembly, and according to the instructions that are given to that assembly, where the Lord has His place, and the Holy Spirit has His right place—that is the Church in principle. As a practical thing for faith, the assembly should be the meeting place of every child of God, in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, and who is walking in faith and godliness. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth still, spite of all failure. What you and I have to be exercised about, is this, that we should know where the truth is, and what the truth is, and then our

hearts should be loyal, and loyal to the truth. If I am connected with what is not the truth, then if I find it out, with the help of God, I will clear out of that association. I will thank any man to tell me if I am wrong, because I want to be right. If I am not right, I seek to be right, and that is what each one of you surely desires in your heart. It is a great thing to know the Word of God, and to do what the Word of God enjoins. The assembly of the living God is the pillar and ground of truth. In spite of the strife and dissension of the Church, God dwells still in His assembly, for the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and the truth will be here till the Lord comes. When His assembly is taken up, there will be a terrible scene of what is not the truth left behind. Truth is in the assembly of God, and the more tenaciously we hold on to the truth of the assembly, and to the will of the Lord with regard to the gifts, and their exercise therein, and to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the better will it be for us.

Now, people often ask, Why have you not elders and deacons appointed in the assemblies of the saints? There are two reasons. First, as the effect of our failure and sin, from the time in which the later epistles were written which depict the ruin of the assembly, you have not the Church—all the saints in one place—together, over whom to appoint them; and, secondly, you have not a competent person to ordain them, even though all the Lord's people, in a given locality, were walking together. I do not doubt that where the saints are really gathered together in the Lord's name, and are seeking to act upon the instructions given to the assembly of God, there are men performing the functions of elders, although they do not assume the name or the office. Again, although the title of deacon has been dispensed with, there are men who are simply, and unaffectedly doing the work of such. It is a great mistake to assume, that because we have no right to ordain elders and deacons, everything is therefore in confusion, and that there is no resource. When I come to the second epistle to Timothy, where the Church is viewed as in disorder, I find the truth is committed to faithful men to teach others.

Just observe the wisdom of God in forbearing to perpetuate these local offices, We are confronted with facts, and so I speak plainly. The reason I judge that the Lord did not give instructions, that these offices should be perpetuated, was because He knew that the Church would fail to walk in unity, and would outwardly break up. Why, I could get a dozen so-called churches today, who have no communion or connection with one another, and if I were going amongst them I should find elders and deacons over all of them. What are they elders and deacons of? Ask them, and they will reply—Of such and such a congregation. I read in Scripture of the bishops and deacons of Philippi, and of the elders of the Church at Ephesus, and these were elders over all the Church in these towns—over the whole undivided assembly, and not over little fragments of the Church, as is the case today. I perhaps find a Christian man boasting in the position of holding a local office. He is an elder of such and such a church. Do they recognize you over the way? I ask him. Oh, no! we have no connection with the church over the way. Well, I would not give much for his eldership—it is not after the pattern of Scripture. The wisdom of God is perfect. He saw what was coming, and therefore, I repeat, forbore to give instructions, and directions, for the perpetuation of these offices after the apostles' departure. He has not left us a warrant in His Word to appoint these officers, because He saw what the will of man would work—division. He would not have that division intensified by a part arrogating to itself that which only belongs to the whole. That the Church would lose her external unity, God foresaw, and therefore abstained from directing the appointment of the local officers, who, if appointed, would only emphasize the division which is

round about us, by the mere assumption of the office, without the power, and position that He designed should go with it. You see the whole Church in Edinburgh today ought to be walking in unity, which, alas! it is not. If you say, Elders and deacons ought still to be appointed, I reply, If the Apostle Paul came into Edinburgh today, where would he begin to appoint them? At this place where we are? Oh, no! Why not? Because we are not the Church. What he would have to say would be—You are all one; I must get you all together. He would get all the saints together, and I think he would then say—Now stay together. That is just what God wants, and it is the wisdom of God that has not perpetuated these offices, which, as now discharged, really help to keep the saints apart.

However much the saints of God may have fallen short of the mind of the Lord in this respect, the blessed Saviour loves His Church, and gives to it that which it needs, and which He sees good for it. What we have to do is to be simple and loyal, and not go on doing what is wrong. Let us not assume power, which we do not possess, to appoint to office. If we have learned the truth, let us hold it fast: and if we have not learned it, the sooner we do so the better will it be, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” It is priceless in its value. May the Lord give to you and me to know His truth more and more, and to seek to carry out His mind, as He unfolds it to us.

13. The Seven Spirits of God

The Seven Spirits of God

It must be clearly apparent to the most casual reader of the book of the Revelation, that the way in which the Spirit of God is presented in this book, is entirely different from that which has been before us in the previous parts of the New Testament. That which we have been looking at for a good many evenings has been the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Himself, in various parts of Scripture, and in varied ways, in relation to Christianity. What has been before us has been the truth of the one Spirit, and of that one Spirit dwelling on earth now, since the day of Pentecost. When we come to the book of Revelation we read no more of the one Spirit, but of “the seven Spirits of God.” In the first chapter (vs. 4), the fourth (vs. 5), and in the fifth (vs. 6), we read of “the seven Spirits of God.” Now, God’s Word is perfect. Are there then, in the same way as we have been looking at the One Spirit, in the early part of the New Testament, seven such Spirits? Ah, that cannot be! we are confronted with this thought, that in the book of the Revelation the Spirit of God is presented in a character totally different from that which has been before us in the other sections of the New Testament. That is not to be wondered at, because in this book you find that the dealings of God are different altogether from those which are brought out in the early part of the New Testament, where you have unfolded God’s action in grace on earth. The great thought of the book of the Revelation, on the contrary, is God winding up matters on earth, dealing with man in various aspects of responsibility on earth, and therefore you find that this book is emphatically the book of judgment. This, I have no doubt, is the reason why people do not read it much. The devil is clever enough to keep souls from carefully studying any part of God’s Word, which distinctly details, not only the judgment of the professing Church, the judgment of the world, the judgment of the whore—the false Church—the judgment of the living, and the judgment of the dead, but also Satan’s own judgment. Little wonder that he would tell you, that this is a book which nobody can understand, although the Holy Spirit prefixes its contents with the words “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.” Not only that, but He says in the last chapter, “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” There is no other part of Scripture that God has prefaced, and concluded, with a specific blessing, in the same way as He has this book, and yet if there be one section of the Bible that is neglected, it is this. If you and I have not as yet paid much heed to this book, we had better seek light from God, and begin its study straight off. I know the study of prophecy is apt to feed the mind, rather than touch the soul’s affections, and fill the heart with the joy that flows from a sense of the love of Christ. That joy is our own proper portion, but, if we know our own portion, we are free to look at that which God has told us about others, and there is great profit in studying that which is here told us. In the book of Revelation we have the Spirit of God presented to us in a character that answers to a remarkable statement in the Old Testament to which I will refer. You find it in the eleventh of Isaiah, There the Spirit of God gives us a prophetic forecast of the coming kingdom, and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Messiah upon earth. “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall

grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (vss. 1-2). You have a sevenfold character of that Spirit given there, and I have no doubt it corresponds to what is called “the seven Spirits of God” in the book of Revelation. No longer now is it the “one Spirit” baptizing into “one body,” as we have seen, but that character of action on the part of God’s Spirit, which goes out to all the earth, in the day that ushers in the millennium. It is the Lord Jesus who will take up the reins of government then, and will deal with the earth in that day, and just what is given us in the second verse of the eleventh of Isaiah, will be the character of His action, by the Holy Spirit, in the day which the book of the Revelation brings before us. What is that day? It is the day when the Church shall have been taken up out of this scene. It is the moment when the Lord, as the bridegroom, shall have come for the Church, and shall have taken it out of this scene as His bride, and when the saints shall be taken to their home. Furthermore, they are seen under the figure of the crowned elders of chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 6 and onwards, we have unfolded what then goes on upon earth, all of which the Apostle John sees in vision. The worldwide work and action of the Spirit of God, as connected with the throne of God, is presented to the seer as the energy of “the seven Spirits of God.”

Before I develop this at all I should like to glance with you over the New Testament, in order that you may see that, in its various sections, God’s Spirit is always presented, according to His special object in each book. This we can then compare, and contrast with what the book of Revelation gives us. Thus we shall have distinct and fresh before our minds what the Spirit of God is in Christianity, as compared with what His action will be in the day which lies before us, and which is undoubtedly characterized by that word in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation “the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.” Now, “the Spirit of prophecy” is clearly that which indicates and points to that which is coming. What we have been hitherto engaged with, is the wonderful fact that the Holy Spirit has come; but in every part of God’s Word, and in the book of Revelation, no less than in every other part, when the Spirit of God speaks about Himself and His ministry, it is in a character which is exactly suited to the truth which He is unfolding in that particular part. In the Gospel of John the Lord first unfolds the wondrous fact that “another Comforter” was to come, who was to abide, whereas He Himself was going away. In the Acts of the Apostles, He had come. The gift of the Spirit—the promise of the Father—the Comforter, was received, and in that book we see how He filled the Lord’s servants, and the Lord’s people. As we pass to the epistles I will ask you to turn over the leaves of your Bible, because you will not follow me unless you do so, while I seek to indicate what is the main line followed by the Holy Spirit in each epistle. Details you may study at your leisure another day. The first chapters of Romans are occupied with showing how a man can be “just with God,” and you do not read one word about the Holy Spirit’s indwelling the believer till you get to chapter 5, where we get the expression, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (vs. 5). The truth is brought out that man’s utter ruin, and degradation, and lost condition, have been met by the blood of Christ, and by the righteousness of God, and that he is now justified righteously, by faith in the One who died and rose again, consequently his sins are forgiven, and he is in peace and favor before God, standing in Christ, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. That is true of every believer. He is not merely forgiven, but is in the favor of God, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. It is nothing uncertain to him. But there is more than that, “Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” The first action of the Holy Spirit

here seen is to shed God's love abroad in the believer's heart.

Now, passing on to the eighth chapter, we find Him both as characterizing the condition of the Christian and as an indwelling person. We find the believer is in Christ, and in the Spirit, as the power of that new position, and that the Spirit of God dwells in him for comfort, for consolation, for everything that concerns him in his pathway down here, and the result is he is led happily on his journey homewards, the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in him, as he is walking after the Spirit.

Look next at the fifteenth chapter. There is a remarkable expression there. The apostle says in the fifteenth verse, "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering—up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." A remarkable statement, and you may say, What does it mean? You remember the two wave loaves, baken with leaven, spoken of in the twenty-third of Leviticus, are presented to the Lord as being "the first-fruits." Christ Himself is the wave sheaf, and the "first-fruits" He takes with Him, on the ground of His death and resurrection, are the Gentiles, who had no link with or claim upon God, but who, being reached, blessed, and saved by the Gospel, are presented to God, as the first-fruits of the death of the Lord Jesus. The believer—the Gentile believer—is here presented before God as being in a condition and state suited to the eye, heart, and nature of God. Such you see is the testimony of Romans. We are brought to God in the Spirit; the Spirit personally dwells in the believer, and we have the joy of knowing that we are thus acceptable before God, being "sanctified" (set apart to God) "by the Holy Ghost." Such is the aspect of this truth in Romans.

We pass now to 1st Corinthians, for every epistle presents the Spirit of God in a distinct way. In this epistle we find a great deal about the Holy Spirit. Look at the second chapter, where it was a question of the wisdom of the world, making much of man, and setting great store upon the outcome of the mind of man. The apostle brings out this, that everything, as to the knowledge of God, and even as to the reception of the things of God, must be by the Holy Spirit. The wisdom of man is set aside by the cross, and replaced by the communications of the Holy Spirit. This we get alluded to in chapter 2. "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." There most people stop. They say things are given, but you cannot know them. Read on, my friends, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is the Holy Spirit who reveals everything. The Old Testament state and condition of soul is described in the prophet's words, "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 now all is altered; the Holy Spirit has come; and what does He do? He "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." We are cast upon the Spirit of God for everything. "Now we 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; communicating spiritual [things] by spiritual [means].” They are revealed by the Spirit, and communicated by the Spirit. And now look at the fourteenth verse “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” They are revealed by the Spirit, communicated by the Spirit (there you have inspiration), and they are also received by the Spirit. What a deathblow to the working of the mind of man. That is the great truth of this part of the epistle. In chapter 3 Paul shows that the assembly is the temple of God. In the sixteenth verse he says: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” He would waken up these Corinthians to the truth that they were God’s dwelling place, and as the temple of God is holy, and the Holy Spirit was there, the temple must be kept suited for the owner. Coming now to the sixth chapter the truth is taught there, that the body belongs to the Lord, and the body must be used for the Lord. It is a great thing to remember that our bodies are the Lord’s. And why? See what he says, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.” Further down he says, “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (vs. 19). The body is the Lord’s, and I have to be very careful to do His pleasure. The fact has ever to be borne in mind by the believer that the Holy Spirit dwells in his body. Passing on to the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, which have been very fully before us on previous evenings, I merely note that in the former we learn that everything of a spiritual nature springs from the Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts He disposes to every man according as He wills. Profit is to be the keynote in God’s assembly, and all depends upon the Holy Spirit. Then these gifts must be nurtured in the atmosphere of the thirteenth chapter—love—if they are to be of any use, in the sphere of their operation, which we have in the fourteenth chapter—the assembly in function—under the control and action of God’s Spirit. We do not need man’s interference, or his regulations, or his arrangements in the assembly of God, because the Spirit is perfectly competent for all that relates to the needs of God’s assembly.

Passing to the second epistle to the Corinthians, you get what is very blessed in the first chapter. The apostle was going through tremendous persecution, terrible difficulty, and he brings out the way in which God by the Holy Spirit sustained him. Apparently the Corinthians suggested that he was not to be relied on, as he thought of coming to them, and after all did not come. Therefore he says in the seventeenth verse, “When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” He says, in fact, If I have to change, God does not. Then follows a rich unfolding of the Spirit’s gracious actings. “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (vss. 21-22). I know of no fuller or more beautiful expression of the varied action of the Holy Spirit, than you have contained in these last two verses. You have the believer stablished in Christ, anointed, sealed; and receiving the earnest of the Spirit in the heart. The Spirit alone can bring you into the sense of the place you have in Christ. It is not merely that the Holy Spirit gives

the sense of being cleansed, but the soul is led into the sense of what it possesses as being in Christ, in the new place that Christ, as Man, has now before God, and into which, in His ineffable goodness and love, He introduces us. But more, "and hath anointed us." That is power. It is the power of perception. The anointing is clearly for this reason, that we may see things clearly. The Spirit not only gives us power to see the divine pathway we should tread, but also the perceptive enjoyment of things divine. Further, He "hath also sealed us." What does sealing mean? It is the abiding mark on the believer, that he is the Lord's, and the Holy Spirit is that mark. He is the seal upon the believer, as it is put in Ephesians, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). The earnest of the Spirit is that energy of the Holy Spirit which brings the soul of the believer into the present enjoyment of that which belongs to him, in connection with the inheritance—the future glory to which he is heir, as being a co-heir with Christ. The earnest of the Spirit brings the soul into the enjoyment of that which will be his in the future, but which he knows perfectly well is his now. On the one, who has not merely trusted in Christ personally, but who has received the forgiveness of his sins, and has bowed to the righteousness of God, God puts His seal. The last thing you do with a letter is to seal it. The last thing God does with the soul is to put His seal upon it. Faith is a blessed thing, and leads to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and the sense of being blessed of God, but until the Holy Spirit dwells in the soul, thus sealing it, there is not an abiding sense of enjoyment of God's favor in the heart. That is what makes the Christian bright. Some Christians say, "I shall be quite happy in heaven." Why are you not happy before you get there? I want to know. Here is what will make you happy. Here is what the Holy Spirit has to give. He delights to give the soul the enjoyment of what belongs to it long before it gets there. This scripture reminds one of the two spies returning to the camp of the Israelites with the grapes of Eshcol. But we have what is much better than the grapes of Eshcol. They were brought to Israel in the desert. We are brought by the Spirit to the place where they grow—to heaven in spirit now. The Holy Spirit brings us into the sense of the glory and magnificence of the scene where Christ is, and our hearts are at home long before we get there. We know the atmosphere of the land, and taste of its fruits long before we reach it, if the Spirit of God be in our hearts. In the seventeenth verse of the third chapter of 2nd Corinthians, we have another great truth in respect of the Spirit, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Bondage marks the soul under law; liberty is the portion of the one who possesses the Spirit. Are you in liberty? I find many dear children of God groaning, and moaning, and bowed down like bulrushes. Now this should not be, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Not merely are you to know, that you are forgiven, but you are to know, experimentally, that you are out of bondage. If you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, there is liberty to gaze on Christ in glory. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). It is the Holy Spirit having His own way in your heart. Upheld by grace, you are kept going through this world, in the liberty of the Holy Spirit, and the joy which the liberty of God alone can furnish.

We come now to the last chapter, and there find a lovely word about the Spirit. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." That is a formula which I fear is often lightly used. But think of it! Look at the blessedness of the statement—the grace of the Saviour, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

What is the communion of the Holy Spirit? Is it not the beautiful inbreathing of all the love of the Father, and the glory of the Son—the breathing of these thoughts into the soul by the Holy Spirit that we have dwelling in us? I fear we know little of it. And that is why we ought to feel desirous of having more of it. The way the Spirit of God is presented in the epistle to the Galatians is that the power to deliver from the lust, the energy, and the activity of the flesh, lies, not in the law, but in the Holy Spirit. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (ch. 3:1-2.) The Galatians were going back to the law, and the moment you get a man under law the Spirit is set aside. He is not under the power of the Holy Spirit. When you come to the fourth chapter you find—“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (ch. 4:4-7). He does not give the Spirit to make you a son, but He gives you the Spirit because you are a son. The one who believes in Christ Jesus is a child of God, “for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (ch. 3:26); and the one, who is a child of God, receives the Spirit of adoption because he is a son, and that he might say what the Spirit always leads him to say, “Abba, Father.” Consequently He says, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” This leads to a very practical injunction. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot (should not) do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:16-17). Led by the Spirit you will not do the things which the flesh will try to make you do. This verse is often read to mean that a Christian cannot help sinning, whereas the very reverse is what is taught. The Spirit’s power is greater than that of the flesh. What a happy thing for the Christian to walk in the Holy Spirit, superior to the claims and lusts of the flesh, and delivered from the law, which is the next result of the Spirit’s leading. “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (vs. 18). Then follows a list of the works of the flesh, which the law failed to keep in order, and in contrast therewith, that which is the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (vss. 22-23). The old man was kept in order by no law, and the new man needs no law to keep him in order, he is by nature an orderly being, and produces suited fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is what may be called a compound fruit. It has many features, all beautifully intermingled and entwined. All were seen perfectly in Christ, and should be seen in us. The Spirit of God alone can produce this fruit, but He does produce it, in contrast to the law, which never could, or can. The law could not produce love, though it could condemn you for not loving your neighbor as yourself. It could not give you an object. It could not deliver from the flesh, nor could it deliver from the judgment that it demanded. The Spirit delivers from everything and fills the heart with Christ.

I need not speak of the Ephesians, because we have had it before us pretty fully on a previous occasion. Only to notice that it is full of the Holy Spirit as setting the saint in heavenly relationships first, so that, in heavenly power, he may fulfill all earthly relationships. The epistles to the Philippians and Colossians are remarkable by the absence of any allusion to the Spirit of God, save in a passing way. In Philippians Paul writes of the “fellowship of the Spirit” (ch. 2:1), and

“worship by the Spirit of God” (ch. 3:3); while of Epaphras, in Colossians, he says, “Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.” These two things are beautiful. The true and normal character of the life of the Christian is unfolded in the Philippians. Christianity is the life of Christ reproduced in the life of the Christian here, by the power of Christ as his object, and to be seen in this world. There is “the fellowship of the Spirit” in that. In Colossians, on the other hand, the main subject is the glory of Christ, as Head, and the unfolding of His glories as the head of His body. Of that body we all are members, hence “love in the Spirit” (ch. 1:8), is a characteristic feature of the life each member possesses. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians there is a great deal about the Holy Spirit. In the first chapter at the sixth verse we have, “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The more bitter the persecution the more abounding the joy. It is always so. In the fourth chapter at the eighth verse we read, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.” The fact that the Holy Spirit is in him, is to make the Christian careful not to overreach his brother in the matter in hand. I must be careful how I treat you, and how I deal with you. In the last chapter, we have the remarkable injunction—“Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings” (vss. 19-20). That is different from the verse which says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 4:30). That refers to the individual. There are three ways in which the Spirit of God may be hindered. In the seventh of Acts we have the fact given us, that the world may, and does “resist the Holy Ghost” (vs. 51). In the fourth of Ephesians individuals are bid not to “grieve” Him. Here, in the bosom of the assembly, it is, “Quench not the Spirit.” You may ask how can we quench the Spirit? Anything that hinders the free action of God’s Spirit in the Christian assembly, is quenching the Spirit. It is coupled with, “Despise not prophesyings,” which evidently alludes to efforts that were made to disparage the more excellent gifts in favor of what perhaps set off the man more, as, for instance, the gift of tongues, and the like. But it may have also wider application to any attempt to limit the action of the Spirit, as, for instance, an attempt to shut the mouth of some brother, whose ministry the rest did not care for. That will not do in God’s assembly. No mouths must be closed save those that God has closed. That you will find distinctly in the fourteenth of 1st Corinthians. Every woman is bid to “keep silence in the assemblies,” but every man is to be free to be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit—free to pour forth his soul in worship, and thanksgiving, as well as in ministry, if so led of the Spirit. Consequently, “Quench not the Spirit” is God’s word. Are you then, dear fellow believer, worshipping in an assembly where God’s Spirit has full liberty? To go where this is not the rule, and practically acted upon, is to disobey the command, “Quench not the Spirit.” In the second epistle to Timothy, the apostle gives a word that is very helpful, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (ch. 1:7). I think Timothy felt there were tremendous difficulties to face. All the Christians in Asia had turned away from Paul, and from heavenly truth, and this he doubtless felt. He was inclined to be downhearted, and therefore the Spirit of God, through Paul, reminds him of what His special character was in such a day of difficulty, when He says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” These are the sentiments with which the Holy Spirit fills the bosom of the Christian, and to this Paul adds, in the fourteenth verse, “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” It is by the Holy Spirit alone we can keep that which God has committed to us. Everything turns on the way in which we treat the indwelling Spirit, individually, and the ever-abiding Spirit in the midst of the assembly, collectively. In Titus we

find a most refreshing word about the Holy Spirit. There we learn how God has saved us. “Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:5-6). I think it is a most refreshing truth to know that the Holy Spirit is shed on us “abundantly.” Do all Christians believe it? Do you? Do I?

Passing now to Hebrews you will find the Holy Spirit recognized as being on earth, as in chapter 6:4 we read of those who “were made partakers (μετῆχουσι companions, see chap. 1:9, there rendered fellows) of the Holy Ghost.” This does not mean that they had received the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, but that they were in the place of privilege—the house of God—where He dwelt, and thus they were His companions. In this condition every baptized professor of Christ is. How solemn and awful therefore, if, with such privilege, Christ should not really be known. Paul was “persuaded better things” of those to whom he wrote, however. The Holy Spirit is thereafter spoken of as “the eternal Spirit,” and “the Spirit of grace.” In the ninth chapter at the fourteenth verse, we read that Christ “through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” Christianity deals with eternal realities, and in this epistle you find the Spirit coming down to give us the knowledge of the place that belongs to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. In chapter 10 He takes a most blessed place as the witness, come to us from God, of the value of Christ’s work, and of the blessings that accrue to us therefrom. In verse 9 you have the will of God, in verse 10 the work of Christ, and in verse 15 the witness of the Holy Spirit—the three persons of the Trinity all active in blessing. In the latter part of the twenty-ninth verse of this tenth chapter you have a lovely title given to the Holy Spirit. The expression, “hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace,” is in contrast with the law, the breakers of which “died without mercy.” The Apostle James makes no allusion whatever to the Spirit, but Peter gives us a most instructive word in his first epistle, where he says in the tenth verse, “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:10-13). The Spirit of prophecy, so abundantly found in the Old Testament, is here alluded to, as unfolding the sufferings, and glories of Christ. First come the sufferings of the Saviour, and then the glories at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But what comes in between? The Holy Spirit has come down from heaven, to give the believer all the joy that Christianity embraces in itself—the knowledge of the Father and of the Son. In his second epistle Peter alludes to the bygone action of the Spirit, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit took up and used various vessels, in Old Testament times, to unfold the mind and will of God, and Peter is led by the Spirit to say that they spoke by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John’s reference to the Holy Spirit is as a witness to the value of the work of the Saviour. In the first epistle, in chapter 5, verse 8, we read, “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (1 John 5:8). The Christian is now before God, in all the value of the work, which this blessed Son of God has accomplished, and the Holy Spirit is the witness to the work, and its results, in

God's gift to us of eternal life in His Son.

Jude contemplates the apostasy, and decay of Christendom, and nothing can be more solemn than what he describes. "These be they," he says, "who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (vss. 19-21). The remarkable thing in all the epistles is, that the believer is regarded as having received the Spirit. Have you the Holy Spirit? then, I would ask. It is a serious question. It is not, Have you faith? It is, Have you the Holy Spirit? "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost," should be the normal condition of God's people now.

It is a very noticeable fact, that in the New Testament, we never find prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit. Hymns and prayers, do not carry with them the stamp of what is divine, except they be by the Holy Spirit. Everything to be real must be of the Holy Spirit, and in the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is not, in that sense, an object of petition. It is by Him alone we worship, and in Him we should pray. He is down here as the servant of the Father's glory, and the servant of the glory of the Son. Likewise, and consequently, if it be a question of worship, it is to be "in spirit and in truth," and if it be prayer, it is to be prayer in the Spirit, and, in Scripture, I repeat, is never to the Spirit.

Then what about singing? you may perhaps ask. Well, the injunction is, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19). Again, we have, "I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15). The Holy Spirit is at the bottom of all the joys of the Christian. This being so, why do we not find any hymns given to us in the New Testament? But, you say, Look at the Psalms of David, you have plenty there. I quite admit the beauty of the Psalms of David, but the songs that suited David's day, and the notes that become ours, are quite different. Why, then, are there no hymns in the New Testament? I think the reason is this—the Holy Spirit is here, and the Holy Spirit is the source of real worship, and God would not formulate that, or limit it. Men like formulas. They are saved the exercise of faith thereby. But formula is ever cold and lifeless. Worship must not be formulated in any sense, because the Holy Spirit must be the spring of it, and I have no doubt those psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, spoken of in Ephesians 5:1-33 and Colossians 3:1-25 are those which the Holy Spirit indited after the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has led certain vessels of His power to express in these metrical lines what the truth is, springing from the joy, into which He first brings the believer, by the truth. There may be plenty of verse, and plenty of rhyme, yet His action be conspicuous by its absence, but a spiritual song is a song which the Holy Spirit alone can produce. He is free to use the pen of any servant, or vessel, for this service to the Church, as He is free to use the lips of any servant, in oral ministry. It may interest you to know that the number of hymns and spiritual songs which have been written in all languages—chiefly, and in their order numerically, in German, English, Latin, and Greek, from the day of Pentecost until now, is over four hundred thousand, and these all breathe, with more or less clearness, the power of the name of Jesus. Thank God for them! I do not say that the Holy Spirit has produced every one of these metrical compositions, but, most certainly, we are indebted to the Spirit for many of these spiritual songs, which proclaim the beauties, and the glories of the Saviour. Again, I say, Thank God for them! and yet it is sad to think that many a Christian has lived, and died, and never sung the name of Jesus. Why? Because he has not found it in the Psalms of David, and they only have been his psalter. He has lived in a

bygone dispensation.

Nothing is more manifest, and sad. Those psalms speak of an earthly people, of an earthly company, and though well suited to the state of souls, and the dispensation when they were written, as well as anticipating the day of the glory of the kingdom yet to be established, they are not suited to be an expression of the worship the Holy Spirit would produce in the saints, towards the Father, and the Son, in this day of full redemption. They do not touch the ground on which the saint is, who has been brought into that liberty of the Spirit, which we have been speaking about this evening. If you really touch that ground, you will find you will need something more full of Christ, and expressive of heavenly joy, than the Psalms of David are. I have not a word to say against these psalms—God forbid the thought—for they are most precious, as bringing Christ Himself so often before us, but, what I oppose, is the wrong use made of them, in confining the New Testament saint to the hymnal limits of the saint of the old and bygone dispensation.

Beautiful as are David's psalms, they were not intended by God to be the expression of the worship of the saints in the day of the Holy Spirit. When He had come, He was quite competent to use vessels to produce those metrical compositions which express the feeling of the saints. I know of nothing more beautiful than to go into an assembly, and to find that out of a given selection of these hymns, the Holy Spirit will pick out one song after another, which will just suit the felt condition, and be the worshipful expression of the assembly, at that moment. There is nothing more helpful to an assembly than a well-chosen hymn, and, sometimes, nothing more hinders the Spirit, than a hymn. Some men think that anybody can give out a hymn. I do not think I can give out a hymn rightly, unless I have the distinct guidance of the Lord therein. A brother may say, I had such a hymn on my heart, and so I gave it out. Yes, but that is no evidence of guidance, for a sister might have a hymn on her heart, yet she has to be silent in the assembly, and not give it out. No, we must have the guidance of the Lord.

Let us now look for a little at the truth of the Spirit in the Revelation. Its presentation is plain and simple. It is presented in a new character, in a day yet to come, when Christ takes up the rule once more, and comes to earth in His judicial capacity. The earth will then be under the direct judgment of God, and then it is, that the Spirit of God is spoken of, as "the seven Spirits of God." In the fourth chapter in the fifth verse we have "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Dearly these seven lamps of fire indicate that God is dealing with the whole earth judicially, even as you find in chapter 5: "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the eiders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." From chapter 6 to the end of chapter 19 we have brought before us the varied judicial actions of God upon the earth, as He prepares the scene for the coming in of the first begotten of the dead, the Lord Jesus. There is the universal action of the Spirit in that day. It will take the form of judgment. He will sweep the earth of all its ungodliness, so that the kingdom of the Lord may be established. When John had heard and seen all these coming sorrows, we read—"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (ch. 19:10.) The thought conveyed is, that the action of the Spirit produces amongst the saints of that day, an earnest looking for what is to come. There is something they are looking for, because it had not

come—namely, the kingdom of the Lord, which would bring them blessing and liberty. We are not looking for these blessings. We have them. The Holy Spirit has brought us to the Father, brought us to the Saviour, and brought the Saviour to us. We dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. We are not waiting for the Spirit. He is dwelling with us, and in us. That is our joy. The Holy Spirit as the “one Spirit,” has brought our souls into this.

By-and-by, in the day of the book of Revelation, the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, and that is what the saints, spoken of there, are looking for, sighing for, and desirous of obtaining. They are waiting for deliverance and blessing—waiting for peace. You and I are brought now into that which is our rest for eternity—the love of God. The only thing you and I have to wait for now is Jesus. And the book closes with the cry of the Bride for the Bridegroom—“Come, Lord Jesus.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” At the end of the book, the very close of the Word of God, you come to the point where the Lord, in closing the book, and putting it, so to speak, into our hands, once more presents Himself to the hearts of His people. And the Spirit dwelling in the Church to form its affections according to the relationship in which it stands to Christ, gives the answer that He looks for. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The Bride is upon earth still contemplating the moment when she shall be presented to the Saviour, the coming One. And now, beloved friends, what have you and I to do? To wait for the Lord Jesus, and nothing but Jesus, for we have the Holy Spirit. We are waiting for the coming of the Saviour—the Bridegroom of our hearts—the One who died for us, who gave Himself for us, and who loves us with a love stronger than death, and who will not be satisfied until He has brought His blood-bought Bride into the Father’s house. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

But, I think I hear you say, I never thought of the Lord’s coming in that way. You ought to join in the cry by the way which the Spirit utters here. “And let him that heareth say, Come.” If you are in Christ you ought to join in the chorus. Ah! you say, I am not ready. There is a word for you then. “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” You may have it now, where you sit. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” While Jesus waits, and forbears to come, look to Him, thirsty, anxious soul, and drink. Trust His name, rest upon Him, count upon His grace, and drink of this living water, and what then? When He comes you will not be left behind. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

God give us in His grace to know what it is to walk in the Spirit, and serve the Lord, while we wait for the coming of the Saviour, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, that we may be acceptable in our walk and ways. Then when we hear His voice, and rise to meet Him, what joy, what blessing, are ours—we rise to be with Him for evermore, never more to wound Him, to grieve Him, or wander from Him. Our eternity is one of unhindered blessing, and enjoyment of God. Oh! do not let us forget that what we have the Holy Spirit for, is to bring us into the present enjoyment of that which will be our portion forever.

Courtesy of BibleTruthPublishers.com. Most likely this text has not been proofread. Any suggestions for spelling or punctuation corrections would be warmly received. Please email them to: BTPmail@bibletruthpublishers.com.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net