

# Lecture 6 "Receive Ye the Holy Ghost;" or, "Life more abundantly."

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*John 20: 19-23.*

***"Another Comforter"***

*Thirteen Lectures on the Operations of the Holy Ghost.*

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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 Ghost 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, viz., the marvellous 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 wrapt 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" (Heb. 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" (John 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 Ghost. 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 for ever 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 Cor. 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 "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 labouring 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 I have power to take it again." It is true that He was "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 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" (Heb. 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 overestimated. 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 (Luke 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 sepulchre, 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 sepulchre, 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 sepulchre, 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 sepulchre, 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" (ver. 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 sepulchre, 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 ere 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 sepulchre weeping." She had no home in a world, that had cast out her Lord. It was empty for her. The world was henceforth characterised, for her, by the sepulchre 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 trow 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, every one 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" (John 20: 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 for ever, 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 Man — 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 favour, 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 marvellous, 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 Ghost, 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 Ghost 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 (ver. 24). It was the general company of believers in the Lord, the assembly, that became, on the descent of the Holy Ghost, in Acts 2, 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 pre-eminently 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" (ver. 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 Ghost. 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 Ghost 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, 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" (ver. 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" (ver. 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" (Gen. 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" (Gen. 2: 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 dishonouring to God, and equally dishonouring 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, and what the twentieth of John brings out. You have in one passage the perfect analogy of the other. In Genesis 2 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 Ghost. Although symbolising the gift of the Holy Ghost, 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 Ghost, through the Word, as the new birth, now takes its full Christian character. The Holy Ghost 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 Ghost. 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 Ghost.

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" (Rom. 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 "the Holy Ghost, 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 Ghost, 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" (Gal. 2: 20). Again, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 2: 4). What is the Christian's life? Christ. And where is Christ? He is in acceptance, and in favour. And where is the Christian? In the same acceptance, and in the same favour 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, 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" (ver. 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 Ghost. 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, viz., 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 Ghost. 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" (ver. 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 Ghost is the power. This chapter supposes you to have received the Holy Ghost. In the seventh chapter you have brought before you the man, who has not the Holy Ghost, 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 Ghost is presented to us in Romans 8 to illustrate the difference between John 20: 22, and the gift of the Holy Ghost personally at Pentecost, it is important to observe, that though historically one was before the other, i.e. the Holy Ghost as the power of life, before He was given to dwell in us, yet now that Christ has actually ascended, and the Holy Ghost 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 whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted; and whose soever 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 Ghost 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 Ghost 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. 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 afterwards 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" (Acts 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 every one who has received His forgiveness, and we ought to be able to recognise 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 out of this room tonight, 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 Ghost, 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 Ghost, and the place of Christ, the privileges of Christ, and the position of Christ, are those of the Christian. Likewise the Holy Ghost 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.