

The "Well of water springing up into everlasting life."

John 4.

Lecture 2 of 'The New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

W. Kelly.

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The preceding chapter presented, in connection with the subject now before us, the Holy Ghost operating on man — that new birth, not of man's nature, as men falsely say, but of God, though in man, that birth of water and of the Spirit, without which none can see or enter the kingdom of God. A nature which is of God is alone fit for the kingdom of God. A divine nature alone is capable of knowing and enjoying God; and no bliss that is outside man, no work (infinitely precious as it might be) that is wrought for him, could of itself solely suffice for the presence of God. It might vindicate God as to sin, and even glorify Him infinitely. Such, we know, is the case with the work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ; but I am bold to say, that nothing simply external to man, were it alone, could fit man, being a sinner, either to know God now, or to enjoy Him hereafter. But the same grace of God, which gives Christ for the accomplishment of the work of redemption, reveals Christ by the Holy Ghost through the word, and thus the soul is born of water and of the Spirit. More than that: now, since redemption, he is entitled to know it in its fully revealed form, in the highest character of expression which suits even the Son of God Himself. That is, it is not merely being converted or born again, but having eternal life. I do not in the least deny that to be born again is substantially to have eternal life. I am only accounting for, as we ought in my judgment to account for, the language of the Lord, which, instead of resting in the most general expression, or in the assertion of the universal necessity of being born again, deigns to give us the blessing since the cross enunciated in that character which suits Himself; for He is eternal life, even that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us. Thus grace has wrought worthily of the Son of God.

But now we come to another part of the subject. It is not the wants simply of man, nor the necessity for a nature which he has not, and which comes from God alone. When God sends His beloved Son into such a world as this, He never limits Himself to that which is indispensable to His presence. He acts as God; He imparts not only the nature itself, but a suitable power to work in it; He gives that which is the strength of its action, and the spring of joy proper to the divine nature. In a word, it is not eternal life only, blessed as this is, and, as we have seen, the richest form of expressing the new birth; but He gives the Holy Ghost. Now, the circumstances were, as they always are, suitable to that which God was unfolding.

In the former chapter, the appeal of man was made with no common earnestness, in spite of the difficulties that seemed to be great, and no doubt were, as far as his mind could judge. But now there was a further step of grace in the path of the Son of God: He was virtually rejected. Instead of men believing upon Him because of the miracles that He did, the jealousy of the Pharisees was excited, and the Son of God in sorrow turns His back upon that Judea to which He came from God. He felt it, as He always did. It could not be otherwise; it ought not to be otherwise. Love could not but feel, for it was not merely that He was rejected; He felt for them forsaking their own mercies, rejecting God Himself — rejecting Him, their Messiah; but this very rejection leads Him to the manifestation of such grace as was unheard of in Judea A woman of Samaria, no meet company (one might think) for the Messiah, a

poor female of the town of Sychar, evidently ruined even in human judgment, meets Him alone at the well of Jacob, where sat Jesus wearied with His journey, who opens soon the pathway to her heart.

Jesus asks a drink of water. He ever comes near, not as the Messiah, though the Messiah, but as the Son of God who needed no glory, who did need to show grace; for man was lost, and God yearned over lost man; and there was but One that could meet the need — it was He. And so in His own love He stoops and asks. What would He not do to reach her heart? And the woman was astonished; for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. To her He was but "a Jew," and herself "a woman of Samaria." How short of the truth on either side! But said He, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." She knew it not. She could hardly be said to know the law of God, though she might speak of it; but as to the *gift* of God — who had ever heard of such a thought? Who, in favoured Israel, had realized the truth that God gives? That to which she clung yielded a quite contrary view of God: human religion regards Him as a receiver. It is true that she was but a sinful and lost woman; but such an one may have religious pride, and share the jealousy of that which had superior claims. At any rate, to her spirit — nay, even to those who ought to have known far better — God is always a claimant, and not one who gives as only God can give. Man's mind never rises above this; least of all in that which he seeks for his soul. He may know the effects of divine wisdom and power, but God Himself is unknown, and never can be known, save in Christ, His Son. This she had not yet learnt. Not a suspicion had she who it was that said to her, Give me to drink. If she had known who He was, God, as a giver, must have been distinctly and gloriously before her soul.

But grace was far from her thoughts; it was a Jew that asked of her a drink of water. She knew not the dignity of His person who was now a man on earth among men; she knew not that He was the Son, the only-begotten Son; she knew not the glory of Him who never proved His glory more than when He thus stooped down to sinners and their need; for what is there deeper on the part of God, or of God's Son, than this expression of grace, stooping down in love — not in condescension, but in real goodness? Condescension is but patronage, human and worldly; and to me there is something repulsive in the notion, save for the little stage of man. There is no such thought, nor could be, in Him who is true, and alone manifested divine love — a love that had no motive outside itself, which was love in its own nature. And this Jesus was, and was now on earth to show it. What was there in any way or degree to attract in such an one as she? It was God giving; it was the Son humbling Himself; in outward form, no doubt, asking, but asking that He might give, making her little gift of water but the occasion of that gift of living water, of which, if one drank, he should never thirst any more. This was indeed a new sound to her — this "living water."

I call your attention first of all to the expression. To be born of the Spirit is totally distinct from the gift of the Spirit. There is no connection whatever between the two thoughts. The one, of course, is just as true as the other. The first had always been. The Spirit of God had surely and unfailingly wrought in souls ever since sin came into the world; but the Spirit of God was never given till the Son was manifested, till God Himself took the place of a giver, and the Son took the place of humiliation in love to sinners, and asked the neediest of souls to give Him to drink, awakening confidence by His perfect grace. It is the great truth which everywhere shines out in this gospel; only thus and then could the living water be given. And you will mark, Christ is the giver. It is not a question of Himself, nor is it simply eternal life; we have had this fully, and Scripture repeats not itself. Although we most surely have absolute harmony in all the parts of the truth of God, still here we are on new ground in presence of another character of need altogether, deeper wants bringing out deeper grace. It is not a choice doctor, but an outcast and wretched woman, good for nothing in the eyes of any in this world. Such

was the one to whom the depths of grace in the Son of God were more or less unveiled.

The woman, it is true, made it palpable that as yet she was wholly unprepared for the inestimable gift. Wonder not at this. I do not think that any one, fairly reading John 3 with the fourth chapter, could boast of the learned Nicodemus any more than of the ignorant woman of Samaria. In the former scene the truth insisted on was, if possible, still more incumbent on man to know. How much had the teacher of Israel known of it? How far did he take it in then? In the later incident, the gift of living water was a truth that no one antecedently could have known. So far from being a matter of common need and urgently responsible knowledge, how could it be conceived? When had ever been given such a revelation of God and of His grace as Jesus had brought before this woman in John 4: 10? Where had there ever been such a display of divine grace as God thus giving, the Son thus bowing down in love to one outside all righteousness, and the Holy Ghost this living source of refreshment for the heart? The woman however falls back upon that which is the constant resource of nature in this world, that is, tradition — "the well of our father Jacob." It was an effort to escape from that which was too vast and deep and divine for her to take in. Jesus had left the place where His people dwelt under the shadow of God-imposed ordinance. Higher purposes were in accomplishment. Our gospel does not trace Him as come to bring out what was destined for the land of promise; for, after all, what is the promise? It is measured grace. He was come in immeasurable grace, for all was lost, where there ought not to have been an object to be the hiding-place of the soul. But where will not a sinner find one? She retreats behind this covering of pride, even for a woman of Samaria — "the well of her father Jacob." He had drunk of it, and his cattle, as well as his children: who was it then that Jesus made Himself? Oh, the withering unbelief of the heart, so quick to darken the rich grace of God! Jesus, however, patiently bears with her folly, and says to her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water" — albeit Jacob's well — "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." More than this, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

This supposes everlasting life; but it supposes a divine source of joy which everlasting life in itself never is nor can be. On the contrary, it would destroy all the truth of this new and divine nature to maintain that the life itself was a spring. Such is not the nature of life; it is essentially dependent; but here I find a spring, a continual source of supply. That is, it is not merely a new creature which, by the simple fact that it is a new creature and of God too, leans on Him whence it comes, and finds its support and strength in Another; but here there is a living source of joy. The very figure of the well aptly conveys as much, and much more, when we think of that which lay couched under the phrase "living water." For it is not some absolutely indispensable requisite for relation with God which we have here. Alas! what would in this case have been the sad truth of all that had ever lived up to this time?

It was a new privilege; it was a fulness of joy that was only appropriate according to the ways and counsels of God, when the Son came. It was impossible that God should not adequately mark the coming of His Son, and His own manifestation in His Son's presence here in grace, as well as the accomplishment of the infinite work of redemption. Not that this work is spoken of here; but still it is involved in His humiliation. It is impossible, I repeat, that God should not mark this greatest of all things before His mind and heart with some fresh blessing, some deep accession of joy to the believer. Those who know Him ever so little will confess that it could not be otherwise. Man may wish to level the fair scenes in the ways of God, and to blot out the landmarks He has made — always bright tokens of goodness in this world, always full of wisdom and blessing; but let man level as he may, and let his will intrude even into the things of divine revelation, God's word stands and shall stand for ever. God's

design is to make everything for His Son's glory. And so when the Son came, it is not merely that a new nature was given; *this* had always been in grace, that souls separated to His name might be born anew meet for His presence. But now, besides this nature and His looking on to the mighty work which would justify Him in the passing over of sins — now the new birth for the believer is brought to light in its true nature and value, eternal life in the Son.

But we have seen there is even more than this. There is a divine power for him who receives everlasting life, a well of water in him, as it is said here, springing up into everlasting life. Thus, clearly, it is not only the fact but the power of eternal life; and this not so much in a nature conferred, as in an unfailing flow connecting with the source. I admit the personality of the Spirit is not yet brought out here: this would be treated in due season. We have this truth afterwards, and it will come before us suitably on another occasion, I trust. But here we have each intimation exactly according to the mind of God and the accuracy of divine wisdom. We have not the question of a person yet: when the blessed Son of God goes away, and this is intimated fully, then another person comes and takes His place; and so the whole scheme stands out beautifully and in order. What now we find is power, rather than personality; but an inward power for him who has the everlasting life, in order that his soul may feel the full joy of grace. Of this then the Lord speaks when He says, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," etc.

Now let us turn for a moment to what man is since the fall, and to what God is as He has revealed Himself in and by the Son to a poor fallen creature, if ever there was one. What was the change that took place when man fell? When Adam was made, had he any thirst in the spiritual sense of the word? None whatever. For a sinless being there was no question of thirsting. This was a defect in the creation which our God did not and could not attach to it, when all was very good. I do not believe it was so even speaking physically; but I am sure, that in the sense in which our Lord discoursed, Adam had no craving after a food he did not possess; he was incapable of the thirst in question, because it supposes that the heart is not satisfied, that there is nothing around to satisfy it, that there is a continual desire after what it has not found nor can find. Not such was the condition of Adam then in innocence, made upright by the hand of God. His creature-satisfaction no doubt broke out, not certainly in spiritual worship, but at least in thankfulness to God. He enjoyed the goodness and wisdom of God in countless good things around and beneath himself. He sins, falls, and, along with the knowledge of good and evil that he acquired there came in this desire after what never could satisfy. And this accordingly is the condition of every fallen being. Put in its best shape, it is hope; for man does and cannot but hope: frequent and bitter disappointments of this world may crush the spirit; yet even so who does not know how it survives, still hoping against hope? But this it was that came in with the fall; for the best form you can give it, in the point of view now brought before you, is hope as a constant pressure towards activity. Man, as was said in Scripture, is become as God. And so there was this desire to be some one — somebody — in this world, in fact, virtually to take the place of God Himself. Of course, the daring aspiration has checks from God, and even yet has not shown itself fully; but it is in the heart, and sure to do its best — really its worst — when God withdraws all hindrances, and Satan works all out. The time is coming, and coming fast; but from the first day of sin to this, it has been just this desire after what man has not got stirring him to activity in a lost world.

Contrariwise, Jesus comes and gives, not only eternal life, but the "living water;" and there is at once an adequate object for the heart, which there never was before, with fresh power to enjoy it. Of old, even that which awakened the heart still took the character of hoping for that which was in prospect. There was trust in God and in His promises, so to speak; but now a mighty change took place. Christ was come; the hoped-for One was present. God Himself was here in the person of that

Man sitting thus weary by the well of Sychar, the lowliest of men; none the less, but the more from the very depths of His lowliness, showing Himself to be the true God in His love. For God in His gift would give nothing less than God. Not only would He give the nature which is of God, but a divine power to be in man of enjoying this nature and the relationships proper to it, the object suited to it, the worship and the service in accordance with it. Herein we find at once what meets the fall and its consequences, according to God; what meets it not in the meagre way of simple adaptation to human ruin, a bare remedy or a repair, but in such a sort as to prove and display God Himself, giving the fullest scope to the resources that are in Him. It is the revealed grace of the Son in the power of the Spirit. It is Christianity in some of its simplest, highest, weightiest elements: a divine person come down in perfect love, if a Jew outside Judaism, with a guilty Samaritan woman before Him, asking not for His own sake but for hers, seeking the least thing she could give in order to arrest her attention, that He might bless her with His own greatest and imperishable blessing, and this now and for ever. It is not only a new nature, but a present power for and in man, but from God, and in itself most strictly divine. And this is just what we now have to rejoice our souls in. He has given us the Spirit of God; He has accomplished His word. God has sent the Spirit of His Son, as it is said, into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father;" "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Not merely is there eternal life, but, over and above the gift of that life, the Holy Ghost Himself is given to us. And mark, then it is we find that the believer shall "never thirst again." This is not said simply of one born afresh, nor even where we hear of eternal life alone; nor was it true in fact when souls were born again and no more; for up to the time of God's giving in Christ and by Christ the Holy Spirit of grace, there was a craving after the things of the world; and God Himself did not wholly condemn this in a certain sense, but allowed it — it might be for the hardness of their heart. But still a man might, so to speak, have this world and have the next too — that kind of thing which even now we know men, grievously blinded as to the truth and ignorant of Christianity, think to be possible. Believers were not then treated as absolutely dead to flesh and world. In the Old Testament we find no such language even in the saints of God; we find it not in the fathers any more than in the children of Israel; we find the reverse more particularly in the whole form of the Jewish estate — a hope first in One that was coming, but at the same time no present deliverance from the course of the world as a judged system. There were acts of faith full of interest to us, in which saints rose above all that surrounded them by God's grace; and so it is that God instructs us by that which we are told of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and so on. But for all this, I speak of what is a plain fact in the midst of these things; for along with a hope that had not yet the object revealed to it, still less the infinite work of redemption accomplished, and laid as a basis for faith, there was also a measure of cleaving to what was found here on earth, which was not yet utterly and in every respect a judged thing.

Now, if the heart is not satisfied with Christ, how is it? It is because the Holy Ghost is not given to us; it is because I have Him not filling my heart to overflowing with the grace of Jesus; it is because, though divinely attracted to Christ, I have no rest in Him — am still occupied with myself, grovelling in the mud of my nature, instead of being taken up by the power of the Spirit with that Christ who is my life. Thus I am not satisfied with Him only; I am also hankering after what is trash, what is worldly, what is carnal. What is the consequence? It may be, and indeed is, most sorrowful that it should and must be so; for God in Christ in the fulness of grace is not enough! The possession and knowledge of a privilege constitutes an added responsibility, but the first thing is for faith to enter in and possess. Nor will He permit that our hearts should be occupied with these things merely as a matter of testimony, but of our own soul's delight in the object by the power that He has given to us.

But still what I do affirm now is this — that Christianity is perfectly brought out, and it is brought out, too, according to the wisdom of God; for, first of all, the divine nature is revealed in the person who is its fulness and complete expression, and, more than this, the power to enjoy is given. The consequence is that, while the heart finds in the revealed object that which alone is adequate to satisfy, because He is a divine person, and moreover the Son of God who loved me, the power of hope is not lost. For I have also a hope — not now a mere hope as it was when of old there was nothing else, but in such a world as this, being still in the body, God does not give it up for us, who need such a stimulus. There is no thirsting again when in the Spirit we enjoy Christ, but there is hope still; but then He whom I hope for is the very same that I possess. The Christ I long for is the Christ I actually have, and I shall never find in that blessed One a whit of difference. I shall know Him better and praise Him more, for I shall be in a condition where my infirmities are gone, and my very body will be incorrupt and glorious, and nothing shall annoy, distract, or obscure; but I shall find Him the same Christ who loves me perfectly now. Is it not blessed to know that this is even now true to our souls — that we have Him here as certainly as we shall have Him above? Thus while there remains in one sense the profit of something to be sought after, in another just as true our hearts have real rest as far as their object is concerned. We have not lost hope as a power for activity, rightly called forth and exercised in a ruined world. This would be indeed a loss, whilst we are here below. But hope must pass away. In heaven it is no longer a question of either faith or hope, as we know, for they always suppose an imperfect fallen condition, as far as things around are concerned; but then the way in which we have the hope is, that we have in Christ revealed to our faith the perfect object for a renewed heart, and that we are ourselves blessed according to the perfectness of the work that He has done, so that conscience as well as affection have perfect rest. At the same time the old creation remains, and we in the body in the midst of it, so that we have in hope a blessed spur to the activity of love. May I not ask, Is not all this worthy of such a God as ours? And is it not God acting according to His perfect love with His children, whom He has thus blessed with and in Christ His own Son?

But there is more than this. I need not enter upon that which has been often before us, and which it would be a joy to press, were it a question of the need of a soul in its unconverted state. I pass over, therefore, that which evinces the necessity of reaching the mind through an awakened conscience. It is blessed, no doubt, that there should be the proof of love before this, for I apprehend conscience cannot bear to be probed unless there be a previous testimony of love; but who will maintain that any testimony of love could of itself suffice for a sinner? There must be a dealing with the conscience; and so we find it here.

But what it is of moment now to draw attention to very briefly is the connection of this blessed power of the Spirit — the divine spring of joy in the soul — with that worship on which the woman, little knowing what she was about to draw out, questions the Saviour. She did so, indeed, as a speculation, perhaps even as a palliative for a conscience that was wounded, and that did not yet thoroughly bow before God; but whatever may have been the motive, the mixed motive, as I presume it really was (which, alas! we know too well), this woman does at least bring out for our edification a blessed and most important bearing of the gift of the Spirit. For indeed we are not only objects of divine love; we are not only possessors of eternal life and of the Holy Ghost, but there are worthy ends in it according to God; and that which claims our notice here is, I apprehend, the highest one necessarily — what goes up, not what comes down. We have our place of worship, we have our place of service; and worship and service are just the two forms in which the Holy Ghost, acting in us as the water springing up into everlasting life, leads our souls. The worship of God Himself, our Father, is first and supreme. It must and ought to be so: how could it rightly be otherwise? But still we are in this world where souls are perishing, and if not perishing, how many are most needy, and call for our

service! I speak now of the children of God, and repeat that expression in the actual state of Christendom — it is penury indeed for them. And so accordingly the ministry of grace has its just application here below.

In the foremost place, then, for the saint, and as the sole topic I wish to dwell on now in closing to-night, stands this connection of the Spirit with worship as explained by Christ. "Our fathers," says the woman, "worshipped in this mountain," (for she had her opinion, and a very decided one,) "and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Thus, in the presence of the Son, not only false systems disappear, but even that which, as partial revelation, had its warrant from God: not only the mountain of Samaria, but Jerusalem itself. How comes this? It was even so. How could Jerusalem possibly hold its place in the presence of the rejected Son of God? The city of the great King! Had the great King been received as such, He would have taken His seat in that city according to the terms of ancient promise. But this was exactly what had been refused; and now His back was turned, as He Himself is despised by those who took the place of being the best and wisest there. This only brings out the fulness of divine grace, and, moreover, attests that fulness of grace here, as always, is attached to the fulness of glory. Such flagrant sin touched the glory and gave occasion for the grace of God. Do not mistake. There is no indifference in God, who resists every sin done against Christ, in the very love that He bears to His guilty people, as well as that which cannot suffer the dishonour of His own Son; so, if it were only in the interests of the Church here below, He refuses to make light of the smallest blot or stain, or allowed affront put on Christ. Besides, man, religious man, had proved, and would yet more prove, the utter hollowness of ordinances to meet his wants or God's glory.

This woman had heard of what might be expected of the Messiah at His coming. Little did she know that He was speaking to her. There was no pomp nor judgment. As King, He of course might have sent forth armies, and burned up Jerusalem. But as the Son, He need say nothing now but these words: "The hour is coming, and now is," &c. He that had made everything by a word blotted at once out, as it was suitable He should do by a word, the place of Jerusalem from the earth as the centre of divine worship. Again, I say, not only the false systems, but even the partial revelation which merely dealt with man on the earth — what was suited, if one may thus speak, more justly to the first man — was doomed, and vanishes away, that the Son might abide — the Son of God. "Ye worship," He says, "ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." There was presumption and ignorance in Samaria; nor does the Lord disguise the advantage every way of Israel. But it may be remarked, that Jesus never says so except outside: He vindicates the Jews when He was in the midst of their rivals, and Himself rejected. What grace! But the time was come for more; and you will always find something tantamount in the wonderful ways of God. The rejected Lord does not deny what had honour, even though active against Himself. He does not slight the line of promise; He does not forget in the smallest degree the great and profoundly interesting fact on which hung the blessing of all that had ever been blessed in the earth — "Salvation is of the Jews." But He does say, "The hour cometh" — yea, He enforces it and presses it out even to this moment, as it were, that was arrived — "and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." When God gave His law, He gave what was according to the relationship in which His people stood with Himself, as well as suitable, inasmuch as it was a moral dealing with the flesh in those that, as a people, had nothing else. But this is just the mighty change, now that Messiah is come and rejected, and the Father is calling and forming sons by Him the Son — nay, more than this, is giving them the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of sonship, that the true worshippers might worship Himself in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

What, then, mean the sights and the sounds of this earth which now come before God in His professed worship? How stands the worship of the multitude now, of a nation, be it what or where it may? A flat and flagrant contradiction to His face of the Son of God; and not merely of Him, though surely this were enough to grieve deeply the heart that loves Him, and fears His name. But God's word shows how serious a thing it is to trifle with that which so nearly concerns the Holy Ghost. He is the present witness of the Son of man, rejected of men but exalted of God, who therefore attaches so much the more value to His name, because He is despised for His grace and humiliation; and the Spirit is contemned, because He witnesses of a Son of man contemned of men. What a demonstration of that which God is, and what an evidence of man!

And now this day on which we are cast sees men rushing on madly, as if they were filled with evil spirits, whose only wish was to smite afresh the Son of God, and to do despite to the Spirit of grace. The most outrageous forms of superstition are followed greedily and taken up, and not merely by those that are accounted ignorant, but by many who plume themselves on their knowledge, refinement, acquaintance even with the Bible itself. Yet, in the presence of such a testimony as our chapter — the words of Jesus Himself, these legend-mongers take the place of being the people of God, yet worship God in such a sort as to prove them but worldly sects crusading against the Spirit of God, and going forward in bold and blind and utter contempt of all that our Saviour here lays down.

None but a possessor of eternal life is competent to worship; but even so it is in the power of the Holy Ghost given. Thus it is one who, having the Son, has life; it is one who has the Holy Ghost as the spring of joy within, and owns the Father. There is no other worship that is now acceptable. The Father seeks none other; He does seek these. Let me appeal to you that are sitting around me at this moment, Are you thus true worshippers? Joy ever seeks communion. Sorrow may pour itself out alone into the only ear that is adequate to give sympathy, to succour as none other can, and to deliver as He only does; but joy finds itself the richer, because it is a sharer of itself with others. And when do you first find this out? Never before the Holy Ghost is given.

Thus, you see how all truth hangs together. As long as souls were simply born again, one might be here and another there; and so in the hope of their hearts, and in the desire of Christ's coming, they poured out often a lament to God, and sighs and groans rose up over the delay, and earnest cries that the time might hasten when the promised One should appear. But He is come in divine grace, He has put away our sins, and along with this He has given us eternal life; and, moreover, there is power according to the gift of God, the power of drawing near in the Spirit to the Father; for it is through the Spirit that Jew and Gentile who now believe have access to Him. It is according to the necessary character of the truth that there should be communion of joy, and consequently communion of worship. Thus it is, therefore, that along with this blessed truth (as we shall find, and I hope to expound some other night) there is ample provision for common praise. There is the gathering of souls together; not only the blessing of each where it is, but now (and now for the first time in the world's history) there is the singling out in this world, and the gathering together, the seeking, as it is said here, of the true worshippers, that these worshippers might themselves pour out their thanksgiving and adoration in common. Why? Because they have one Spirit, who accordingly unites them to the praise of God's grace, separate from all that are not true worshippers.

Up to this time worship had been mingled. The Samaritans worshipped they knew not what. For the Jews it was God, Jehovah the God of Israel, it was the Almighty Lord God of hosts that they worshipped; but still there was one here and another there, and there was no attempt to bring out and join together, and it could not be so until the Son came, and the mighty work of redemption was wrought, and the Holy Ghost was given. The partition-wall yet stood. But now Christ is come, and

what is it then to go back? What is it to distrust the Spirit of God? What is it to apostatize from grace and truth? Oh! be assured, it is coming — that falling away; and I warn you most solemnly, I warn you that have to do with others in responsibility, never let your children, even though unconverted, have anything to do with the false worshippers of this world. I say not that men as such are competent to worship, but that they are beyond a doubt responsible to feel that they are not true worshippers. I do say that you are wrong in giving children a rein in any respect, because they are unconverted, to mingle with the world and religiously take its course. I beseech you to watch carefully, and never to allow any plea on the score of curiosity, or some other reason of a natural sort which may possibly be found, for there is no one so clever as the devil in furnishing good reasons for bad things; but, beloved friends, treat it always as the deceit of the one that seduced Eve, whether under the smallest pretence for good that is to be got, or for any reason under the sun, you are called to do anything that is not God's will. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father." Is there any worship but this that God allows?

I admit that His grace enters where you could not, neither ought to go; I allow that it can work anywhere; yea, I know not why it might not work even when the sacrifice of the mass is offered for the living and the dead; for it is not sin that could hinder the grace of God. Surely, if sin could have hindered the Son, here was an instance; but it was because there was sin, it was to meet and deliver sinners out of sin, that the Son of God thus came. And so, I doubt not, it is, or at least it may be, in the Spirit of grace. But, I beseech you, let none suppose that grace means tolerating or dealing lightly with evil: there is nothing so sternly and thoroughly condemnatory of it. There is nothing that at the same time can avail to deliver; for while Another bears the judgment, the guilty one is saved in real divine love — and this not in death only, but in the power of His life as risen from the dead. Thus the Holy Ghost strengthens in good, as He is the energy of blessing and gives delight in it. Thus He is the only real power against evil in this world.

Here is that which may well act on the conscience of a saint. Have you ever worshipped God your Father in spirit and in truth? Or have you been content hitherto to mingle with the world and take part in its music, its architecture, its ritual? You know well that anybody can take part in these things. An instrument of man's device that has no heart nor conscience does take a part, and a very lively part; and so naturally the world is welcome, and, in point of fact, worships. It is absolutely bringing back again the very substance and means of idolatry. Indeed, the apostle discerned this in the Galatians (Gal. 4) when they took up Jewish forms. But what would he have felt and said at the state of things now found — what is actively going on? And what makes it so especially solemn at this time is that it advances daily. And this will never cease till the awful close, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we not saved to worship now, and this in spirit and in truth?

I beseech my brethren in Christ, on the other hand, that it may be their hearts' joy, when assembled for the purpose, to rise up into worship, and not to content themselves with mere speaking about it. Sometimes there seems too much of this when we meet to praise the Lord. It is rather something said or prayed about worship than actually adoring Him. I may talk about worship in my prayer or from the word of God, perhaps even in the very hymn. Beloved, worship is not talking about worship. We do not come at such times to expound or enforce the matter: this may be all well to set forth at another time. If we are there to worship, let us be found engaged in the thing, adoring Him who should be before every soul to praise and magnify and delight in. Christian worship is the outflow to God of hearts that have seen and found their joy and satisfaction by the Holy Ghost in the Son and in the Father.

The heart which has not a want that is not satisfied in the Christ we have found (given of God now in the midst of such a world as this) desires to praise, and cannot but praise, in fellowship with all that are thus blessed. It refuses to be associated with that which, being ignorant of grace or even sin, can have no communion with the Son and with the Father; it demands that the power which carries on the worship should be according to the will of God, who has sent the Holy Ghost down from heaven for the purpose. And who that knows such a power to conduct the children aright in worship could be content with any leader save the Holy Ghost acting sovereignly in the assembly by whom He will? The consequence is, that Christian worship always has for its central object the Son of God revealing the Father, and necessarily supposes the special gift of the Holy Ghost as the power in us of enjoying God, and of praising Him adequately. It is only for the true worshippers who know the Father. It is a low character of worship to be merely occupied about ourselves and one another, and ever singing about our own privileges.

Even edification, however precious, is not worship: it has the saints for its object, not the Father and the Son. Teaching is admirable in its way, of course; and I do not deny that, if we are really occupied with the Father of our Lord Jesus in adoration, there will be refreshment and edification; but it remains ever true, that the proper aim of worship is our common praise going up to God, of ministry is the grace and truth of Christ coming down, and so building up the saints. Even thanksgiving, though a real part, seems to me the lowest form of Christian worship; and for this reason, that it is not so much the expression of our joy in God as in what He gives to us. Now, though this abides, and it is right we should ever feel what He has done for us and given to us, we are entitled as His children, and are so richly blessed as Christians, that we may yield our hearts to the Spirit's revelations of what our God is in Himself, and so rejoice before Him. All has its place, and room is left for the state of souls, and the actual guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Another thing too, brethren, I may just observe by the way is, that the Saviour does not speak simply of worshipping "the Father." He tells us that "*God* is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Assuredly Christian worship is not formal, but it is not the less real because it is spiritual. There are occasions when the Holy Ghost would make the worship to be especially directed towards the Son as an object, and there are occasions, I need not say, when the Father is more prominently before the assembly. One knows times also when the Lordship or the grace of Jesus might predominate, or when the most striking thought before us is our rest in God Himself as such. I do not mean any one of these varieties taken exclusively, but I do say that the fact might be felt, that some one of these or of other presentations of our blessedness was giving tone and character to the worship. Form, of course, is blind to these differences, and would blot them out. Indeed, where the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost is not entered into, souls are not in a condition to understand or appreciate this.

Surely, too, all is perfect grace; and I hardly know anything that demonstrates how blessed we are more than this, that not only can we rejoice in our Father, but joy in God, as it is said in Rom. 5: 11. Reconciled to Him, and knowing His love by the Holy Ghost given to us, we have our boast in God as God, and for this simple reason, that all the nature of God, His whole moral character, has been so perfectly vindicated and satisfied as to our eternal blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord, that we know there is nothing in Him that does not range itself righteously for us now and evermore. He, who hates evil and has a perfect abhorrence of it in His nature, altogether intolerant of what He and we know to be still in us as a fact, has nevertheless been so absolutely glorified in Christ on our behalf, that He can rest in nothing but love, and we can go forth to Him in unceasing joy and praise. Not that we are spared from needful dealing: this, of course, would be loss indeed, and dangerous for us as we are in the body,

and here below; and we have it from Him in the character of Father. The chastening we meet with now is from our Father. (Compare Heb. 12 and 1 Peter 1: 17.) Undoubtedly our Father is God, but it is well to distinguish nature and relationships; and this is the way of Scripture. Most needful it is that we should know this near relationship of *Father*, which, as we are told by John, characterizes the very babes of the family of God. But it is of the utmost moment also to know that it is the triumph of redemption to set us in peace with *God* as such, and to make us boast in Him, now that all His nature can rest for us in Jesus, and in us by Jesus.

Thus we can delight that He is our Father, and justly so; only there is a danger of being shut up to this, and losing sight of our deep and perfect rest in God as such. (1 Peter 1: 21.) Now I say that, where the heart has not submitted to God's righteousness, does not know fully the depth of redemption, there is more confidence in the relation of "Father," than in having to do with "God." There is a want of appreciation of the work of Christ, and it may be, also an inadequate sense of His glory, And as there is a defectiveness in the faith and state of the heart, so this betrays itself in lack of liberty and fulness in worship, as of course, too, in the practical walk; for these things hang together. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 28, 29.) For "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb. 13: 12-15.)

I do not apologize for these general remarks of a practical nature as to Christianity and Christians, any more than for some of a similar nature with respect to worship. They all tend to show how our blessings and responsibilities connect themselves with the gift of the Spirit — not merely the new birth, as always, but the gift of the Spirit consequent on the Son's manifestation and rejection now. This blessing, that we have seen to be dependent on the presence of the Son in lowly love here below, is given by Him in virtue both of His glory and of His humiliation. In the chapter before, the being born again had nothing whatever to do with any particular time, and is fully described by our Lord as the universal necessity for God's kingdom, before He utters one word about His presence in this world, much less about redemption. In point of fact, no intelligent believer doubts it was true from the fall onwards, and that the Old Testament saints were born of water and the Spirit no less than those of the New Testament; but here we find ourselves in the presence of blessing which awaited His coming, and is given in the full grace of God; for truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. It was also contingent on redemption; but redemption is not directly brought into the passage, I suppose, because the object is to present more undividedly the grace of God as He now is known, the glory of the Son (whatever, yea in, His humiliation), and the consequent gift of the Spirit to the believer.