

# Lecture 6 — The Holy Spirit's Temple:

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*John 8: 31, 32, 36; 2 Cor. 3: 5, 6, 17; 1 Cor. 3: 16; 1 Cor. 12 - 14.*

## from 'The Church: What is it?'

**Ten lectures on the church of the New Testament seen to be established, endowed, united and free.**

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## The Holy Spirit's Temple: The Free Church.

If there be one thing more than another that marks Christianity, it is that which is brought before us in the words of our Lord in the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, and in the writings of the Spirit of God in 2 Corinthians 3 — namely, that the saint of God today is called to freedom, divine freedom, divine liberty; and that is why I say that I believe the Assembly of God is a free Church. There is not the smallest touch of bondage about it, viewed according to Scripture. If you are not yet in the liberty of the Spirit of God, individually and collectively, I hope you soon may be, because, according to Scripture, if you are not free in your soul before God — if you are not standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free (Gal. 5: 1), you are not breathing Christian atmosphere.

How simple are the Lord's words to the Jews, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*" (John 8: 32). First of all, the soul, individually, by the reception of the truth revealed in Christ, is set in perfect freedom before God. Freedom from what? Everything that would hinder your heart and soul thoroughly enjoying God. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever" (John 8: 35). The servant is in bondage; the Son is in liberty. There is the contrast; and who is the Son? The blessed Lord Himself; and what does He do? The moment He takes you into association with Himself, of course on the ground of death and resurrection, you are in the same atmosphere as He is, and therefore when He says, "the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you *free*, ye shall be *free indeed*" (ver. 36), He indicates the abiding liberty into which His grace brings us, that we may enjoy the rich portion He shares with us. I like to admit, honestly and openly, that I am a Free Churchman. You say, The Free Church of Scotland? No, nor of any other land; the Free Church of God — of Scripture. I am also a thoroughly Established Churchman; and greatly rejoice further to be a member of the United Church. The Established-United-Free Church is the Church of Scripture, and membership of anything but that is foreign to its teaching. God's Assembly is *established, united, and free*, and I should be ashamed to own that I was a member of aught else. All Christians are united to Christ and to each other, are in the liberty of sonship before God individually, and are brought by God into the most wonderful liberty collectively, His saints, all together, forming the temple of God. Now see how other scriptures present it.

In Romans 6 the apostle says of believers in Christ, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (ver. 18). There is yet sin in the believer, but he is set free from its domination. He has learned what it is to have died with Christ, and to be alive in Him, in all the freedom of resurrection. This liberty, however, is never known till I have the sense that I am dead with Christ, and also am risen with Him. What is true of Christ, the believer is to apprehend — by faith for himself, and take account of as true of himself.

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (ver. 10). What is that? He has nothing but God before Him. Now for the sequence: "*Likewise reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (ver. 11). Is not that liberty? If you do not understand that, I hope you soon will.

Romans 7 tells us of one who is what many are today — full of himself. He speaks of himself forty times, and at length he says, "O wretched man that I am." He could not be anything else, because he is full of himself. How did he get liberty? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 25). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus: for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 1, 2). There is our new place before God in Christ. Who is that true of? Every one who through faith in Christ and the Spirit's power can enter into it. There is no use pretending to be free if you are not. But thank God, it is the portion of the feeblest believer. I have had the happy and exhilarating sense of what it is to be connected with Christ, the other side of death, for four and forty years. He is my life, and in Him I have sweetest liberty.

Now go to Galatians, and see how this truth is presented there. I find the apostle saying, "Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5: 1). What is that? Getting under law. Nine-tenths of God's people today are under law as to their standing before God, and in their soul's relation to Him, hence they are in bondage. Paul urges us not to be entrapped by the yoke of bondage, because law occupies me with myself, and a man that is occupied with himself is bound to be wretched, because there is nothing in him that can answer to God's claims. You must learn that you are "dead to law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7: 4), and alive unto God, before you can get liberty. A Christian is entitled to know this, hence the apostle says, "*Stand fast* therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5: 1). Liberty — freedom, is what belongs to a Christian; not liberty for the flesh, but emancipation from it, and from all that which kept the soul in bondage, darkness, and distance, so that we might be in the enjoyment of God, even as Christ is.

What a trumpet note of the Spirit to our souls we next hear: "For, brethren, ye have been *called unto liberty*; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5: 13). The apostle is so angry with the legalist teachers — the men that put the Christian under law, and consequently into bondage — that he adds, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (ver. 12). Paul knew that love effects what law fails to produce, just as the gospel takes you much further than the law. The law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" The gospel teaches us to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3: 16). For this the believer in Christ has power, by the Holy Ghost; for the gospel gives you life, power, and an object, life in Christ, power by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and then Christ personally as

the object for the heart. The law did not give you any of these; the gospel gives you them all. Well may Paul say, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" - *i.e.*, hold firmly the very elements of the Christian calling — and then adds "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5: 13).

Now look at 2 Corinthians 3, where Paul says, "Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (ver. 6). If you were under the new covenant in the letter, you would get into bondage again, therefore he says, God "hath made us *able* ministers of the new covenant; not of *the letter*, but of *the spirit*." What is the new covenant? The terms of relationship with Himself into which God will enter by-and-by with the house of Israel and the house of Judah according to Jeremiah 31: 33, 34: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Israel will then be fitted for the enjoyment of the reign of Christ; they will have the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Ghost be in them, but their blessing does not include the sense of sonship and union with Christ. We have all that they will have, and much more; but we are in the enjoyment of the blessings of the new covenant, through the ministry of it, without being under it. We must always remember that all Israel's blessing by-and-by is on earth, whereas we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

We get the spirit of that covenant which is grace. Then we are told, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (ver. 17). That is the characteristic feature of Christianity — liberty, as there was none under the law, to behold the unveiled glory of God in the face of Christ; and the effect of it is to transform us into the same image, for" 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" (ver. 18). You get occupied with Christ, as He is revealed in glory. And as you are occupied with Him you become transformed — you become more and more like the One with whom you are occupied. What occupies a person will give colour to his character; and if you are occupied with Christ, in the enjoyment of what He is, and where He is, you will take your colour from Him, and come back into this world, either individually, or as the Assembly to be here for Christ, and to express Christ in the scene where He is not.

Now if it be true that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," we may well ask, Where is the Spirit of the Lord? He dwells in His temple. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6 — which is the only place in the New Testament where we have the term, "temple of the Holy Ghost." The apostle in writing to the saints at Corinth about practical life and holy walk, 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?" (ver. 19). That is the body of the individual Christian — yours and mine. Every Christian has received the Holy Ghost; a divine Person has come to dwell in his body — which is the blessing promised by the Lord in the gospel. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of

truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you (collectively), and shall be in you (individually) (John 14: 16, 17).

And now this precious truth is applied practically to each individual, as Paul inquires: "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" (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20). That blessed truth regarding the individual should lead each believer to be holy in the practical details of daily life, because, wherever we go, we take the Holy Ghost with us. If we go into bad associations, morally or spiritually bad, we take the Spirit with us. Do you think He will manifest Christ to us under these circumstances? No, He will be like the scarlet pimpernel that opens during the day and closes at night. He shuts up, so to speak, ceases to minister Christ to your soul, and you do not feel very happy, because you have grieved Him, and in faithfulness to you, He grieves you. The apostle says, Do not forget "ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." That is the individual side of the Spirit's temple, and now to see the collective we will go back to 1 Corinthians 3: 16.

Addressing the Corinthian Assembly, Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The temple is the House of God in its most sacred aspect — the Assembly. God dwells in it by the Spirit — for "ye are the temple of God": hence the terrible sin of defiling it. What is your thought of a temple? No man's house is a temple: God's house is, as occupied by God, and God's Spirit making Him known. We must get hold of the double thought — it is the temple *of God*, and the Spirit of God *dwells* there. It is where His presence may be known, and where His blessed Spirit dwells for that very purpose.

There is a remarkable verse in the Old Testament that connects itself in my mind with this — "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory," or, as the margin translates it, "Every whit of it uttereth his glory" (Ps. 29: 9). What is the meaning of that? There is not a thing in His temple, says the Psalmist, that will not utter His glory. You say, If *we* are that temple then we are here for that object. There is a great truth in that — I commend that verse to you. Study it, pray over it, ponder it; and you will find out that if you have learned what it is to be of God's temple, there is something very grave about it, as every whit of it is to utter His glory. How could that glory be uttered unless His presence be known and enjoyed? The thought is very beautiful — He is in His temple just to make His presence known to His people, that their hearts should turn back to Him in worship, delight, and praise. Our Lord says in Psalm 22, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (ver. 22). There, in the Assembly, the blessed Lord, the risen Man, declares the Father's name, and becomes the Leader of the praises of His people.

You will say, that is Psalm 22, but it might not have the peculiar application I have given it. Go, then, to Hebrews 2, and read what is there said regarding His singing in the Assembly. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren (ver. 11). Who is he that sanctifieth? Christ; and "they who are sanctified"? — all Christ's, every one that belongs to Him — they "are all of one "of one stock, one set, one place before God as set forth in the risen Man. It is the place that Christ's brethren

— the Assembly — have before God; hence it says, "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

I hope you would not call the Lord Jesus your Brother, not even "Elder Brother." Thomas will teach you better, as you hear him speak on the second Lord's Day, when Jesus was among His disciples. He was not present the first Lord's Day, and he missed a fine meeting. It is a great mistake to miss a meeting with God's people. The next Lord's Day Thomas was present, and the Lord spoke to him. Mark his response: "My Lord and my God" (John 20: 28). There is a reverence due to that exalted Being, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we must maintain, and that we must ever preserve in our own souls. Of His saints it says, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" — sometimes we fear He might be, as we think of our life and ways. He is looking at the Assembly, however, as that which He has redeemed by His atoning sufferings and bloodshedding; He has presented it to God, and "he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Wonderful, indeed, is it to hear Him sing praise. How does He do it? Do you not understand? Then you have missed the great point of Christianity if you have not got this. To be, here on earth, in His Assembly, where you have His presence, hear His voice, and are conscious of His leadership, as He is leading the praise, is wonderfully blessed — every whit of that temple is to be vocal with God's glory, and the risen Man leads it.

You say, I thought we should get that by-and-by, when we get to heaven. Yes, but we are also to have it down here. How are we to get it, you say? Well, that is the question; the Spirit of God alone can lead us into it. Now look at the temple, and see how the Spirit of God works in the Assembly. The temple is connected with worship, and where can I get worship? Only in the midst of God's people, who form that temple. I meet a crowd today in the street hurrying along. I know some of them and I say, Where are you going? "Oh, to church." What for? "Dr So-and-So is going to preach." And do you call that worship? Oh no, that is not worship, that is ministry, quite right in its place, but ministry is not worship. There is tremendous confusion in the minds of Christians about these matters. You may say, "What are you doing this afternoon? You are speaking on God's Word." True, but I am only exercising any little gift God has given me for the good of His people, or those not yet converted if such be here — but this is not a worship meeting, nor is it the Assembly. The Assembly, *in function*, consists only of the Lord's people, born of His Spirit, and indwelt of His Spirit, gathered together in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing the blessed truth that there is one Body, and when so gathered, subject to the guidance and control of His Spirit. The chief object of the Assembly when so gathered is the Lord's Supper — the showing of His death, which leads to praise and worship of the highest kind.

What is the difference between ministry and worship? Worship goes up to God, and ministry comes down from God. If you come and hear me speak, and get a little help, thank God; but that is ministry, not worship — it comes from God to you, though He may use a human vessel. But worship is what we read of in John 4: "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. . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but 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 (fountain) of water *springing up* into everlasting life" (vers. 10, 13, 14). That is what

the Lord says to the poor Samaritan woman. It is to her He also says, "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" (vers. 23, 24).

Do you know what the Lord Jesus did and is doing? He came "to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*" (Luke 19: 10). He is still ranging the world to find sinners to save them. The Father is *seeking worshippers*, and it is only His children that can be such. You cannot get worship from the world, it knows Him not. Pharaoh wanted to get the Israelites to put up their altar in Egypt. No, said Moses; and he was quite right. The world is a scene under judgment. We, like Israel, must go three days' journey into the wilderness, so to speak, before we can hold a feast unto the Lord. There must be downright separation from this scene, and that is what Christianity is. You are brought by the death and resurrection of Christ out of this scene, into relationship with Christ, and you find yourself in the company of the risen Man. He is the Leader of the worship of God's Assembly, and none but God's people are there.

What about the world? It is outside. What are you going to do with them? Leave them alone while we worship; they cannot worship. Worship is the overflow of a full heart — the outflow of a heart that enjoys God; but the man of the world does not know Him. I would leave them alone very severely so far as worship is concerned, for they know nothing about it. But on the other hand, when not engaged in the worship of God with our fellow-saints, we should seek to be in season, and out of season, carrying the blessed gospel of God to them. Then when they have believed and received the gospel and also the Holy Ghost to dwell within them, we should like to see them in the bosom of God's Assembly, and will heartily say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" (Gen. 24: 31). But as long, my hearer, as you are unconverted, you are really outside, you have no place in God's Assembly, for of you it is as true as of Simon, you have "neither part nor lot in this matter." That is drawing a very hard and fast line, you say. I did not draw it, I did not write the Scriptures. You see how God writes, and what He says. People have such strange notions in their heads about "the Church." They must all "join the Church" — whether converted and saved is often a question not raised — and they go in troops, and God's people are thus swamped and spiritually hindered, if not actually buried in Christendom's systems, which avowedly admit believers and unbelievers to similar privileges — such as the Lord's Supper. True spiritual worship under those circumstances is an impossibility.

Now let us look at 1 Corinthians 12 and its connection with chapters 13 and 14. You will remember that Paul wrote to Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1: 7). The spirit of power is seen in 1 Corinthians 12 — the Holy Spirit; the spirit of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13 — the spirit of Christ; and the spirit of a sound mind is what marks 1 Corinthians 14. Study these three chapters, and you will find it to be so. The persons who possess the gifts of the twelfth chapter must be imbued with the spirit of the thirteenth, or they will be of no use in the fourteenth, where you have the Assembly in function. What do you mean by that, you ask? Well, the British Parliament exists, though it is not sitting today while I speak. All the members are away in the country; but presently they will return, assemble at Westminster, and that will be Parliament in function. That really is chapter 14, and there we learn how God's Assembly is to be conducted. Chapter 12 shows us all that the Spirit is to the Assembly. The gifts are manifestations of the energy of the Spirit committed to

men, and we read that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (vers. 4-6). This is not exactly an exposition of the Trinity, but you have the Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and God, all in relation to the Assembly — the Assembly here on earth — acting in and through the gifts.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (ver. 7). Whatever the Holy Ghost has given to any individual member of the Assembly is not for himself, it is for all the rest, for the profit of everybody else. "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; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, *dividing to every man severally as he will*" (vers. 8-11). It is the sovereign will of the Holy Ghost that distributes these various gifts in power, for the good and blessing of the Assembly. Where He works, it is God who works, but the Spirit is thus presented personally acting on earth as *He wills*, and His operations in men are gifts distributed according to His will.

That is the way God started the Assembly down here, and the variety presented is most interesting. Spiritual power was very diversified, and the most striking feature of this chapter is the fact that all these various and most useful manifestations were not placed in one man, but by the same Spirit divided to every man severally as He willed, the complete antithesis to the usual ministry of Christendom's churches.

I pity the minister of the present moment, for he is supposed to have every possible gift vested in him. He must preach and exhort, teach the believers, convert the unbelievers, dispense the sacraments, visit the sick, bury the dead, be pastor, teacher, and evangelist all in one, and finally lead the congregation in worship — a goodly charge indeed. Christendom demands this, and gets plenty to take upon themselves this responsibility. In fact, generally speaking, people are not happy unless they can find a man to their mind who will take charge of the whole concern. But that is not what Scripture teaches; and whether the plan — which is not Divine — really leads to true Divine worship, whether it works out well, and leads to spiritual life and progress, the saints being well fed, while sinners are manifestly saved, you must judge. But I think it is rather like King David's new cart that carried God's Ark in the wrong way. He got into trouble over that, and was the cause of a man's death. Then David halted, read his Bible for three months, and got a lot of light. Of that more anon.

Now God has given us His way for His Assembly, and it is very simple; it is by one Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. Do you not think there is all that God knows is necessary for His Assembly in it today? Yes, it is there, but much is not in use, many gifted men are, practically speaking, buried in the systems I have alluded to, and are consequently not in the exercise of the gift they have received.

The order and importance of the various gifts we may now glance at. "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" (ver. 28). Gifts were to be estimated

according to the measure in which they served to really edify the Assembly. Some were more excellent than others, and should be earnestly coveted. Why are tongues put last? The Corinthians were proud of them, and put them first — they thought if a man could stand up and talk in a foreign language, it was wonderful. They possessed these sign-gifts, and used them like children with a new toy — showed them off — and the Assembly was being turned into a kind of Babel, because they were using these gifts quite out of place. The sign-gifts were to testify to people outside. "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (1 Cor. 14: 22). The possessor of a spiritual gift was a man honoured of God, for he ministered to God's people, and this explains the exhortation — "but covet earnestly the *best* gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12: 31). I wish I saw the saints, young and old, more covetous of that which would help them to minister the things of the Lord to the people of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 13 opens with a statement that all *preachers* should remember. Here is God's word to us. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (ver. 1). Love is what God is, and if I have it not, I am not born of God so as to partake of His nature. God's love is its own motive, and, in us, participation in the Divine nature is the alone source of love, which will sustain us in all difficulties. Let us never forget that love is God's nature, and we are to represent Him on earth. You say, I have no gift. Possibly so, but you can love. That every Christian can do, and it is more valuable than the brightest gift, because love is the nature of God, and seeks the blessing of others — it thinks of everybody but itself. What is said of love in chapter 13 is really the reproduction of the divine nature. It is the life of Jesus, and love abides for ever.

In chapter 12 we have had the gifts, and in chapter 13 we have love unfolded to us, the spirit in which they must be exercised if they are going to be useful in chapter 14. Long ago I used to wonder why chapter 13 came in there. I understand now, there is no use in any gift unless it is exercised in the spirit of love — love that seeks the profit of others. In 1 Corinthians 14 you have the Assembly receiving God's instructions, as to what was to obtain in its midst when in function, i.e., when gathered together, so that God might have what He desires out of His people so assembled. First we are told to "follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, 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" (vers. 1, 2, 3). Are there any prophets now? Not in the sense of those who bring out the mind of God for the first time, who were connected with the apostles at the foundation (Eph. 2: 20). But there are yet men who are prophets in the sense of verse 3, whom the Spirit can use to speak after this manner, for edification, exhortation, and comfort — men whose ministry brings you into the presence of God, builds you up, stirs you up, and binds you up. Such ministry is invaluable; it is the richest gift. There are many who are anxious to be built up, and if you get good out of ministry, and feel you have been built up in the truth of Christ, that is edification. Then there is exhortation. I like a prophetic brother who stirs me up. He touches my conscience, and brings me into God's presence, as to my practical ways. His ministry is very valuable to God's people. Then there is the comfort, the binding up. There are, in God's Assembly, such prophets today, though they may not all be exercising their gifts — that is another thing.

Now observe that the thought of what will *profit* the Assembly is always before the apostle's mind in this chapter. Edification is to be the ruling principle. "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive *edifying*" (ver. 5). The keynote of God's Assembly is what will profit, what will help. If ministry is profitable, all right; if not, it is not to be allowed, it is condemned by the Spirit of God. The Assembly will soon know what profits it; and if my ministry is not profitable, the kindest thing my brethren can do is to tell me so. It is waste of time for any of us to go on with that which does not profit. You might not be able to say much, but if God's Spirit gives you anything to say to His Assembly, say it, you have that liberty in God's free Church, and the "five words" might help greatly (see ver. 19).

But an unknown tongue could profit no one, and accordingly we read, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful" (vers. 13, 14). I must know what to pray about, and pray so that others may understand me, *i.e.*, in a language they understand, and audibly to boot. I said to a brother once, "I never say Amen to your prayers." He said, "Do you not? Why not?" "Because I never hear what you say," I replied. He was a mumblor. There should be no such in public. The point is what is profitable. If a man prays till you are fairly worn out by it, that is not for profit. The essence of a good prayer-meeting is simplicity, audibility, and brevity. Long prayers in public are only spoken of in Scripture with condemnation. Prayer in your own closet, with shut doors, may be as long as you like, and our Lord said will be rewarded (see Matt. 6: 6).

In the Assembly the Spirit should control every motion. "What is it then? 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" (ver. 15). God's Assembly is marked by prayer — the expression of dependence — and singing, which is the outlet of the heart's joy. Some people think it is not spiritual to sing — I do not think they have the Spirit's mind. Paul says, "*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 thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (ver. 16) Here is worship; blessing and giving of thanks. What a lovely picture of the Assembly in function. It is marked by ministry that profits, and prayer, singing, and worship. That is what God's Assembly is put together for, to turn to Him in prayer, song, and worship. It is the New Testament analogue of Psalm 29: 9 — "Every whit of it uttereth thy glory."

Worship is a most important function of God's Assembly. But what is worship? It is not thanksgiving — it is more. Thanksgiving is gratitude and blessing for what God has given; but worship is the delight of the heart in what He is. It is the soul finding its delight in God — its rest in the revelation of Himself, in Christ. It is not merely gratitude for blessings conferred, for what you have got, though that be not forgotten, but your soul is delighting in Himself, and that is what God looks for. One saint expresses it for all the rest, and the Assembly says Amen. In what takes place in the Assembly God likes warmth and fervency, and if a brother prays to, or worships God, one likes to hear a hearty Amen. There will be a worship meeting by-and-by, in which the Assembly will take part, and hear an Amen that will reverberate through creation. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in

the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen" (Rev. 5: 13, 14). There is a deep diapason note in that Amen. Sometimes brothers pray and lead in worship, yet there is not a sound at the end. I believe if the heart is right there will go out an Amen, a so be it. You are putting your seal upon that which the Spirit of God elicits, and God looks for that.

But now as to ministry in the Assembly. We get very distinct instructions as to what is, and what is not to obtain. Paul felt the importance of only acting in a way that ensured profit to others. "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. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in *understanding be men*" (vers. 18-20). We ought to understand and obey the Assembly instructions which, in His wisdom and love, our God has here given us, for this chapter is very important, as you will see. "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that they will not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (vers. 21, 22).

Sign-gifts were only for the beginning, but prophecy always goes on, and here we have the final and fullest directions for the conduct of God's Assembly when coming together. "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?" Mark those words — "the whole Assembly." Here was God's Assembly in one place. You may say, you cannot get that now. If I could not get the whole I would seek to be one of those that would act on the truth that should bind the whole, if they were subject to God's Word. All were supposed to be there, and gathered in this way. If all spoke with tongues the unlearned would be disgusted. "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" (vers. 24, 25). Detected and exposed by the prophetic ministry, the man's heart is reached, He worships God. He has proved that God had a temple at Corinth, and met God in His temple there. If we all walked in the truth of this, and were so gathered today, a worldly man coming in would find such power that he would say, "There were a lot of Christians there, but God was there too."

But the Assembly at Corinth, though they thus gathered, were uninstructed, hence Paul asks, "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*" (ver. 26). They were all too active at Corinth; but that was the way the Assembly met, with freedom and liberty for *every one* to take part. How to take part *with profit* is taught here. And now we get plain instructions. "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course (*i.e.*, separately); and let one interpret" (ver. 27). How simple. "If any man speak," that is open enough, free enough surely. Is that the way things are conducted in the church to which you go? You say, We do not allow that. Why not? Here is God's word for His Assembly. Here are His instructions for you and me, for this epistle is written

to us, as much as to the Corinthians; and God says "if *any* man speak." It is to be only two or three, not more, and not all together.

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (ver. 28). If what he has got to say cannot be made understandable to others, it is of no use — it is excluded. "Let the prophets speak two or *three*, and *let the others judge*" (ver. 29). Not to permit this when the Assembly is gathered together is to quench the Spirit. That is as clear as daylight from another scripture, where the apostle says, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5: 20, 21). To despise or hinder the freedom of the prophets is to quench the Spirit. Solemn reflection. I could not, and would not, recognise anything as the Assembly of God where this liberty of the Spirit of God to use any member of the Assembly He *willed* was not maintained inviolate; nor should you; to do so is going clean in the teeth of God's Word. We are not supposed to swallow, but we are told to judge what every one says, and I do not expect you to lightly swallow what I say, but God's injunction as to the liberty for two or three to speak we must each of us heed, if we are to please Him and keep a good conscience. Whoever speaks must do so as "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4: 11). That is his responsibility, ours is to "*prove* all things, and hold fast that which is good." We are bound to judge of what is spoken, not critically, but so as to know what is right, and not to sanction what is wrong.

And then we are told — "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace" (ver. 30). A prophet might be speaking, and another sitting by get a revelation; if he get up, the first must hold his peace. If the Spirit of God in energy raises a second, the first must sit down. You say, There would be all sorts of confusion in the Assembly if this were allowed. I beg your pardon, the confusion is when it is not allowed, for God is disobeyed. He has said, "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. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (vers. 31, 32, 33).

These instructions, I repeat, were not merely for Corinth but for every Assembly in every place (see 1 Cor. 1: 2). These directions are binding upon you and me today; and all I say is, if you are sanctioning what is in the teeth of this, you are assuming a very grave responsibility in your pathway as a child of God. The existing arrangements in the Churches of Christendom are distinctly in opposition to what we are told here. Supposing the apostle Paul came into this city this morning, and found himself at the service of one of these Churches, could he get up to speak? You say, That could not be; it is all arranged beforehand. Yes; and that is where the departure from God's Word is so apparent, and the results so sad. The existing arrangements of man absolutely do what Paul told the Thessalonian Assembly not to do: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." To despise the latter — refusing them — is to *quench* the former. The world "*resists*" the Holy Ghost (Acts 7: 51), the individual may "*grieve*" Him (Eph. 4: 30), but the Assembly, as such, can "*quench*" Him by refusal to heed what He may say through a prophet of His own selection. That is easily and now universally done by pre-arranging all, and putting all into the hands of one or two, who shall preside over the Assembly, to the exclusion of the Spirit's free action by any member thereof that He may will to use for the profit of all the rest. Those who sanction and accept this clerical position incur a fearful responsibility regarding the rights of the Holy Ghost, which the youngest saint can see are thus ruthlessly infringed and

disregarded. The greatest sin of Christendom is the way the Holy Ghost has been treated in what calls itself the Church.

You know where you are today — are you walking on the lines laid down in 1 Corinthians 14? You say, No. Well, you will have to ponder this scripture, and one thing that should awaken your inquiry in the matter is the injunction, "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" (ver. 34). What use was it to bid women be quiet in the Assembly, if all the men might not speak? You know that in the Churches everywhere today women *and* men too are kept silent. Everything is, as I have previously said, supposed to be wrapped up in the person of one man or two - *everybody else is to be quiet*. God says, "Ye may *all* prophesy, one by one." The only restriction was upon the women — "Let your women keep silence." Christendom says, Ye may *not* speak, save the one we have authorised to speak. And you call that the Church! It is man's, not God's Assembly.

The apostle saw that the Corinthians then — as well as many today — would not like these instructions, so then he says, "What? came the word of God *out* from you? or came it unto *you only*?" (ver. 36). That means, Are you to teach me? or am I to teach you? or are these instructions *meant only for you*? Not at all, they are God's plain directions for every Assembly — the whole Assembly of God, world-wide, is bound — when come together — to follow the directions of this chapter, or they will find out by-and-by, in the day of the Lord, that they have made a mistake, as to Church order, all along the line down here, and have built up that which has not God's sanction.

The gravity of these instructions is intensified deeply by the apostle's next word: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that *the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" (ver. 37). We all like to think ourselves spiritual. Now, fellow-Christians, you must face this, every one of you — "the commandments of the Lord" must not be despised. You cannot treat them lightly, and if you have not treated them rightly before, I hope God will give you grace to do so from this time forth. I know some will say, All that was for early days, and did then, but it is not practicable now. That is sheer unbelief, and audacity to boot. God has spoken, our place is to obey, not to tell Him that we are wiser than He, and know how to arrange matters in His House better than He knew Himself.

In God's House every arrangement must be of God, not of man. We should enter the Assembly with the sense that God will order, arrange, and take care of Christ's glory better than we can by any arrangement of man's suggesting. Everything in the Assembly 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 to begin with, and then rules and regulations as to the conduct of the Assembly, you are trenching on the domain and liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is a noticeable thing that Christendom's creeds and confessions are marked by the omission of any adequate testimony to the personal presence in the Assembly of the Spirit of God. I do not say that it is denied; but the truth of His personal presence, as dwelling in the House of God, and also in the individual believer, for all that relates to the order of the former, and the comfort of the latter, is conspicuous by its absence. The kernel truth of Christianity is little in evidence.

Again the arrangements for the so-called worship of God are made after a sort that render men independent of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is left out as though He were not here at all. A formula takes the place of the unhindered action of the Spirit in some quarters, and the intervention of men — appointed by man — obtains in others. In all this the Church has departed from the truth, and not listened to the words of her Lord. It is with deep sadness I say these things, but I dare not shrink from uttering the truth in respect of this, for the blessing and growth in grace of God's dear children so depend on this grave matter. It is in direct ratio as we give the Holy Ghost His right place in our lives individually, and in the Assembly collectively, that we advance spiritually.

But many will say, If you do not have things arranged beforehand there will be sure to be confusion. Leave God out, and there will be. Let Him have His place, and there will be none. I will ask you a simple question. Who orders matters in your house? You or your servants? "Of course I order my own household," is your reply. Good. The Assembly is God's House. Can He not keep order in it better than we? Surely. Let us have faith in the real ever-abiding presence of the Spirit of God. The presence of that Spirit is a real thing, and if only there be two or three today who are prepared to own the truth of the Body of Christ and the habitation of God, as they gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will He be, and the ever-faithful Spirit will deeply bless such. God always honours faith, and we shall do well to remember that God's arrangements are ever better than man's. Further, we must not forget that these injunctions in 1 Corinthians 14 are the *Lord's Commandments*, and long ago He said, "Behold, to *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15: 22, 23).

"But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (ver. 38), is small comfort to all such. If any are ignorant that Paul wrote with God's authority in this matter, it is ignorance indeed; let such be bound in their ignorance. The simple and spiritual will be delivered. Any one filled with the Spirit will own that what Paul here gives us, is the expression of God's wisdom, and came from Him to His Assembly for its blessing. The conclusion of it all is this, "Wherefore, brethren, *covet* to prophesy, and *forbid not* to speak with tongues" (ver. 39). We must not have any manmade rules in God's Assembly, to check His Spirit, or lessen the activity of His Spirit; and the great sin of Christendom, I repeat, has been the quenching of the Holy Spirit, by introducing rules and regulations as to the Assembly clean contrary to the Lord's commandments here given.

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (ver. 40) is a very lovely word for our hearts to heed. It is like an inscription that runs right round the inside of a building. In chapter 3 the Assembly of God is presented under the figure of a temple. As I draw near, and am going up the steps, I see written over the portico, "*He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*" (1 Cor. 3: 19). That is God saying to us, *If you come in here, you will be found out*. I go inside, and I see a beautiful golden belt running all round the building, and inscribed on it, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" And what is the Divine order? The order that comes in chapters 12 and 14. Whether you and I are walking in the due order is the question each must answer for himself before the Lord. He who is so walking will agree with me that God's Assembly is indeed THE FREE CHURCH of Scripture.