

## The Spirit of God

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"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1: 29-33).

Two works of our Lord are referred to here — what may be called His great earthly work, and His great heavenly work. On earth His work is — and what can be so great? — to take away the sin of the world; not only the sins of us who believe, but the sin of the world.

Did you ever, by the way, know one that quoted the phrase correctly? Have you ever seen it employed aright in any liturgy that ever was framed? I do not recollect it so much as even once, although familiar with rather many of such compilations. Evidently, the truth intended is not before hearts, nor even understood, but confounded with something different; and hence men cite the words falsely. This shows the all-importance for the truth of cleaving to the only unerring standard, the written word of God. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; but the Holy Ghost in this connection carefully abstains from saying "sins." It is constantly assumed, when persons read the passage, that Christ has taken away the "sins" of the world. Now this would be another thing altogether, and confounds the text with 1 Peter 2: 24.

When John the Baptist gave his testimony, in pointing Him out to his disciples, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," he did not mean that He was then effecting it, nor yet that, when He died on the cross, the sin of the world would as yet come to an end. Then and there no doubt He laid the basis for taking it away. The only work which could ever take away the sin of the world was the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God. Yet the sin of the world is not yet gone. If sin were taken away out of the world, no wickedness could be known or exist anywhere longer. There would not be an atom of evil left.

When, then, will the sin, that the Lamb died to take away from the world, be clean and for ever banished from it? In the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It will not vanish away till then. As believers, your sins are undoubtedly forgiven, but this is another thing. Your sins are now blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus if you believe on Him, "whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us" (Heb. 10: 15-17). Hence we read: "You now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1: 21); but He has not yet reconciled "all things" (ver. 20). He has shed His blood for the purpose, and that blood is beyond doubt a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, whereby all things are surely to be reconciled to God; but they are not reconciled till He comes again. There is still suffering, sorrow, and death; there is corruption and violence, unblushing idolatry, and heartless infidelity; there is still every kind of human iniquity and rebellion against God going on in the world as much as ever. Yet the work which, as a righteous ground before God, will remove all this evil out of the world, is done; and God has accepted it but not yet applied it to the world, though He is so doing to believers. When the Lord takes the world-kingdom, it will be richly applied and for a long while, but not in absolute and everlasting fulness, till "the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then there will be left remaining no more sin nor effect of sin in the world. It will be completely gone. Then will it be

proved how true it is that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

I am aware that people lay stress upon the fact that John said, "which taketh away," as if it were then going on; but this is a very ignorant way of using Scripture. For instance, one goes into a druggist's shop and gets there a bottle of laudanum labelled "Poison." This does not mean that the poison is working now. If the druggist says it is laudanum which kills a man, he does not mean that it is then doing its work, but simply that, when it is applied to a man, it will kill him. People confound what is called the absolute or ethical present with the actual present. One is sorry to be obliged to use high-sounding words about this matter; but it is difficult to convey what is wanted in simpler language, and it is important that it should be conveyed accurately. Even learned and devoted men — and you know very well that I do not wish at all to question their ability — have sadly mistaken in this matter.

But a man may be a great scholar, and not wise in Scripture. Not a few of the greatest scholars have been rather heterodox. Great learning does not necessarily give even good sense. Further, a man may have both learning and good sense; and yet not be spiritual. If you had ever such ability and attainments, you would still require the teaching of the Spirit. Assuredly this is what one constantly finds if much used to commentaries and writings upon the Scripture, as some Christians have been in their time. You would find it dull work to pore over their discussions, if you had reason to examine the folios and quartos that have passed through the press; you would prove how very little Biblical learning has to do with the real intelligence of the word of God. Learned as many of the writers of these commentaries were — and some of them were also able men indeed — yet somehow or other, when they took up the Scriptures, they failed to apply Christ as the one key to unlock all. They rarely seem to speak out of the possession of the truth; and this is the only way to understand the Bible. You can never understand it unless you have Christ and Christ's work, and its present result in power for the soul, clearly before you, in order out of this to interpret the word of God, which then to a large extent becomes an explanation in God's own language of what you have already got. You have already life in the Son of God if you are a believer; you have by His blood the forgiveness of your sins; you have by faith entered the family of God as His children, and have been sealed by the Spirit till the day of redemption.

Let me bring the matter home to you. I had great difficulty in finding a few verses of a Paraphrase which we might sing to-night in a certain connection with my subject. Be assured that I do not wish to find fault — the very reverse. But then I could not agree to sing what was not true. I should have liked to have found something scriptural to celebrate about the Spirit; but I could not. I found a prayer to seal us by His Spirit. But how could one sing that, any more than, when I put my coat upon my back, I could ask a man to put it there? If you are sealed, it is a fact, and it is a fact that abides. It is not an uncertainty. It is not something that requires to be repeated. There is no such thing as being again sealed by the Spirit. It is not a partial blessing, or constantly in need of renewal, just as you have to take food every few hours. This is not the case with the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is a privilege once given which continues, however important it is that we should not grieve Him but be dependent on His action and be filled with Him. Clearly then he who wrote the Paraphrase referred to was not aware of this; and the consequence is that he was in no little uncertainty when he came to the Spirit's operations. I see in the LXth Paraphrase, and no doubt it is the same all through, "Oh, may Thy Spirit seal our souls." I could not sing this, nor could I ask you to sing it; because, if I believe the Scriptures, He has sealed my soul, and He has sealed yours if you are now children of God in the liberty of Christ. If you are not in liberty, you need to be sealed. It is the sealing of the Spirit that brings, not life but, liberty into the soul. You recollect the apostle's words — "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Now, in a previous verse of the same chapter he says "The letter killeth" (referring to the law),

"but the spirit giveth life." Thus, if one take up the Old Testament and abide in the mere letter, no spiritual blessing is gained. If one take, for instance, the various offerings and merely think of a Jew bringing his bullock or sheep, or perhaps a pair of birds, to the altar, what is there in this to quicken the soul? Nothing. The consequence then was that the Jews who simply brought their birds or beasts to the altar lived and died Jews, and never went to heaven at all. But any of us drawing from these symbols that there is Another who must settle his case with God, that there was to be an unblemished One to take up the cause of the sinner atoningly, and that this sacrifice is none other than Christ's, passes at once from dead offerings to the Lord made sin on the cross. There is the spirit that quickens.

When a man is quickened, he does not always receive liberty. I have known a soul (who, I cannot doubt, being quickened, has gone for thirty or forty years without being sealed at all) to remain still in great bondage of spirit, a lady who passes too much of her time in capricious judgments, too harsh here, too light there; the end of all which is that she finds the word a two-edged sword, which, while it has an edge against other people, has also one against herself. Constantly doubting whether such or such a person is saved, she goes from one thing or person to another, but always comes back to herself, and never yet has seen for her own soul that God rolled everything upon Christ, never yet for her own need been able to rest on Him as the Lamb. The consequence is that she is not what Scripture calls "saved." It is not that she doubts He is the Son of God, but she constantly hesitates about her own interest in Him when it comes to the point. She is like a person who would say, "I am not content with the High Priest confessing the sins of the people. If I could only hear Him mentioning my name and my sins, it would give me true comfort; but I only hear about sins in general, which I cannot believe to be a confession for me." This is not the faith of the gospel really. The word of God's good news says, "Whosoever," for He knew a great deal better than to indulge souls in such delusions.

Supposing for a moment, that there was such a thing as naming anybody, do you not know that there may be hundreds of the same name? Thus a person would on this principle be always in doubt whether his own sins were really confessed: so that, if one were to be indulged in a desire so selfish, neither he nor others could ever get solid peace at all. Graciously therefore does God say "Whosoever." Surely any of you that have had questions about your soul are covered by the words "whosoever believeth." Again, "If any man thirst." Just see the blessed ways God has taken to open the door and to bring sinners in. He loves to save. It is the delight of God to reconcile to Himself. It is glory to the name of Jesus when a poor sinner comes and casts himself upon His precious blood. He is the Lamb of God, and the very fact that He is so is the best possible ground for a soul to come now, no matter who he may be or what he may have done.

It is not true that Christ has taken away — still less that he was then taking away — the sins of the world; for if this were done, not a single soul would be sent to hell. Everybody would be saved if all the sins were taken away. If faith were still necessary in order to apply it, the believer would be comparatively uncertain, or in danger of self-righteousness; for all his difference from a lost soul must then lie in what is personal: God's grace would be the same absolutely for all. But this contradicts Scripture.

The consequence of this mistake is the more serious, because it leads to other and if possible worse mistakes. In the Roman Mass Book they say "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Christ, according to their doctrine, has taken away everybody's sins; but nobody gets to heaven unless, besides that, he is faithful to the church, and does what the priest tells him — unless he obeys not only the commands of God, but also those of the church, availing himself duly of the seven Sacraments. And so there is a hope that, being thus faithful to the church, he may get to heaven at last. Is it not a very poor kind of salvation? Is it God's?

It is God alone that can save; none but a divine person. The church needs to be saved, and therefore cannot save. The whole notion is radically false, and while opening the door to the delusion that everybody's sins are gone, it brings everybody's sins upon them after all, because if after being baptised they sin again, Christ does no good to them, and the whole work has to be done over again. Such is the doctrine of the Council of Trent, yea of East as well as West. Indeed it has so affected other bodies that there is scarcely any Protestant body in Christendom that has not been more or less injured by this dangerous departure from the word of God. This shows the importance of even one letter. The "sin" of the world is right — "sins" would not be true. It is never said that our sins are gone except to the believer. Where it is written that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it is the believer's sins that are referred to. There is no such thing as His bearing the sins of every person in the world; but if you come out of the world, if you confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, you find your sins are gone. Christ has done the work. God gives you to know by His word and Spirit that you are forgiven. This is the doctrine of Scripture, so that there is the fullest comfort — without reserve, and without hesitation — in virtue of the mighty work of the Lord Jesus. But the full effect of His earthly work will only be when every trace of sin is gone in the eternal scene of righteousness and glory.

We come now to His heavenly work. What can it be? Many are not aware that Christ has done a great heavenly work. I do not speak of His priesthood, nor even of His advocacy before the Father. He is a Priest to give us sympathy in our suffering, and He is an Advocate to give us restoration when we have sinned. For alas! you know believers may sin, and do sin; and the Lord Jesus is Advocate with the Father; as John says — "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

But there is another blessed work that John refers to here in the verses we have read, and what is that? "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Yet the Lord Jesus never baptized with the Holy Ghost till He went to heaven. It is from heaven that He does so, and this is clearly brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles, to which you can now refer. You may see it for yourselves clearly promised for the last time in Acts 1: 4, 5, "And being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which [saith he] ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Do not suppose that this was confined to the apostles, or to those who were Christ's immediate disciples. The apostles were prominently before His mind, but not exclusively.

Accordingly in Acts 2 we find that, when they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house. Just as the wind did then fill the house, so the Holy Ghost came to constitute them God's house. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them. There was the personal as well as the general presence of the Spirit of God. He did not appear like a dove, but like cloven tongues of fire. He came like a dove on the Lord Jesus; for the Lord Jesus had no sin: not a taint of evil was in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a perfect man, not even knowing sin; and, that this might be, He was conceived of the Holy Ghost. If He had been born in a natural way, He must have had sin; but the power of the Highest counteracted this, so that He should be born of woman, yet "A body hast thou prepared me" without sin. This wonderful truth was set forth in the meal offering, where the flour was mingled with oil, without leaven, which represents the corruption of our nature. But there was no leaven in the meal-offering. Oil, the constant symbol of the Holy Ghost, was mingled with the flour to make the cake, and, when the cake was made, oil was poured upon it. This was admirably fulfilled in our Lord Jesus. First, the Holy Ghost came upon the virgin, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and next, when He was about thirty years of age, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him without blood, because He was

without sin. And God the Holy Ghost comes down on us.

But see how strikingly our case resembles, and yet is differentiated from, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are of a sinful nature, but born of the Spirit. There is by the word of God the action of the Holy Ghost: we are born of water and of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost does not come on us until we rest on Christ's redemption. The problem was, How could the Holy Ghost come and dwell in what was unclean? Now the efficacy of the blood of Christ is to make us perfectly clean in the sight of God. This is what redemption does. The precious blood of Christ "cleanseth us," it is said in Scripture, "from all sin." Do you believe it? Do you really bow to what God declares, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin"? We see the reason why the Holy Ghost was never before given to a sinful man. I do not say He never operated on such; on the contrary He did so in every believer since Abel. But He never was given, never sealed a believer, till the blood of Christ left him without spot or stain. There is the Spirit of God quickening the soul when a man is a sinner; and there is the Spirit of God now sealing him, when he, a believer, rests on the work of Christ. So our Lord Jesus told the disciples that they were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. They were already quickened, being for years true believers, but they were not yet baptized in the Holy Ghost. But now He goes up to heaven to send down the Holy Ghost; and this is most distinctly shown in Acts 2: 32, 33, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

The Holy Ghost was given to Christ twice — for Himself while He was upon the earth, for us when He went to heaven: and this is the reason why the Holy Ghost never leaves the church, because He is given to the church in virtue of Christ, and not because of our good behaviour. The Holy Ghost is given to Him, and it is through Him and because of Him that the Holy Ghost always abides. If the Holy Ghost were to leave the church, it would be as good as saying that Christ was no longer worthy of the Holy Ghost abiding. God could not say so; and this is what makes the Holy Ghost so precious. And so the Lord told them in the fourteenth chapter of John, "He shall abide with you for ever" (John 14: 16).

To be sure there are people who do not believe this. I do not know whether it is the case now, but some forty years ago it used to be a regular practice for known evangelical men to put forth a little document every year calling for united prayer that the Holy Spirit should be shed forth again on the church — that we should have a fresh effusion of the Spirit of God. Is not this a very serious thing? Suppose that people were to begin to pray at the end of the year that Christ should die again! Everybody would look aghast, thinking it a denial of the faith. But is it less really preposterous, is it not equally unbelieving, to pray for the Holy Ghost to be given again? He is shed, and being shed, He abides for ever.

Do you tell me, that the Spirit is to be shed again in this world's history? I grant it; but this will be for Israel, and for the Gentiles when Israel believes, as it is beautifully shown in the High-Priest going into the sanctuary and coming out. Perhaps you recollect that the bells which were on the vestments of the High Priest gave forth a sound when he went into the most holy place, and when he came out. The bells ringing when he went in would answer to the gift of the Spirit of God to us, the church, when our Lord went up on high; and the bells ringing when he came out, to the fresh testimony of the Holy Spirit when Israel shall be brought in. But there is no such doctrine as the Holy Ghost shed repeatedly for the church. When He was sent down, He was given to abide with us for ever. I am aware of all the darkness in the middle ages — of the revived superstition and the fresh and abounding rationalism in the present age; nevertheless, the Holy Ghost abides. Yet I do say that the Holy Ghost abides, because Christ said it, after He obtained eternal redemption, as it was because of this that He went up into

heaven itself. It was not a temporary redemption, like that of the Jews, who were taken out of Egypt, but might be carried off to Babylon. It is otherwise with the church of God. The Lord Jesus brought in eternal redemption, and the consequence is that the Holy Ghost comes down and abides for ever.

So far our Lord's case differs, on Whom the Spirit came down like a dove, because there was a perfect absence of evil; no question of the smallest sin or taint, or anything to indicate corruption in our Lord. This could not be said about us, and therefore did the Holy Ghost descend in the form which He assumed for the disciples, "like as of fire." Fire always marks the judgment of God. The Holy Ghost could not have come upon the disciples if there had not been God's judgment dealing with their sin in the work of Christ. But there was more than this. There appeared cloven tongues, because it was to be a question of testimony. Not so in Christ's case; for He is the One testified of. We are called to be witnesses of Him. We know but are not the truth; He only and emphatically is the truth to be witnessed to. Cloven tongues formed a beautiful emblem of the power of the Holy Ghost put forth in making believers witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Cloven tongues — no longer one language as of Canaan, but more, every tongue of every nation under heaven — point not to Jew only but to Gentile, so that the expressiveness of the symbol seems unmistakable.

Such then is the fact: let us now enter a little into the doctrine. Notice, first, that the Spirit of God, and we are speaking of the gift of the Spirit, is never mentioned until a man has already believed. Always bear this in mind. The new birth makes a man a believer; the gift of the Spirit comes when he is a believer. The gift of the Spirit brings him into liberty — not into life. The truth of Christ brings him life, and the Spirit of God takes His part in quickening; but the Holy Ghost is given to him already a believer; and this seals him in perfect liberty. For this reason you *wilt* observe that in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans we have the sinner looking to Christ and His blood, and not one word about the Holy Ghost yet, because the idea is to present Christ, not to distract him with what works within him. The Spirit does work in order that he may look to the true object, but the Holy Ghost is never an object of faith, which Christ is. When a man has received the gospel, when he rests upon the blood of Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given. This is the first mention of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Romans. We come to no less than the fifth chapter before there is any allusion to the working of the Holy Ghost in the believer; and then we hear of the love of God shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Ghost.

"Perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4: 18) But it is God's. Whenever we turn upon our own love, or take any satisfaction from it, it is a poor sign of state or faith. Real love always has a high ideal of the object that is loved, but never of itself. God's love in Jesus is a perfect love, and casteth out fear. There is no perfect love except the love of God in our case, not ours to God, but His to us. His is perfect love, and only so; and this alone casts out fear. I know that He loves me so perfectly that He not only gave His Son to come down and bear my sins on the cross, but that I should be as He is in heaven. There are two ways in which Christ shows perfect love: first, by coming down to bear all my sins and stripes; secondly, by going up to heaven to give me His glory. Meanwhile He sheds on me the Spirit, that God may dwell in me and I in God. Such is the perfect love of God. Christ was carrying out God's mind, God's affections, God's great purposes; and all this is exactly what the Holy Ghost bears witness to. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1: 20-22)

Passing over some most instructive chapters in the Epistle to the Romans we come to the eighth, where we are told — "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We need not read the next clause, because it ought not to be there; and one may safely venture to predict

that, when the new version of the Scriptures comes out, none will find it there. [See now R.V.] "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) This is the first reason assigned why there is no condemnation — sin and death are no longer a law to the believer, because the Spirit of life in Christ risen has liberated him. He has a new life; and the Holy Ghost has been given to him. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The allusion is to what the Lord did on the day that He rose from the dead. He told Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20: 17) This was His message. He put the disciples, as far as could be, in precisely the same relationship with God as Himself. He could give them (not Godhead, but) the place He had as the risen man before God. Up to that time the bearing of sin, and death in rejection and atonement, were always before Him. Now everything evil was behind Him, and glory in heaven before Him. Now He says, this is your position as well as Mine: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And that message brought the disciples together, "the doors being shut for fear of the Jews," and the Lord entered the closed doors just as easily as if they had been open. (John 20: 19)

You will notice that the first thing He did — after giving them the comforting announcement of peace, peace for them, and peace for others — was to breathe upon them. And what breath was that? His resurrection breath — life in resurrection power — "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John 20: 22) It was the resurrection life of Christ breathed into the souls of the disciples. I do not say that it was a thing that could be felt physically, or seen, of course. Such is not the nature of the spiritual life. The wind may be a figure of it, but it is not a material thing palpable in an outward way. Yet it is a reality — a present reality — much more so than the old life, which itself is quite impalpable. The wisest who cry up the present time are no wiser on this point than the sages of former times. Yet life is not more momentous than wonderful; and how solemn to think that, when it leaves the body, all efforts to restore it fail! You may galvanise a dead body and make the limbs move, but electricity is not life. Even in natural life you come to a barrier that no science can penetrate — no microscope can discern, no tests can analyse; but there it is, an inexplicable secret to man — a thing that shows the finger of God, where all the discoveries of science only bring out more clearly the fact that man cannot solve its enigma.

If such is the case with natural life, how much more so is it with the spiritual — that life that comes from Christ and enjoys Him for ever! With this law the Christian has to do, as the Jew with the ministry of death and condemnation written on stones: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8: 2) Death, of course, was the end of the first man. The resurrection of Christ is the believer's power of entrance into the new condition where there is no change, or sin whatever. You may tell me the Christian may sin, and quote passages from Scripture to prove that; but they do not mean that the new life has sinned. It is because a man has not kept the old life in order. The old man is like a wild beast, which you have to keep like a wild beast under lock and key. We are responsible to do so. Nothing can be more shameless than to hear a man who has broken out into sin say, "Oh, it was not I that sinned, it was the weakness of the flesh." If you live in the Spirit, you are bound to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. It is unchristian-like for any man to excuse his wickedness by talking about the flesh. No doubt it is the fact; but he is bound to keep the flesh under, and there is power in the Holy Ghost given him to deal with the old man.

In Gal. 5: 17, correctly translated, we read — "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would." Our version runs, "So that ye cannot do the things that ye would"; but this is quite wrong. What the word of God, properly rendered, says is good and true, "That ye do not the things that ye

would." The Holy Ghost is given to the believer, and the action of the Spirit is directly contrary to the flesh, as the flesh is contrary to the Spirit. "Lo, I come," said Christ — who indeed was the only one that could say it unwaveringly — "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God"; but we are responsible, being set apart for the purpose — sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we are merely to obey and that the blood of Christ repairs our disobedience. The meaning is that we are sanctified to the same kind of obedience as Christ, whose blood gives us confidence that our sins are by grace forgiven.

The allusion in 1 Peter 1: 2 is to what took place at mount Sinai, when blood was sprinkled on the people, and they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." But they did not. They were disobedient; and the blood witnessed that they must die the death because of their disobedience. We start with the precious blood of Christ, while at the same time we are called to obey as Christ did; and what comes in to meet our delinquencies is confession of our sins, or the washing of water by the word. This is the meaning of the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord Jesus before He went to heaven. It was to show His own here the work He is gone to heaven to do for them. Peter at first refused to let his feet be washed, and then, when corrected, asked that his whole body should be washed; but he was wrong in both respects. He did not know, if one be already washed with the washing of regeneration, that no more is wanted for the removal of subsequent faults than to have his feet washed. In other words, the particular evil that may be contracted in walking through the world requires to be removed. "He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet." If at first wholly washed, as every believer is, he needs only partial cleansing, in other words the washing of his feet, when he subsequently does wrong. Peter did not lose the benefit of being born of water and the Spirit when he afterwards sinned grievously. If not a true saint he would have gone and hanged himself, like Judas. Therefore the very thing the Lord prayed for was that his faith should not fail. Judas, in the despair of his heart, went and perished miserably. Peter did not, although he committed a great sin, because the Lord prayed for him, and afterwards indeed took particular notice of him — "Tell the disciples and Peter" — the only one mentioned, and why? Because he was the one that most needed it. How gracious is the Lord! How full of tender mercy! He is the spring, the unfailing Giver of all grace. Once in Him all your sins are gone, and yourself brought nigh as alive to God. This is the true place of every believer. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8: 2-4)

You observe two reasons are given why there is no condemnation. The first is, that Christ gives a life which God cannot condemn; whilst the second is, that God has already condemned (not merely the sins, but) the sin that gave them birth. The whole of our evil is already condemned in the cross of Christ — the wondrous Christ of God. These are the two grounds why there is no condemnation. And the effect is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Not in any Jew, but in every Christian; for every Christian loves God and loves his neighbour, and these are the two great moral aims of the law. How can a Christian not love God, who first loved him? And does not the Christian love his neighbour? Does he not go forth every day of his life to serve not only his neighbour and friend, but even his enemy? This is what the Christian is called to; and this is what every real Christian does, although not so fully as he ought, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Just so far as a Christian walks in the Spirit is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him. It is a remarkable fact that the people who were under the law never kept it, and that those who are not under the law are the only people that do keep it, and this because of the delivering power that God has brought in through Christ.

Let me here recall to your notice the constant danger of a soul that has been awakened, to mix up the work of the Spirit with that of Christ. It is always on the look out for fruits. As you are, you had better say nothing about fruits yet. If you seek to find fruits before you enter into peace with God, you never can find peace. No man ever found peace with God by looking within himself; and God never meant any to find peace save by turning to Christ. Do you not hear Him saying, "Having made peace by the blood of His cross?" This is not within but without you. It is something wrought for you by Christ, and Christ alone: and the quickening of the Spirit is not to furnish ground for peace within you, but to prove that you are nothing but a poor guilty sinner; thus forcing you out of yourself to rest on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tendency of the anxious soul is to look within, for confirmatory marks of the Spirit. But so long as he does not rest on the work of Christ, he never can have peace.

For saints there is another danger. When you have peace, beware of separating, as is too often done, the Spirit from Christ. Men say you need the Spirit of God to sanctify you. Rather you need the Spirit of God constantly to direct your eyes toward Christ. There are these two dangers then: one for a man who is just awakened; the other for him who has found peace with God. The saint cannot go in safety unless he has the Spirit of God fixing the eyes of his heart on the Lord Jesus. This is the point the apostle refers to at the close of chap. 3 in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

But I would say a few words on a preceding verse "Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"; (2 Cor. 3: 17) and I will show you how difficult it is — not in reality, but in appearance — either to understand the Scriptures, or to give them even a right outward form. People often think that if you have "spirit," or any other word in a verse more than once, it must always bear the same meaning. Here this is not the case. "The Lord is that spirit." How should "spirit" be printed? I answer unhesitatingly, with a small "s." "Now the Lord is that spirit." The "Spirit" would be downright heterodoxy. Who would tolerate such a notion as that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost? One can understand how in the "Shepherd of Hermas" (a most offensive little treatise, and really heretical, which in the second or third century used to be read in public worship) there occurs a confusion and worse between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost; but this no where is or can be in Scripture.

The fact is, that the meaning of the verse is connected with what was quoted before. The apostle was contrasting the old covenant with the new, and he says, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Christ, under the letter of the old, quickens; the letter of the old without Christ does not. "Now," says he, "the Lord is the spirit," *i.e.*, of the old. The letter cannot quicken, but the spirit does. It is the Lord that is meant by the Passover, Red Sea, Manna, etc., as also by the burnt, meat, peace, and sin offerings; and so one might go through all the letter of the law. "The Lord is the spirit"; and this is the reason why I should print "spirit" with a small letter, though it is not so in my book. It may be different in your Bibles. But if not, you must remember the copyists were not inspired, any more than the printers, translators, or critical editors. The question is the bearing of the truth of God; and I affirm that the doctrine which confounds the Lord Jesus with the Spirit is not true. Is it not impossible, therefore, to print "spirit" in that verse with a capital "S" consistently with truth? For this would identify the second person of the Trinity with the third, which is wholly untrue.

But the moment you come to the next clause, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," you must have a capital "S," because the Holy Ghost is meant. The Lord has gone on high, but the Holy Ghost is sent down below; and He it is who now seals the believer, bringing him into liberty in Christ. Thus what the apostle first lays down as a principle is that the spirit of the old forms of the law always pointed to the Lord Jesus. "The Lord is the spirit." Then besides this, the Spirit of the Lord is now come down from heaven to anoint the believer, and seal him in virtue of redemption.

Not a few passages might be quoted bearing on the same point. I might go through almost the whole of the epistle with the same result, each having its own special bearing, and all perfectly harmonious; but this is scarce necessary.

What I want is to lay before your souls the truth of God as to this the great Christian privilege. Have you not only Christ for your life, but the consciousness that your body is the temple of God? I know there are many who would think this a most extraordinary thing to claim. Let me tell you that — "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his"; (Rom. 8: 9) he does not belong to the Lord as a Christian unless he be sealed. He may be quickened, born of God, and converted. But the proper power, the true distinctive mark, of a Christian is that he is sealed with the Spirit; and the sealing of the Spirit comes in answer to the redemption of Christ Jesus.

Wake up then, wake up, beloved children of God, to your great privileges! Those who are ignorant of the gospel may call you presumptuous. In truth you can never worship or serve God as you ought, if you do not enjoy your proper privileges. You need to do so in order to be at home with God, to gain confidence in His love, and glorify Him. The spring of all power to perform duty depends on the simplicity with which your soul enters into your relationship with Christ. Even in common life relationship affects, as it should govern, all our actions. The duty of a servant is quite different from that of a master; and a similar rule holds good in all our social relationships. There is a walk, and a worship too, belonging to the children of God, and to none else. You cannot mix men of the world with those that are of God without dishonouring Him. Indeed the effect of such a union is ruin practically to the souls of both; because, as the child of God cannot raise up the worldly to his own level, he must come down to the level more or less of the worldly man; and this is why in many of the liturgies they mingle both in an offensive alliance that suits neither, with language of a wholly inconsistent kind. A Christian is not getting forward with God who tries to please both world and church; if he follows God's way, all will go well with him. We are members of the family of God — heirs of God with Jesus Christ. Even on earth the family life is the highest type of bliss for man. And God has a family, in whose well-being He takes special delight. Suppose a person were to go into a household, and, pretending himself a friend of the children, should put it into their heads that possibly the chief of the house was not their father, you would say, "What a villain he is, to try and spoil all the peace of that family!" And if this would be bad in your families, to play a like part is a great deal worse in God's family. It is as insulting to God as it is injurious to His children; and though people may do what they like with God for a while, the day is coming when they will have to own their folly and sin.

I beseech you, therefore, to be faithful to the Lord. Let me urge on you, in the name of the Lord Jesus to search and see whether these things are so. If you are not children of God, the door is open, the way is clear, the Saviour is waiting. If you simply come as poor sinners, the Lord will in no wise cast you out. But come as sinners in the sense of your sheer need, in the confidence of His grace. Do not come as if there were a doubt that had to be cleared whether you could succeed or not; and the Saviour will meet and serve you at once. When the Syro-Phoenician woman came, she spoke as a Jew. She cried, "Son of David." What right had she to say, "Son of David, have mercy on me"? No more right than a Frenchman has to repair to an English consul and ask his assistance; let him go to the French consul. The Son of David was for Jews. When the two blind men so appealed in Matt. 9, had they to wait for an answer of peace, when they confessed their faith? When two more at the end made the same call near Jericho, did the gracious One rebuke, or reply in grace? The woman of Canaan was wrong — somewhat as worldly people when they say, "Our Father, who art in heaven"; for He is not their Father at all, but will judge them by the Lord Jesus. But if a person comes and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," will He then say them nay? The Lord would not at first answer the woman's prayer, because

she went on mistaken ground. And when the disciples would have done with the case, ashamed of her crying after them, He had to correct their impatience with His maintenance of God's order: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she said, "Lord, help me!" When she dropped to this, the Lord answered her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." The moment she hears it, the truth flashes on her soul that she was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a dog. She sinks to the lowest place, and says, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." She took the place of truth, and got the blessing of grace. The lack of this keeps many souls from obtaining the blessing. They are unconsciously in a false position. They assume to be worshippers when they should not. If they confessed themselves poor sinners needing to be saved, they would find the Saviour at once. If you can and do say, Abba, Father, be assured you have the Holy Ghost; and if not progressing in the Christian race, see and judge what hinders you, and if you are not grieving the Holy Ghost; search the word of God, and follow Christ! Amen.

W. K.