

# The Holy Spirit

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### HIS DIVINE PERSONALITY.

Man by all his searching cannot find out God; but what God has revealed in His word concerning Himself is for our adoring contemplation and study. But we do well to engage in such studies with reverence and godly fear. If there be a right attitude of soul toward God, and due subjection of spirit, our souls will be nourished, and our worship deepened; but if the mind be allowed to stray in any measure, or if we go in any wise beyond what is written, we are in jeopardy, as many have proved to their sorrow.

Scripture is most plain, whatever unbelief may say, that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead, equal in power, majesty, and glory, each taking His own part in all that is done, whether in creation or redemption, yet ever acting in perfect unity and communion.

It is interesting to observe that the Trinity was first clearly revealed at the baptism of the Lord Jesus. When coming up from Jordan, after having fulfilled all righteousness, the Father opened the heavens to Him, and expressed the delight of His heart in Him, and the Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove upon Him (Matt. 3: 16, 17)

What can be clearer to a simple mind than this! The Father speaks, the Son receives His testimony, and the Holy Spirit descends to seal and anoint Him. Three persons, yet but one God.

It is proposed to deal somewhat, if the Lord will, with the person and work of the Holy Spirit, particularly with His gracious operations during this period of privilege while the Lord Jesus is hidden in heaven at God's right hand. The personality of the Holy Spirit has been called in question by not a few, some speaking of Him as though He were a mere influence; others alas! sinking in their ideas lower still. Many also who truly love the Lord Jesus, and desire to have right thoughts, are often very vague as to the person and work of the Spirit of God.

On this occasion, I shall do little more than bring together some of the scriptures which distinctly assert His personality and deity. We will let scripture speak for itself to our souls. Could the following be said of aught but a person! "I will send him unto you." "When he is come." (John 16: 7, 8) "He shall testify of me" (John 15: 6). "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4: 6). He is represented too, as striving with man (Gen. 6:3), revealing things to the saints (1 Cor. 2: 10; Luke 2: 26), and He it was who sent forth Barnabas and Saul from Antioch to evangelise the Gentile world (Acts 13: 2). Can any of these things be said of a mere influence! Moreover He can be resisted (Acts 7: 51) Vexed (Isa. 63: 10), grieved (Eph. 4: 30) lied to (Acts 5: 3), and, solemn to say, blasphemed (Matt. 12: 31)

Further; scripture declares He has taken a part in the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). The Spirit of God was thus the antitype of the oil which formed one of the ingredients of the meal offering, as it is said, "mingled with oil" (Lev. 2: 4).

As to the cross, we read that Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). Then, after having been put to death in the flesh," on the third day He was "quickened by the Spirit," "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead" (1 Peter 3: 18; Rom. 1: 4). The last passage, I may say in passing, includes doubtless the resurrection of others as well as the Lord Jesus, as Lazarus, etc. But all these scriptures speak to us of a person, beyond all dispute; and a divine person too, as I shall now proceed to show. The word of God declares His creatorship! His omniscience! His omnipresence, His sovereignty, and His equality with Father and Son.

(1) His creatorship. He had a part with the Father and the Son in all that was done; else what is the force of the passage! "By his Spirit he garnished the heavens"! (Job 26: 13) As to the inferior creation we read, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created" (Ps. 104: 30). And to go back to the earliest record, the very first mention of divine activity in the six days' work is, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" Gen. 1: 2). What can be plainer!

(2). His omniscience. We read that "he searcheth all things, even, the deep things of God" 1 Cor 2: 10 We cannot do this. The apostle shows that we should never have known God's depths had not the Holy Spirit come from heaven to be our Instructor.

(3) His omnipresence. David said, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139: 7). He felt that wherever he went, below or above, whether in darkness or light, the Spirit of God knew all his movements, and discerned the thoughts and intents of the heart. And in the present period of grace, does not one Spirit dwell and act in all the saints of God the world over!

(4) His sovereignty. 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of His manifestations in the saints for their mutual Profit and the Lord's glory, and there we read, "dividing to every man severally as he will." This is a plain assertion of His sovereign action, and they are the losers who fail to understand and act upon it in faith.

(5) His equality. Though a distinct person, in no sense is the Holy Spirit inferior to the Father and the Son. All are co-equal and co-eternal. In concluding his second epistle to the Corinthians the apostle links the Holy Spirit with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, in his salutation. And the departing Lord, in giving instructions to His disciples, bade them "teach all nations, baptising them in unto the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28: 19).

Are not these divinely formed links! Who would venture to join with the Father and the Son one who was not divine! Faith may therefore rest assured that the Holy Spirit, whereof we speak is a person, and properly and essentially divine.

## **HIS INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

We have seen that the Spirit of God is a person, and that He is divine in the fullest sense of the term; we will now look at His gracious operations with regard to the scriptures.

It is an unspeakable mercy in such a scene as this, with the Babel of human opinions on every hand, that our God has given us a perfect revelation of His mind and will in His own precious word. Where else could we turn for divine certainty! Where besides is there a solid rock for our feet! And whither, if not to scripture, could we turn for a sure and settled resting place! Possessing the word of God, we are thoroughly furnished; we have food for our souls, and light for our path.

Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit. He it was Who guided each writer, whether in the Old Testament or the New, filling and taking possession of the vessel, holding in check all that would be of man, that we might have the mind of God in its Perfection and purity without adulteration or alloy. Let us hold this firmly. Lack of decision is serious in such a matter. This is a day of loose thoughts as to Inspiration. Never was Satan more determined to wrest the scriptures from souls than at the present time. Ritualism on the one hand places a priest between the word of God and the soul; Rationalism on the other, throws doubt on all that is revealed. Both systems, though in different ways, would rob us of the priceless treasure God has given. 1 Cor 2: 10-14 furnishes valuable instruction concerning the connected subjects of Revelation and Inspiration. The apostle reminds us of the word of Isaiah that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" adding, "but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Here he asserts divine revelation is the source of the vital truths he taught. See also Ephesians 3: 3-5 By revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." The apostle was the administrator of blessings not made known by God until his day. Such a truth as the union of the saints with the glorified Head in one body was hid in God until the Lord Jesus went on high and the Holy Ghost came down. Paul was the honoured vessel — he had "visions and revelations of the Lord." It was his to fill up the word of God, i.e., to complete the subjects of which it treats (Col. 1: 25, 26). Now no one can reveal the things of God but the Spirit of God. The Apostle asks, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God." As no one knows my things (thoughts) but my own spirit, until I utter them or reveal them, so no one knows God's things but God's Spirit.

Nothing can be more degrading than the notion that God cannot reveal His mind to man. This is to lower God painfully. If the creature can communicate his thoughts to another, is it to be supposed that the Creator cannot do so!

Some men speak much of reason in connection with the word of God, but where is their reason to suppose such a thing of our God! The truth is that the Spirit has revealed the mind of God, and we have it in the scriptures. Thus the apostolic writings are the standard whereby truth and error may be tested. As John says, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4: 6).

But, as is often remarked, revelation does not go beyond the person receiving it; to pass the truth on, in its perfection, to others requires divine inspiration. Such is man, that even the favoured recipients of divine revelations could not be trusted to communicate them to others without marring them.

Here, therefore, the Spirit of God comes in again. Hence Paul tells us, "which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means" (1 Cor. 2: 13; compare J. N. Darby's translation). This is inspiration. Here, too, we may see how far inspiration extends; concerning which many have vague thoughts. Some have taught that the doctrines of scripture are inspired of God, but that the writers were allowed to express them in their own language; others, as Burnet, that the reasoning so often found, particularly in the epistles, was left to the writer; and yet others, as Paley, think them to have used their own illustrations, and to have selected O.T. scriptures to confirm their words. All such thoughts are below the truth, and scripture is injured thus by those who sincerely desire to be its friends. The fact is, nothing was left to the vessel — the words, not merely the truths or doctrines, were given by the Holy Ghost. Were it otherwise, we could have no divine certainty. Where should we draw the line between the human and divine? And is it likely that all would agree as to the line to be drawn? Not that a human element is altogether denied. Paul has his style, and Peter his; for the Spirit took up the men as He found them; nevertheless, every word thus written was from Himself.

No one would be so foolish as to contend for the inspiration of a translation, unless it were the Trent fathers. In such efforts there may be (and are) blemishes, for God does not work perpetual miracles; and here the study of languages comes in as an important and valuable work. All that is asserted is, that the original writings, as sent forth by Matthew, etc., were inspired every word by the Spirit of God.

Just a few scripture proofs. As to the OLD Testament Peter says, "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Also, he tells us that the Spirit of Christ was in them, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow (2 Peter 1: 21; 1 Peter 1: 11). Paul says in Acts 28: 25, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers," etc. Joel is quoted in Acts 11: 17, as follows, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith God. In Acts 3: 18, we are told that God showed by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer. As to the Psalms, we find, "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said" (Acts 4: 25). And the Psalmist said of himself, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23: 2). The Books of Moses are declared to be divinely inspired in such passages as Matt. 15: 4, "For God commanded, saying," etc.

The new Testament, as well as the Old, is vouched for in the general statement of 2 Tim. 3: 16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The word "scripture" I admit, merely means "writing," but it is the technical term for the sacred books, and understood as such. We are quite understood when we say "the Bible," which, after all, simply means "the Book." Consequently whatever comes under the heading of "scripture" is inspired of God. Thus Paul's writings are vouched for, including, and I suppose specially referring to, the epistle to the Hebrews, in 2 Peter 3: 16. Paul calls his epistles "scripture" himself in Romans 16: 25, 26, where read "by prophetic scriptures," not by the scriptures of the prophets." And in Timothy 5: 18, he quotes from Luke 10, and says "The scripture saith."

The book of Revelation is a singular one among the New Testament writings, but its character is clearly indicated in chapter 1: 2: John "bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ — all things that he saw." Omitting the "and" before "all things," we learn that the visions vouchsafed to John were the word of God, etc. Let none, therefore, despise the book because of its

symbolism.

These are but a small part of the proofs. Let the diligent soul search it out, and the more deeply the subject is investigated, the deeper will be the soul's confidence in God that He has given us by His blessed Spirit His unerring word in all its fullness and beauty.

In conclusion, one more thought remains to be noted in 1 Corinthians 2. We have seen that the Chapter asserts revelation and inspiration; it also lays down that the help of the Holy Ghost is needful in order to receive and understand the things that have been given.

This is why enemies stumble. Man's wit fails here. His learning is at fault, his powers are unavailing, apart from the Holy Ghost. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The soul must be born of God, and the Spirit must be the teacher; then all is simple and plain. He has come down from above to guide the saints into all the truth, and He never disappoints or fails the humble waiting soul.

## HIS QUICKENING WORK

We have had before us the personality of the Holy Ghost and have also considered His gracious work; with regard to the Word of God. Now we will enquire into His work in the soul in producing new life towards God, where once sin and death reigned.

This is unfolded very simply in John 3. Nicodemus came to the Lord by night. He had been outwardly convinced by the miracles which the Lord was performing, as were many others in Jerusalem at that time (John 2: 33). He came "by night," feeling instinctively that the world and Jesus were opposed, and, that to be seen going to Him would bring down persecution, or at least reproach upon himself. He opened by saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher Come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The Lord met him instantly with the Solemn statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

How deeply humbling! What a check upon the thoughts of the ruler of the Jews! We learn here the solemn fact, that man in his natural condition, cannot perceive or understand the things of God. Privileges or advantages make no real difference. Nicodemus had many. He was not a profane immoral man, nor was he even a Gentile. He was a Jew of high position as a teacher among his fellows, acquainted with the letter of scripture, and, we have no reason to doubt, moral and religious. What fairer specimen of humanity can be supposed!

Saul of Tarsus was just such a man. Read his account of himself in Philippians 3. Possessed of every natural, dispensational and religious advantage.

Some, perhaps, would have understood the matter better if the Lord had spoken of the new birth in Phil. 4 instead of Phil. 3 In Phil. 4 He is seen dealing with an openly wicked woman at the well of Sychar. Not there, but here, does the Lord say, "Ye must be born again."

All must learn sooner or later that man's nature is altogether antagonistic to God, — altogether bad and corrupt before Him. It is not only that men have done bad things, but the very nature is bad beyond repair. Few accept this. We hear much in these days of improvement of man, of the raising of the masses, etc., but all this only shows that men have not accepted the verdict of God about themselves. If they did but bow to it, they would be thankful to be objects of God's sovereign grace and

love.

But it remains true, in flesh dwells no good thing. Its mind is enmity against God and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 7: 18; Rom. 8: 7, 8). This admits of no appeal and no modification. A man must be born again, or he can never see or enter the kingdom of God.

But how is this brought about! Nicodemus could not tell, nor can many in this day, but the Lord Jesus explains. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," etc. Here we have it in a few words. It is the direct work of the Spirit of God, acting by means of the word of God upon the soul. Perhaps I need hardly say that "water" here is the figure of the word of God. Some have imported the idea of baptism into this chapter and the Lord's Supper into John 4. But Christian baptism was not instituted until after the Lord's resurrection, and the Lord's Supper not until the night of His betrayal. Consequently neither can possibly be found in the early chapters of John's Gospel.

The water is a symbol of the word of God, which the Jewish teacher should have understood from such Old Testament passages as Ezekiel 36: 25, and Psalm 119: 9. Christians have the thought confirmed in Ephesians 5: 26 and John 15: 3. The Spirit of God brings the word to bear upon the soul, convincing it of sin and revealing the Saviour dead and risen. To this the soul believingly bows, and thus a positive new life and nature is imparted. As we read in 1 Peter 1.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." This is not an improvement of the old nature. By no means. That remains as evil as ever, to be kept under by the soul that has learnt deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a life imparted that had no existence in the person before, enabling him now to sorrow for sin according to God, to believe the gospel, to love the Saviour, to pray and worship, and to love the ways of holiness and truth. It partakes of the nature of Him Who is its source — "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

This is not peculiar to Christianity. Ever since sin came into the world, men have been thus graciously wrought upon by the Holy Spirit. What is peculiar to this period is the Spirit's indwelling, of which we shall speak on another occasion; but His quickening operation in the soul is true at all times, irrespective of dispensational differences.

Still, the Lord says more in John 3. than could have been made known in Old Testament times He speaks of eternal life. He had come from heaven to make God known and to show what suits Him and His presence, and He was the manifestation of eternal life. Eternal life was Himself; yea, He was it, a life heavenly in source and character, of which heaven is proper and suited sphere, but which is the enjoyed portion now of all who believe in the Son. The Son has been uplifted that life might be bestowed upon all who trust His name. It is not denied that saints of old time had eternal life. But the life was not made known in its full and heavenly character until the only begotten Son came forth from the Father into the world.

## **A WELL OF WATER.**

In John 4, the Spirit of God is presented under a figure. The Lord Jesus speaks of Him as a well of water within the believer, springing up into everlasting life.

It is to be observed that this instruction was given by Him, not in Jerusalem to a Pharisee, but to a woman of Samaria, by the well of Sychar. To the Pharisee, He said the solemn word, "Ye must be born again," and then proceeded to unfold the meaning of the new birth and the Divine Person by Whom it

is brought about.

Here the circumstances are altogether different. The Lord is seen outside the circle of Judaism for the moment, and among the despised Samaritans Why? Because of the enmity of the Jewish heart. He knew they were aware that His disciples were making and baptising many on His behalf; and knowing this would draw forth hostility, He withdrew from their midst. He went towards Galilee, and must needs go through Samaria. There He met the woman and ministered blessing to her soul, which resulted in blessing for many others also. If some reject His grace, their unbelief does not dry up, but diverts the channel: others get it.

It is a picture in some sort, of the Lord's position at the present time. He is away from Israel because they have rejected Him and He is showing grace to the stranger. Here we come in It is a lovely scene: a weary man by well, yet withal, God manifest in the flesh, asking drink of a woman of Samaria. Why? Merely to satisfy His own need! Oh, no: He saw her need and meant to satisfy it out of the bounty of His grace. She had tried the world, but had found no rest to her spirit. She had drunk deeper than most, but had proved it all to be vanity and vexation of spirit. She had found death in the pot at every turn.

The Lord meets her; He begins gently and graciously — "Give me to drink," — words as marvellous as "Let there be light." The Eternal Son asking drink of an outcast like her! She was surprised. To her He was a Jew — she a Samaritan. The two races had no dealings. The Jews hated the Samaritans as imitators of their worship and aliens in their land. He answered, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water"(John 4: 10). "The gift of God!" What glad tidings for a sinner! Not the law of God, which exacts, and curses all who fail to render its requirements; but God revealed as a giver. "it is more blessed to give than to receive." This is one of the first and greatest principles of Christianity. Do you know Him thus, dear reader! Or do you regard Him as an austere Person, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed! (Matt. 25: 24) If so, you are a stranger to our God. He delights to give, He has given His Son, He gives eternal life to all who believe, and all things besides (John 3: 16; Rom. 4: 23; Rom. 8: 32)

And do you know the Son! The Lord said, "and Who it is." She did not know. She thought Him a mere Jew, until He proved Himself the Searcher of her heart. These are two essential principles of Christianity — God known as a giver, and the knowledge of the Only Begotten Son.

Well, the Lord speaks of the gift of the living water; the woman did not understand. She was so full of earthly things that she could not get above them. She spoke of the well, its depth, and His lack of a pitcher. How true it is that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God! (1 Cor. 2: 14) He referred to the gift of the Holy Ghost, soon to be the enjoyed portion of all who believe in His name. This is quite distinct from quickening. He first acts on the man, implanting a new life, as John 3 shows; then after faith in the gospel, He takes up His abode within, and that for ever. This is peculiar to Christianity. The Spirit was not thus bestowed until Jesus was glorified, however He may have wrought in men from the first. This is a day of wondrous privilege. Would that all our hearts grasped it! Redemption being accomplished, the Son is in heaven, glorified as man at the right hand of God, and the Spirit is here, God's priceless gift to all who really believe in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Let us look further. "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 of water springing up into everlasting life." A thirsty Christian is an anomaly. The Spirit is the seal to us of fullness of blessing. Having come from the glory into which Christ has gone, He assures us of sins put away, of righteousness completed, of

acceptance, of sonship to the Father, and of liberty of access to the presence of God on high. All that was merely promised of old, as righteousness, salvation, etc., is ours now. The work is done, the Holy Ghost has come, all is made good to the souls of those who believe. How can we then thirst! I find a good deal of thirsting in the Psalms and in the Prophets; but I do not turn there for proper Christian experience. It is the language of souls under law, before redemption, and before the accomplishment of God's promises of grace. Those who are sealed with the Spirit of God have nothing left to desire, save to enjoy simply and fully what has been given.

But more -the Lord speaks of a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is the Spirit acting as a living power in the Christian. As water always rises to its own level, so does the new man, led by the Spirit, ever rise up to God. What holy exercise should we be capable of apart from the Holy Ghost? He is the power of Worship. He leads the soul beyond such systems as Jerusalem or Gerizim, up to the Father (where He is), in worship, in spirit and in truth. The Father seeketh worshippers. Wondrous thought! Once He sought sinners. Having found us as such, He now seeks us in a new way. Do we respond!

The Spirit is the power of prayer. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought;" hence we read of "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 8: 26; Jude 20). He identifies Himself with us in all our circumstances, forming our thoughts and drawing us forth suitably in prayer and intercessions.

In closing, how could we bring forth fruit without Him! (Gal. 5.) Or how could we serve effectually apart from His power! (Rom. 15: 19). In every way He acts within us on earth to form us after the pattern of Christ, that we may be to His honour in this scene.

## **RIVERS OF LIVING WATER.**

In John 4. the Spirit of God is brought before us again under the figure of Living Water, but the circumstances and instruction for our souls are different.

The feast of Tabernacles had come round, and all were going up to Jerusalem to keep it. It is noticeable in John's gospel that the feasts are always called "the feasts of the Jews" (John 2: 13; John 6: 4; John 7: 2; John 11: 55), whereas in Leviticus 23 they are declared to be "the feasts of Jehovah." This altered way of speaking of them is not without meaning; they had become mere forms; they were no longer occasions when loyal hearts gathered up to God's centre, because moved by a sense of His goodness. This had faded completely, and they had degenerated into merely ritualistic observances. The Lord's brethren urged Him to go up to the feast, to avail Himself of the opportunity of making Himself known to the world (John 7: 1-5) They had no faith in His person. They saw not in Him the sent one of the Father, here for the accomplishment of the Father's will and glory. Their counsel was purely carnal; what else could be expected? The Lord did not go up when others did, but in the midst of the feast He went up as it were in a private way. He went up, not to join in the hollow rejoicings of the season, but to meet the longing of any individual seeker who might happen to be among that religious crowd.

The feast of Tabernacles was a memorial of Israel's passage through the wilderness, and typifies the coming kingdom of Messiah when all Israel shall be restored and be found in the land of their fathers, filled with the goodness of the Lord. How solemn therefore, that He should have to take His place entirely outside of its celebrations!

God hates mere forms. He cannot bear men who honour Him with their lips, while all the time their hearts are far from Him. Thus it was at Jerusalem. The feast was running its course; ritual was in

full swing; all were filled with rejoicing; but the Son of God held Himself entirely aloof.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink" (John 7: 37) It is Possible there were some thirsty souls in the throng. Hearts in whom divine craving has been created by the Holy Spirit cannot be satisfied with the mere forms of religion. These satisfy flesh. Too often they serve as a veil to hide from the soul its true condition in the sight of a holy God. Flesh loves religion, and the more pompous it is the more it is preferred. But true hearts want something more; whether they know it or not Christ alone can satisfy them. Here we see the rejected Jesus outside all the display and religiousness of the hour, inviting any thirsty souls to come to Him and drink. What such could not find in mere religion, they would find in Him. And is it not so to-day! Can all the carnal forms and display of Christendom slake the thirst of a soul who is feeling after God! Nay, they keep the soul at a distance; they cast a cloud over it and plunge it into distress and doubt. But Jesus can satisfy every longing. He is still outside. Those who really seek Him must go forth to Him without the camp, as Hebrews 13 speaks. Having found Him the heart is divinely satisfied. It never thirsts again. How can one thirst, knowing deliverance and acceptance, being assured of the Father's love, enjoying liberty of access to God without a veil, filled with the Holy Ghost, and taken up with Christ!

The Lord adds more. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (vv 38, 39) Here we have more than satisfaction for our souls, the gift of the Holy Spirit as an overflowing power. Observe, there could be no such thing until Jesus was glorified. He had received the Spirit personally at Jordan, as an expression of the infinite delight of the Father in Him; but He must go into death and accomplish redemption ere He could receive the Spirit in a new way for those who believe in His name (Luke 3: 22; Acts 2: 33) Having thus the Spirit of God, we are responsible to be channels of blessing while passing through this arid scene. But I must be satisfied myself, yea, more than satisfied, ere I can impart to others. I cannot give away if I have not enough myself. What a test for all our hearts! Have we enough! Have we found in Christ risen and glorified sufficient to satisfy every desire of our souls! He was enough for Paul, everything else in comparison was as loss and dung (Phil. 3.) "Freely ye have received, freely give." All around are needy souls. The world cannot meet their need, religion cannot; those who have the truth can, by presenting Christ in all the glory of His person and the efficacy of His work. But it must flow from the inward parts, or but little blessing will result. That which comes from the head, while it may please the ear and charm the intellect, leaves the poor famished soul where it was before, unsatisfied, unfed. May the Spirit of God work so uninterruptedly in us all, ministering Christ to our souls, that we may overflow in happy, holy service, to the Lord's glory, and the blessing of man.

## **ADVOCATE AND TEACHER.**

In John 14 we are in a sensibly different atmosphere. The Lord uses figures no longer, but speaks directly of the Spirit of God as a divine person, Whom He would send from the Father after His ascension on high. The communications of John 13-16. are always precious to the believer's heart. The Lord was just about to leave His own. The hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father. Before doing so (and His pathway lay through death), He gathered His disciples around Him in Jerusalem, and put the facts of their new position before them, or as far as it was possible to do so at that time. He promised to return and introduce them into the Father's house. He promised to manifest Himself to them in a spiritual way, as a, result of their keeping His word, and (what is

particularly before us now) spoke to them of the other Comforter, Whom He would pray the Father to send.

John 14: 16, 17. The Spirit could not come until Jesus was gone. He was not given to all Old Testament believers, as now to all who are Christ's. Redemption must be accomplished, and Christ must be glorified as man at the right hand of God, ere such a gift could be granted to the saints. The work is done, Jesus has gone, and the Comforter is present. The word rendered "Comforter" here (Paraclete) is the same as that rendered "Advocate" in 1 John 2: 1. It means one who takes up the cause of another, and who pledges himself to see us through all our difficulties. What a Provision for our souls in such a world as this? He has come to abide for ever, in contrast with the Lord Jesus, Who was only with His disciples for a short time and then returned to the glory. The world cannot share in this. Some have taught otherwise, but the scripture is very plain to a simple mind. The Spirit has not become incarnate, as the Lord, therefore it cannot see Him, neither does it know Him. "But ye know him," the Lord says, "for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This is true Christian knowledge and experience. But how many fall short of it! How much real unbelief there is abroad as to the personal presence of the Divine Spirit! Many in this day pray for His outpouring, or for a fresh baptism, while others dread lest He should leave them because of their shortcomings and failures. But He is to be with us for ever — the righteous basis being the sacrifice of Christ.

John 14: 26. The Lord promised the disciples also that He should be their Teacher, and bring all things to remembrance that He had said to them. Much that the Lord told them they could not understand then, but when the Spirit came, what a flood of light was thrown back upon all the gracious communications of the Lord Jesus!

John 15: 26, 27. Coming from the glory, He would bear witness to Christ. He would bear testimony to the glory into which He has entered for us, that our souls might be formed by it. What could we know of this but for Him! What could Rebekah have known of Isaac and his father's house, had not Eliezer told her, who came from thence! The Spirit loves to bring before us the blessedness which is now His, and to assure our hearts that all is ours because we are in Him before God. He would use the disciples also. They knew all the facts of the Lord's life and should bear testimony to all the things they had seen and heard. We know how this enraged the Jewish rulers, in the Acts of the Apostles.

John 16: 7-15 Now the Lord goes a step further. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away." Filled as they were with Jewish thoughts, this was inexplicable. It seemed rather incalculable loss. They looked for a kingdom of glory on earth, for the restoration of Israel's scattered tribes, and for all that the Old Testament prophets had spoken of to the fathers. They knew not yet that His death and resurrection would inaugurate a new order of blessing, heavenly in character, of which the indwelling Spirit is the Divine Seal. God has brought in an altogether better thing than the kingdom, though He will not disappoint faith as to that in its day. Souls who believe in the Son while He is thus hidden in heaven, are privileged to know the blessedness of accomplished redemption, of sonship with the Father, and of union with the exalted Lord as members of one Body. All this could not be known until Jesus went away and the Spirit of God came down. His presence here is solemn as regards the world. He convicts it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. The world's greatest sin is its rejection of Christ; and this the Spirit presses. Righteousness is only to be seen in Christ at God's right hand — there is none here. Judgement has been pronounced, because the prince of the world is judged, and the world and its chosen prince are to share it together. Judgement is not yet executed, but will fall when God's present purpose of grace is completed.

As regards the saints, the Spirit is the guide into all truth. He is the Spirit of truth. The Lord had many things to say but the disciples could not bear them then. They were not in a position to enter into the circle of truths which we call Christianity, until the Spirit came. But now we are fully furnished. We have the complete word of God, Paul being used to complete its subjects, and we have the Holy Spirit to unfold it to our hearts. Why is it, that in very many cases the souls of the Lord's people are so lean? Why do such a number fail to apprehend the mind of God as unfolded in the scriptures? Because man is so generally looked to, to the overlooking of the Spirit of God. He may use means to lead on our souls, indeed this is His usual method. Gifts have been given, teachers among others, that we may grow up into Christ in all things; but such must ever be regarded as but vessels of the Spirit. The Spirit is the true Guide; our dependence must ever be upon Him.

## **"RECEIVE YE THE HOLY GHOST."**

The Lord was now risen. His mighty work was accomplished. He was now alive from the dead to die no more. He had laid down His life for God's glory and for our redemption, and had taken it again in resurrection. God had shown Him the path of life, and He was soon going into His presence, where there is fullness of joy, to His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

But first, the Lord shows Himself to His own. Mary Magdalene has the joy of hearing His blessed voice once more, causing her to dry up all her tears, and changing her lamentations into divine rejoicing (John 16: 20-22).

It was the first day of the week. The Sabbath (an high day just then with the Jews) He had spent in the grave. Now He comes forth to inaugurate a new order of things on the ground of His precious and perfect sacrifice. The old order was now judicially done with; God no longer owned it. Judaism was an empty house. The Lord finds His own gathered together (John 20: 19-23) They feared the Jews, and so assembled, as it were, in secret. Contrast with this their boldness in the presence of the enemy after the descent of the Holy Ghost. But the Spirit had not yet come, hence we observe only the weakness and timidity of poor human nature. The doors were shut. The Lord came and "stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." Precious words from the lips of the risen Jesus! Glorious proof that all the work was done! "He Came and preached peace." He had drunk the cup of wrath for them (and for us), little though they understood it at the time. He had stood in the breach and met and endured in His most holy person all that was due from a righteous God against sin. All being past, every question having been righteously settled, He is able to speak "peace" to His own.

And not only so, but He showed them His hands and His side. The memorials of Calvary were not effaced, nor will they ever be. The adoring disciples could see with their very eyes something of what the Blessed One had passed through in deepest love to their souls. His incarnation was not sufficient to make peace. Death must be endured, His blood must be shed. He has made peace by the blood of His cross (Col. 1: 20).

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. This is not needless repetition, He was giving them a commission now. His Father had sent Him into the world for His glory, and to bear witness to the truth. His work was done, and He was about to resume His place at the Father's right hand. But He never leaves Himself without a witness; therefore the disciples must take His place in this scene. Mark carefully their place and ours. Taken out of the world, heavenly persons because associated with Christ, sent into the world to bear witness for Him. Such is our business here: would that all our hearts realised it more! In connection with the commission, then, the Lord says, "Peace be unto you." Amid all the disturbances and trials of this

hostile scene, we are privileged to enjoy, not only peace with God as to our sins, but the peace of Christ filling our hearts (John 14: 27; Col. 3: 15)

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." What is this! Clearly not yet the gift of the Spirit as a divine person to abide with them: for He said to the same disciples some days later, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" and He told them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to "wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1.). The Spirit came from heaven in fulfilment of this on the day of Pentecost not before. To understand these words of the Lord in John 20: it is necessary to refer to Genesis 2: 7. There we have the Lord God first forming the man's body of the dust of the ground, then breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Here then, we have the Lord breathing His own risen life by the Holy Ghost into His disciples. They were converted men before, beyond all question; now they partake of the great blessing peculiar to Christianity, the risen life of the victorious Son of God. Let it be distinctly understood that all the saved from the very beginning of time have had divine life in their souls communicated to them by the Holy Spirit, but it could not be said of saints before the cross that they were partakers with a risen Christ. This is "life more abundantly," as the Lord speaks in John 10: 10. The possession of this places us in Him beyond death and judgement. It is a life that Satan cannot touch, and that we cannot forfeit. It is heavenly in its character, and eternal in its nature. Heaven is its proper and suited sphere.

The difference between the Spirit as life and His personal indwelling may be seen in Romans 8: 1-11 There we have Him presented as characterising our life and relationship to God, instilling Himself into all our thoughts and feelings; in verses 12-27 He is spoken of as a distinct person dwelling within us, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, groaning within us, and leading us out in prayer according to God.

The words of the Lord in John 20: 23 should be carefully weighed. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." This is supposed by some to mean priestly absolution. Need I say that there is no such thing in Christianity! A priestly class now is a denial of the work of Christ. All believers are equally priests unto God (1 Peter 2: 5; Rev. 1: 6). The Lord's words refer to reception and discipline in the assembly, and should be compared with Matthew 16: 18, 19; Matthew 18: 18, 20.

When the assembled saints receive a person, whether out of the world, or for restoration after exclusion, they "remit" his sins; and when one is put away, as the wicked Corinthian, they "retain" his sins. But this is administrative for the earth and must be distinguished from the eternal forgiveness of the soul.

## **THE DAY OF PENTECOST.**

This was a Wonderful day in the history of the ways of God. Redemption was now accomplished. Christ was glorified as Man at His right hand. The moment had come for God to give effect to His counsels formed before the world was. Accordingly the Spirit of God descended according to the promise of the Lord Jesus. The disciples are shown as a waiting company. They had been bidden to tarry in Jerusalem until endued with power from on high. The day of Pentecost had come, and they were gathered together with one accord in one place. It was the first day of the week, the formal meeting day of those who believe in Jesus, being the day of His glorious resurrection from among the dead.

While together, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 11: 2, 3) Such was the manner of the descent of the Holy Ghost. Never had He come from heaven to dwell in and with the saints before. He had wrought in them, of course, producing in the first instance a sense of sin, then faith in the living God; but He had never been given of God as His seal upon any. He had come upon certain persons (as prophets, etc.) at times for special purposes, but the time had now come for something beyond all this. During the present period He dwells Within every believer, making his body His temple. The blood having been shed and sprinkled, the oil has followed, to use the language of the type (Lev. 8.)

"But," it may be asked, "why should He come upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire, when He descended upon the Lord Jesus as a dove?" The answer is to be found in the character of the recipients and the testimony they were called to bear. The Lord was here as the expression of God's grace and love. He came not to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Personally He was the meek and lowly One: what more apt emblem of this than a dove! As for the disciples, their testimony was of a very solemn, as well as blessed, character. The word of God through them, while it brought peace and blessing to all who received it, nevertheless judged all before it, and gave no quarter to anything of the first man. Their testimony was to branch out to both Jews and Gentiles, hence "cloven tongues."

The first effect of the Spirit's presence was that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Thus did God surmount the confusion brought in at Babel (Gen. 11), though the time had not come to do away with it. He intended the gospel for every creature. The law was given in one language, and to but one people; but the gospel of God's grace, God's precious testimony concerning His Son, could not be thus limited. Gentiles and Jews were equally needy, and all should have the offer of the Saviour. This, however, the early Christians were slow to learn. They were ready enough to preach Christ to the children of Israel but God had to specially intervene to make Peter; open the door to the Gentiles, even though the commission was clear and plain (Acts 10; Luke 24: 47; Acts 1: 8). So slow is the heart to take in the extent of God's thoughts of grace.

The tongues, I need hardly say, were miraculous. Peter and the others had not learned these languages, yet they were suddenly able to speak them. Who but God could have wrought this! It astonished the multitude. Being the feast of Pentecost, Jerusalem was full of Jews from all parts of the Roman empire, and they heard these men, who were evidently all Galileans, declare in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Some were honest, and enquired concerning the marvel. Cavillers were not wanting, as always, who attributed it to wine. The early hour of the day (the third) should have preserved them from such an insinuation, as Peter soon pointed out.

It was not fleshly excitement; it was divine power. A Divine Person had come down from the glory into which Christ had so recently entered; and was here to bear testimony to Him and His finished work. Thus it was that day. Peter was the chosen vessel. He had but recently denied his Lord with oaths and curses, but grace had fully restored him; and he was bold as a lion. He could even charge the Jewish people with the very sin of which he himself had been guilty (Acts 3: 14) So reassuring is the grace of the Lord. Peter reminded the multitude of the prophecy of Joel God had spoken of an out pouring of the Spirit, before the great and notable day of the Lord: need they wonder at what had occurred Then he brought home to their consciences their dreadful sin with regard to Jesus. They had rejected and slain Him, but God had raised Him up, and exalted Him. This he proves conclusively from their own scriptures; for Peter could see the bearing of all these Passages now that the Holy Ghost had come.

The result we know. Three thousand persons were saved and added to the little band. Thus was the church of God commenced, though the truth concerning it was not unfolded until Paul was called, some time later.

## IN THE FLESH AND IN THE SPIRIT.

Romans 8 is the climax of a very important series of instruction. Most readers have doubtless observed that the Epistle is divided into three parts. Part 1. consists of chapters 1-8, and brings out the fullness and the completeness of God's salvation. Part 2 embraces Rom. 9-11 and is dispensational, explaining God's present dealings through the gospel, in view of the special promises made to Israel. The remaining chapters (Rom. 12-16.) are practical, pressing upon the recipients of God's mercies a becoming walk below.

Part 1. is however subdivided. In Romans 1: 5-11 the apostle takes up the question of sins, and shows our complete justification from them all through the death and resurrection of Christ; from chapter 5: 12 to the end of 8. it is more a question of sin; and our complete deliverance from both our old standing and former bondage is shown in the risen Christ. We were once in Adam (Rom. 5.), and were then lying under death and condemnation we were once under the bondage of sin (Rom. 6.) as truly as Israel of old were under the hand of Pharaoh in Egypt; we (or at least Jewish believers) were once under the law with all its solemn consequences for our souls (Rom. 7.).

But from all this we have been delivered. We have passed out of our old position by death. and we are now before God in the risen Christ. This Romans 8 brings before us fully. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (ver. 1). The added clause mars the beauty of the Spirit's words. Our standing is not dependent on our walk in any way, though our enjoyment of it is. "In Christ describes our new position before God, through grace. We have in Him a life which death cannot touch, and which is beyond all condemnation. We have all the advantages of His risen position. All that is His in virtue of His accomplished work is ours also. The same divine favour and love which rests upon Him, rests upon us also who are in Him. Marvellous place to be brought into! Mighty change from our former place in the first man, where all consequences brought in by Adam's fall were ours, because of our connection with him as our head. Adam became head of a race after the fall, and all therefore have his position, with everything that attaches to it; Christ became head of a new race after His resurrection, and all who are in Him share the blessedness that is His, our sins having been put away for ever, sin having been condemned in His death and righteousness established.

But if "in Christ" expresses our new standing before God, "in the Spirit" characterises us now as men walking below. Romans does not regard us as in heavenly places, as Ephesians, but as those who are set free to walk to the glory of God on earth. "In the flesh" characterised our former state. The flesh was the source of all our thoughts and actions. Flesh is antagonistic to God and they that are in it cannot please Him. The mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be. The sure result of following its course is death, as the apostle speaks, "For to be carnally minded (or the mind of the flesh) is death if ye live after the flesh ye shall die" (verses 6, 13)

We are not in the flesh now (Rom. 7: 5; Rom. 8: 9), though the flesh is still in us. It is no longer a controlling power, it does not characterise our lives as once. Faith treats it as a condemned thing, and allows it no place. If it acts, it leads us from the Lord into some by-path of sin and sorrow. We are not now debtors to it, to live according to it. "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" (Rom. 8: 9). The Holy Spirit is God's great gift to every believer; and it is He, in contrast to the flesh. Who now gives

character to all our walk and ways. He gives us the happy knowledge that Christ is in us — as He Himself said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14: 20 — He forms all our thoughts and desires, teaches us how to pray, enables us to bring forth fruit for God, strengthens us for all our conflicts with the enemy, and sustains our hearts along the road by His gracious ministry of Christ to us. He is our Leader, and by His power we are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body.

Every soul will do well to enquire of itself before the Lord how far this is practically realised. It is one thing to know and accept it as doctrine, quite another to walk in the power of it. Every Christian lives in the Spirit or he would not be a Christian, but every Christian does not necessarily walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5: 25) And we should not forget, too, that it is perfectly possible for a true believer to sow to the flesh and not to the Spirit. Lot is a painful instance of this in the Old Testament. This brings us under God's governmental dealings. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap:" and this is as true for the Christian as for others; though it is not possible, through God's grace, to lose the eternal life, which he has in the Son (Gal. 6: 8).

"The mind of the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8: 6). The secret, therefore, of a peaceful walk is to follow the gracious leading of the Divine Indweller. If flesh is habitually judged and mortified, and the Spirit of God allowed His true place, our souls thrive and grow. Things that would disturb and cause bitter sorrow, do not intrude themselves then. The Spirit has not to be occupying us with ourselves and our state, but is free to lead us on to a fuller knowledge of Christ, which is His delight. The apostle, in Romans 8, traces the Spirit's gracious work in us and for us, onward to the resurrection. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead! shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (ver. 11). Our bodies being the temples of the Holy Spirit, the God Who raised up Jesus will not suffer them to remain in the grasp of death. "Because of his Spirit" (for so the sentence should read), He will raise them up at the appointed hour, and conform us to the image of His Son.

## **THE ANOINTING, SEAL AND EARNEST.**

In 2 Corinthians 1: 21, 22, the Spirit of God is brought before us under three striking figures. "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The apostle is setting forth the settled place of blessing into which God has introduced every believer in Jesus. We are no longer in Adam, exposed to death and condemnation, but in Christ, and in Him we find every purposed blessing made everlastingly good. But so abounding is the grace of our God, that over and above all this, He has given us the Holy Spirit as the anointing, the seal, and the earnest. He dwells within us.

(1) The anointing. The Lord Jesus received the Spirit in this way when walking as a man on earth as we read, "Thy holy child (servant) Jesus, whom thou hast anointed" "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 4: 27; Acts 10: 38) This was an expression of divine delight and complacency in Him personally. The Father saw in Him perfect dependence and faultless obedience; the Spirit was sent upon Him in token of His full approval and complete satisfaction. He was the true meal offering 'Anointed with oil" (Lev. 11: 4). Believers are anointed with the Holy Ghost on an entirely different principle. It is not because of what God sees in us, but because of what His eye sees, and what His heart has found, in the risen and exalted Christ. One grand result of the anointing is, that we have fellowship with the mind of God. The Holy Spirit introduces us into the circle of the thoughts of God, as revealed in His word. It is not enough that we should be born again, the Spirit must

be possessed ere any advance can be made in the things of God." Hence when the beloved apostle warned the babes against the many antichrists that were even then abroad in the world, he refers them to two things as safe- guards. (1) Apostolic teaching: "Let that there- fore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2: 24) (2) The anointing: "The unction which ye have received of him abideth in you," etc. (1 John 2: 27) Souls who avail themselves thus and abide in the circle of the Spirit's instruction, are preserved from all the many efforts of the enemy. Our hearts are then in the enjoyment of what the Spirit imparts; and thus are in a position to reject the devil's counterfeit. There may not be ability to expose the error that is presented, but it is known to be not the truth, and that is sufficient for the simple soul (compare John 10: 5). In considering the anointing, we are reminded of our kingly and priestly place. Both kings and priests were inducted into their office in this way. Both dignities are ours through divine grace. Believers are "a holy priesthood" now, with title to draw near to God through the rent veil; and in the approaching day are to reign with Christ, when all things are given into His hand by God. Suffering is our appointed lot meanwhile.

(2) The seal. "Who hath also sealed us." The Lord Jesus could say of Himself, "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6: 27). The same is true of all who believe through His death and resurrection. Sealing follows faith. This is quite plain in Ephesians 1: 13 "In whom after that believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." thus we note two distinct operations Of the Spirit of God: first He works in us to produce faith in God and in His Son then He is given as God's seal. Believers are thus marked off as belonging to God. Our connection with the world has been broken, the fetters which once Satan bound Upon us have been severed, and we are now the possession of our God (1 Peter 2: 9). Do all our hearts respond loyally to this! Are we yielded up, body and soul and spirit, to Him, for His service and glory! Alas, there is not a little keeping back of part of the price. How much self-will works, how strongly the world is clung to "Of a few of those who really belong to the Lord Jesus! Let each one of us own more thoroughly His gracious claims and surrender ourselves entirely to Him.

What immense comfort that this Divine Seal will never be removed from any, even the feeblest believer. Many are defective as to this point. Many fear that the Holy Spirit will really be withdrawn, because of their faulty ways and walk. Not so. God gave me His Holy Spirit well knowing what I should turn out to be, and gave Him not because of what He saw in me, but because of what He saw in Christ. This will never change. But a careful holy walk is nevertheless due from us. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30)

(3) The earnest. "The earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This is in view of the future inheritance. God intends to give everything in heaven and in earth to His beloved Son. The usurper may hold at present part of His dominions, but divine power will shortly wrest them from him and give them over to the Lord Jesus. He will share this universal inheritance with us such is the Purpose of His heart. But it cannot be given to us yet. There are purposes yet to be accomplished, and enemies to be put down. The Spirit of God dwells therefore within us as the earnest (or pledge) of all that is to come. He is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph. 1: 14; 2 Cor. 5: 5). Thus we wait in confidence for God to make good all His word. As the seal, the Spirit is the token of God's claim on me as the earnest, He is the token of the claim which divine grace has given me on God.

He is not the earnest of divine love, nor of relationship. We know and enjoy both now. We are already in a circle of boundless unchanging love, for all the affections of the Father's heart rest upon us in Christ Jesus; and we are already children of God. But the inheritance is not yet ours, for it has not yet come into the hands of Christ — hence the earnest of the Spirit. He waits at the right hand of the Father; we wait in this scene for the same appointed hour. The Holy Ghost is the present blessed link.

## THE ONE BODY.

We have had before us the work of the Spirit of God in the individual believer; we will now consider His gracious operations with regard to the church of God. There are not only blessings and responsibilities of an individual character, which every believer should know; there are corporate ones also. The reception of the Holy Spirit introduces the believer into the wonderful unity spoken of in scripture as "the body of Christ." Of the truth concerning this, the apostle Paul was the honoured administrator. Neither John nor Peter tell us anything in their Epistles about the church. The conversion of Paul — then known as Saul of Tarsus — was of a very remarkable character. He was not brought to the knowledge of Christ through the preaching of the gospel (God's usual way of acting), but was arrested by the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road when actively engaged in the persecution of His saints. On that memorable occasion Paul learned among other things, the following weighty truths; (1) that Jesus of Nazareth, Whose name he so cordially despised, was a glorified Man in heaven (2) that He owned His saints on earth as part and parcel of Himself. The Lord did not speak of them as His disciples, nor even as His brethren, but as "Me" (Acts 9: 4).

This then was the vessel chosen of the Lord to unfold to the saints the great purpose formed in the divine heart concerning Christ and the church, before the foundation of the world. It was not made known in Old Testament times, as we read, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3: 5). It was "hid in God," not even in the scriptures, as some have affirmed; though, now that the truth is revealed, faith can turn back to the Old Testament writings, and observe many striking pictures of it.

The body of Christ is dealt with especially in Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. In the former we get the heavenly order; in the latter, the earthly. In Ephesians we have the divine counsels, and our many blessings in association with the risen Head in heaven; in 1 Corinthians we have rather our responsibilities as members of Christ and of each other, called to walk together below.

Notice carefully that Christ became Head of the body, the church, in resurrection (Eph. 1: 20-23). Union in incarnation is never taught in scripture, but the very opposite. It was impossible that the holy Jesus should unite Himself to sinful and fallen humanity. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or for ever abide alone (John 12: 24). God be praised, He has died, putting away all our sins by His one sacrifice, and is now in glory as Man, against Whom no charge can be laid. Hence, in virtue of the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, every believer is one with Him on high. In this wondrous circle of blessing the distinction between Jew and Gentile has no place. The former was outwardly nigh to God, having the sanctuary, the law, etc.; the latter was afar off from God, having no part in the promises, and no hope (Eph. 2: 12). Now the wall of partition is broken down. The God Who raised it has demolished it, the enmity between Jew and Gentile is slain through Christ's work, and every believer in Him is brought into a wholly new place of blessing. We have been made nigh through the blood, we have access by the Spirit to the Father, and share with the exalted One all that has come to Him as result of His toil. What a position for the Christian! Blessed a Christ is blessed, loved as He is loved! Accepted too in His acceptance. Would that every saint entered into it in simple faith. We should not then see true souls going mourning all their days as so often is the case.

Now turn to 1 Corinthians 12. Here we have the side of responsibility. This epistle presents to us the church of God not as blessed in the heavenly places in Christ, but in its practical working on earth. The apostle uses the expression, "the Christ," to describe the Lord and His saints (ver 12). How wonderful! It helps us to understand the "Me" of Acts 9: 4. This unity he shows to be due to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Faith does not unite us to Christ; the Spirit is the bond. It is important to see

this clearly. This helps too as to the limits of the body of Christ. It began when the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost; it will be completed when the Spirit of God leaves this scene at the Lord's coming. Believers neither of preceding nor succeeding dispensations come into it. They will have their own portion of blessing of course; but they have no part in the church of God.

Then we get practical exhortations (1 Cor. 12.) The apostle lays down that every member has his place assigned to him by God, and there is to be no discontent (ver. 14-18). The ear, the eye and the foot have their own proper functions. All are necessary. There are no irresponsible members in Christ's body. Not only is there to be no discontent, but contempt is forbidden (ver. 19-25). The more gifted must not slight others, as though they are of no value. None can be dispensed with. The feeble furnish occasions for the exercise of love and patience (Rom. 14: 1-6) and the "Uncomely" are to be cared for also, the blemished being graciously covered, not exposed. All round there is to be godly care and affection, and a holy recognition in every way of the profound and divine fact that we are all members one of another, as of the risen Head above.

The apostle concludes the section with. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12: 27). In the early days of the church, all this was understood, at least in measure, and acted on in faith; but what can we say now! For many dreary centuries the great truth was completely lost, and to-day how few enter into its meaning in power! We hear much of "bodies" that men have formed, and of persons being members of them; but how feebly is it grasped that there is still "one body and one Spirit" on earth! Where this is learned from God, separation from all that is of man must ensue. Not that the church of God can now be reconstructed as at the first but the few who are content to be together in simplicity as members of Christ's body, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, will never fail of blessing. The Lord knows how to minister to, and sustain His own.

The one body finds its great expression in the breaking of bread. "We being many are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (1 Cor. 10: 17) Anything like sectarianism has no place here. As members of one body it is our privilege to meet, and in that simple character to remember the Lord until He come.

## **HIS WORK IN THE ASSEMBLY.**

There are two main branches of the Spirit's work amongst Christians; (1) in the individual believer, and (2) in the assembly of God. The latter is not so commonly apprehended as the former. Very many believers understand His blessed operation in the individual, but few comparatively enter into the meaning and blessedness of His action in the church of God. We find the two things clearly marked in 1 Corinthians 6: 19, we read, "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!" The connection shows that believers are here addressed individually, for the apostle is exhorting to personal holiness. Then in 1 Corinthians 3: 16, we read, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you!" Here he addresses "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1: 2) hence the instruction is of a very different character.

It is a vital truth of Christianity, that the church is "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 1: 22). Of old, God dwelt in the tabernacle in the midst of His redeemed people, and later in the temple which Solomon built for His name. But there was always distance between God and the people. The veil shut God in, and the people out. There was no drawing near to God within the sanctuary (Heb. 9: 8). But mighty changes have been wrought through the accomplished work of Christ. Not only is sin put away, so that a purged conscience is the birthright portion of every believer, but the Spirit of God

has come down from heaven to form the church and to dwell in it. As we read "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them" (2 Cor. 6: 16). God the Holy Ghost dwells in the church, to guard the lordship of Christ, and to lead out the saints in all their exercises towards God. This is very little understood. It was thoroughly believed in the first days of the church of God. The shaken building (Acts 4: 31) and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11) were striking proofs that a divine Person was really among them. And though we have no such outward signs now, His presence is as real and true; faith has but to act upon it.

He is the assembly's all-sufficient Leader and Guide. When together for worship or prayer, what further need is there for anyone to regulate or superintend! Such human provisions were only made when the truth of the Spirit's presence became weakened in men's minds. In 1 Corinthians 12: 10, 11, it is laid down that the Spirit distributes to all the saints severally as He will. There is great variety, and all is needed for general edification and blessing. The modern idea is concentration, not distribution, as if it were possible for one member of Christ's body to have everything requisite for the help and advancement of all. Those who act on such principles most assuredly suffer deeply in their souls in consequence.

1 Corinthians 14. is of great value as to the regulation of things in the church of God. Everything is to be done for edification, this being the golden rule that is laid down. For this reason those in Corinth who possessed the gift of tongues were not to exercise them unless an interpreter was near by. We read of prayer, singing and prophecy. Verse 26 would seem to show that there was considerable eagerness in the Corinthian assembly to take a part in the public gatherings of the saints. But the saints are not bidden to keep silence and to fall back upon an official leader, but are simply told, "Let all things be done unto edifying." Liberty is allowed as of God, but apostolic counsel is given. The only persons who are to keep silence in the church are the women, and this on natural as well as on other grounds. When the Spirit of God is really looked to and trusted, the saints will not come together in vain. However few and feeble they may be, the divine Indweller will not fail to give them through one vessel or another what their souls desire and need.

What real unbelief has long existed in Christendom as to all this! By some, the Spirit of God is prayed for, as though He had not yet come; by others His presence is recognised as doctrine, but that is all. All this is serious dishonour to God, however little intended. Let it be our earnest and unceasing prayer that God may graciously arouse the whole church to a deeper sense of the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to more. simple reliance on Him for all the need of our souls until the Lord Jesus come.