

THE  
ELEMENTS  
OF  
GOD'S  
ASSEMBLY

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# THE ELEMENTS OF GOD'S ASSEMBLY

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PART 1  
THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST  
IN ITS VARIOUS FEATURES AND ASPECTS

Acts 3:

I desire to speak to you tonight a little on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think we must all feel how very important it is that we should have faith in His name, and in order to have faith in His name we must understand His name. Now this chapter describes His name on what we might term the official side—on the side of power. On the side of power “the name” applies to Him more particularly as Lord, in his official character and position of supremacy. There is also the name of Jesus, the name of the Jehovah God of the Old Testament, now revealed in a man. Also there is the name of the Son, by which the name of the Father is revealed. Therefore in several places in John’s gospel you read, “whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name,” (John 15:16) etc.; there it is the name of the Son, and that is not at all the same thing as the name of the Lord Jesus.

You would not think of speaking direct to JESUS, because Jesus is a much greater name than Lord; for being the name of the revelation of God in a man, it is the name which is above every name, so we read, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” (Philippians 2:10). On the other hand it is decreed that every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ is Lord, but the two things are distinct. The bowing is to the name of Jesus, and the confessing is to the name of the Lord, and the distinction in these things is important. In this chapter we have the name of power, the name of the Lord.

In chapter 2 the apostles are brought before us as witnesses. Peter, standing up with the eleven, in a very few words reports what was never known before. He was the first to report the position God had given Jesus in heaven. All that any one knew before was, that a

cloud had received Him out of their sight. They had no idea of the position that God had given Him as Man in heaven. Peter reports this by the Holy Ghost, for until the Spirit came it was not known, indeed could not have been.

Peter, standing up with the eleven, reported the place God had given the crucified and risen Jesus in heaven—until His enemies should become a footstool under His feet.

Very simple statements he made, but it was the word of faith—the word which reports the position that God had given Jesus glorified; and it is a matter of the greatest possible importance that every true believer should learn to give the Lord Jesus Christ the same place in his heart and mind that God has given Him actually and bodily. That is what I mean by faith.

The man of faith holds Him in the faith of his soul, in his heart, mind and thoughts—exactly in the same place that God has given Him actually. This word of faith has come and reported all this to us, and it is true, for it is God's own report of the way He has acted in regard to the One whom man crucified.

Now this is not the righteousness side of the gospel; that is more connected with Christ, and if you have received Christ you have received righteousness and are right with God. God answers that faith in Him by means of Christ, by giving the Spirit, which carries with it the *reception* of the forgiveness of sins.

Now supposing you then went straight off to heaven, there could be no need for anything more. However, that is not usually so. We are generally left on the earth, and in a day like this you find yourself amidst great religious dissension, where every kind of confusion exists, and if the eye be off the Lord, and if your faith is not simply in the Lord Himself, you are apt to get very much perplexed.

Now it is to my mind a matter of paramount importance, after having believed in God, after having received Christ, after having got right with God, and so fit for heaven surely, that we should learn to have faith in the name of the Lord Jesus. I daresay many of

you here will know that the name, Lord Jesus, does not apply to natural things, but to spiritual things only, to those things which concern our souls as God's people while Jesus our Lord is absent.

The name of the Father revealed in the Son furnishes a full answer to your spiritual affections as born of God, for being born of Him, you have divine affections produced in your soul, and you must have an answer to them, and that answer you find abundantly in the Father's love revealed in the Son. Still, you see we need power against Satan, because we are yet in the scene of the enemy's power while passing through this life.

The outward professing body has become so corrupted, that instead of being a sphere of safety for our souls it has become a sphere of the greatest possible danger, and our resource therefore lies, not in any outward body of christians, but in the Lord. I daresay that all here today have taken the ground that they have come out to the Lord. That is a very easily used expression in a day like this, but you need to ask yourself if you understand the Lord's name, so that you can exercise simple faith in that name, and find all power that you need in that name.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10). If you are right you do not hold yourself to be anything against Satan, you simply turn to the Lord's name, and putting your faith in His name, the enemy runs away. The name of the Lord is indeed a strong tower; the righteous do not make efforts against the enemy—they simply run into the name of the Lord. Now that supposes they have some idea what the name of the Lord means.

This chapter very simply describes the various features of the Lord's name, on the side of the name of power, and it is very important that we should know them. The incident recorded at the beginning of this chapter is important, because no doubt it illustrates the teaching of the chapter.

The impotent man is not a figure of a sinful man—he is a figure of a weak man. Impotence means weakness or incapability. I have no doubt it takes us a much longer time to learn our weakness than our sinfulness. This is a very long lesson, but a necessary one, and when it is learnt in any measure we can say, “when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

You make use of another power if you are weak, but if not you make use of your own power. There is such a thing as praying most earnestly to the Lord to help you, but God will not join His strengths to your strengths, though He will add His strength to your weakness. It is only the Lord's strength that is any match for the enemy—only divine power will enable you to refuse to succumb to Satan's influence. Power means, that whatever comes upon you, you are found equal to it, so that instead of the pressure overcoming you, you overcome it.

I am conscious that I am speaking to a good many young people, and I have no doubt in the christian path you are beginning to find there are a great many things to contend with that you never bargained for. Still, you are not prepared to draw back, but you may have very serious exercises about going on, and it is a matter of the greatest importance that you should understand the Lord's name, and learn to put your faith simply in His name, for you will find everything in His name that you need against the most subtle suggestions of the enemy.

Now this impotent man, in the primary application of the picture, represents the nation of Israel, a people under law—under the best law that could be given, a holy law, and commandments holy, just and good; and supposing they could have obeyed it, they would have been quite righteous, and have been saved from their enemies.

However, the law was weak because of what man is, and it was ineffective because man was so weak that he could not keep it, but answered to the lawlessness of his own sinful flesh instead. Now in christianity God has provided power, so that what is pictured here

of the nation of Israel is answered perfectly. They had never walked all their life as a nation, that is to say, they had never moved according to God, had never even stood upright on their feet, and had never been to God's praise in any way, but dishonoured Him.

To stand up—in a spiritual sense—is to be upright, and uprightness is being according to God; whilst walking is moving—in your soul now—according to God, and leaping is that obstacles and opposing influences do not detain you.

Peter then gave the impotent man the faith of the name of the Lord—he had no silver and gold to give him, but he had the word, which gave him the faith of the name, and the man accepted it, and the effect was that he stood on his feet, and walked and leaped and praised God.

What a wonderful thing for a person to be able to do who had never stood on his feet at all! Young christians, you need this power if you are to stand upright in your pathway down here. It is a great thing to be upright and fair and square in your soul with God. You have received the Spirit of God, remember, and have become one of God's people, and so you are on a new line altogether from religious man in the flesh. God has a people now on the earth of a very different kind from what they were before in Israel, and you must not take your idea of God's people from them.

Now you understand why your baptism comes in so often in scripture and why you are buried straight away *right off*, so as to give you to know the true character of God's people in christianity. They have all been buried with Christ, and so put out of sight, and have had the name of the risen and glorified Lord called over them, so that they cannot be a people of God in the flesh now.

You are now under the Lord, and you cannot consistently accept *any religious position* for yourself in the flesh, because you have been baptised. If that be truly accepted, I think it will make you feel the need of a resource outside of yourself and outside the whole

scene in which you actually are as a christian man or woman, for you cannot find a sufficient resource in it.

I know what it is to run about from place to place, and fall in with different modes and manners of meetings, and meet those that think that every new acquisition is the right and all sufficient thing; but one has found out that what one ought to have done at the beginning is just what is taught here.

The first thing, then, that is brought before us in relation to the name of the Lord is that He is God's Servant, to fulfil all the unconditional promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is the first feature of His name. (2) He is the Holy One; (3) He is the Just One; (4) the Originator of life, and lastly, God's Prophet to tell us God's mind.

Those are the various features of the name of the Lord, as described here, and you are to accept them in real faith, and as sure as you do so, they will cover in your soul all that you need against the great enemy that you have to contend with in passing through this life. There is no doubt that Satan is a very great adversary, and opposed to all that is according to God, and if he can only influence us contrary to God's word and mind and God's Christ, he has gained an advantage over us.

Therefore, if you would escape his influence you must have a resource, and God has provided His people with one, and only one. We are just as weak—spiritually speaking—as this man was naturally, for we have no power, apart from the Lord and the Spirit, to raise ourselves up or to move our souls according to God, or to surmount spiritual obstacles; and I am sure we have no power truly to praise God, except by means of the power placed *here* at our disposal. This power lies in the Holy Ghost, of course, subjectively, yet He never moves apart from the Lord Jesus, the object of faith. The Holy Ghost has not come to be the object of faith, but He moves along with the Lord Jesus, who is the glorified Servant of God.



The first thing, then, stated here is, that the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has glorified His Son—it should read—His Servant Jesus. God has now got a glorified Servant.

I have no doubt the Lord Jesus has servants, in whom the Spirit dwells, at His hand, and therefore He can make use of them, and put into them the various things which He intends them to give out to others.

But the Lord Jesus really does it all by the Spirit, and if He does not do it, it is not done according to God, and in this sense God has only one Servant, and He has put everything into His hand. The promises of Israel, but are unconditional promises of blessing to the earth and the people of God on it, in connection with Christ.

This line of things does not apply to us as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but you will never be able to answer to your heavenly calling without this. If you cannot keep clear of the enemy here, how will you answer to what is in heaven? How can you thus enter into a position in the heavenlies in any degree of reality? You may hold it as information, but this will only puff you up with a sense of superiority over others who do not know as much.

So that you need setting free from what is outward here, for you have to go through this world, and you do not become a sort of angelic being because you are converted. You are susceptible to influences which will work on what you are naturally, and you have these influences to resist and keep clear of. How, then, are you going to do it? How blessed it is to know that God has raised up a faithful Servant and that Jesus is that Servant—a Person who is really divine—truly the Son of God, and now as a man glorified, and glorified, too, as God's Servant, who has put everything into His hands that He wants carrying out.

I know He finished all the work God gave Him to do down here—finished all on that line, and perfectly glorified God in His death, and proclaimed that the work was finished; but there was a fresh beginning of work when He took His place on high, on the Father's throne.

He is there the glorified Servant, and it is as the glorified man that He is God's Servant, and all that God wants carrying out, whether in christianity or after we are gone, is put into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to build your faith up in the Lord Jesus, and I pray God that we might have more faith in the name of the Lord.

The great thing, then, and the first, too, is that He is God's Servant, to carry out all that God has promised in relation to the earth, and if we get the good of that we shall find ourselves free from Satan's power, and free to enter into heavenly things; but we cannot do so otherwise. It must be on the principle of faith, in the power that alone can save you, that this is done; and you have to learn to give the Lord Jesus Christ the place in your mind that God has actually given Him. It is really obedience to God, that is, subjection to Him who is of God made Lord, and you must in faith give the Lord the same place that God has given Him actually, and you cannot be in power against Satan without it.

Of course no one can take Him out of His place. He holds it whether you give it to Him or not, but if you are to realise the power, you must hold Him in that place in the faith of your soul. That is the first thing we learn in regard to His name. He is the glorified Servant of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom the promises were made, and in order that those promises shall not break down God has provided Himself a Servant, who is able to carry them all out, and who can enable God's people, while on the earth, to be in all the good in their souls of that which will be universally displayed in the world to come.

Of course all is in mystery now, and you must not expect to enjoy these things externally in a day like this, whilst Christ is absent. We know the Lord has dealt out much in the way of ministry through one servant or another; it abounds on every hand, but though that is all very blessed and precious in its place, yet none of these privileges, or all of them put together, will save us from the power

of the enemy. In fact, he can puff us up in connection with these things, and build us up in our own estimation in connection with them. Therefore we need a power outside of all these things to save us and take us away in our souls even from privileges and benefits, so that we may give the Lord His place and own that He is the One alone able to carry out all divine purposes, and so we put our trust in Him.

If I use myself in the Lord's service it is all vanity, but if I act as one whom the Lord is using, I cannot think of myself in connection with it at all. So that you see how great a matter it is to give the Lord Jesus Christ this place in your mind, and hold Him in faith as the one glorified Servant to carry out all these unconditional promises. He is thus God's Servant, and I am quite sure He never failed Him yet, and never will. You may fall out of line with His ways, and not be subject to Him, but as sure as you do so Satan will entrap your soul in some way or other.

The next feature of His name is, that He is the Holy One, and this word Holy One, in Acts chapters 2 (gracious one) and 3, is a very beautiful one in the original language—it means a Person who is an expression of graces. He is in Himself, as a man, an expression of all that a man is who is in fullest favour with God. He is God's gracious One, and He is as a man in all God's grace and favour. In short, He is everything that even God desires man to be.

Well, if He is everything that God wants a man to be, surely He is everything that you could spiritually desire a man to be. Do you now seriously consider the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you perseveringly think about Him? If so, you will not fail to find in Him an answer to your every desire, and to what you know every christian ought to be. You may look at your brethren and be grievously disappointed by the way you see them behave, but suppose you by faith contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, will you not find a perfect answer to your heart's desire?

He is God's Holy One, which also in this chapter gives the thought that He is unique and apart; yes, this blessed Man is indeed apart from every man. You have, then, in faith to hold Him as apart, which forbids your connecting Him with man or things on this side of death. This is, of course, a very different thing from being connected with Him by the Spirit, where He now is. Now if you hold Him thus in the faith of your soul, I am quite sure you will never think of connecting Him with yourself here, or with a visible system of religious things.

If you hold Him apart from all and everybody, you could not think of comparing any one with Him. If you hold Him as the Holy One, it follows that He will be to you the just or righteous One, and the only Man that is righteous absolutely. I daresay you look round sometimes and wonder who is right and become quite puzzled. Do you think that is faith? No! it is not faith. If you were holding the Lord Jesus Christ as God's just One or God's righteous One, you would have an immense satisfaction against all the ups and downs of people's inconsistency and your consequent painful exercises of heart and mind.

If you are upset because of the way people turn out, it only shows that you are not going on in faith. If you were walking in faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ you would not be really disappointed, because there is only one Man absolutely righteous, and only one Man that everybody may take his cue from with safety, because He is always right. If you have *man* here before you—however gifted—and take your line of direction from him, and believe all he says, and think as he thinks, and he makes a mistake, and you follow him, then you will err also.

That will not occur if you hold the Lord Jesus Christ as the only absolutely holy and righteous one. If He has that place in the faith of your soul, you will not get far wrong. These are all blessed features of His name. He is indeed God's Servant to carry out God's purposes and He is the only One who is apart from man, and He is the

righteous One—the One who is always right. Now I think it is a very great matter to hold Him in this way.

Then again He is the Prince of Life—another very important feature of His name, and this word Prince is more correctly “Originator” of life. All that is really living according to God has its origin in this glorified Servant of God, in this glorified Jesus; it springs from this source. It may be, and is no doubt *communicated* to our souls by the Spirit, but that does not alter the fact at all; you do not find that the Spirit is said to be the *Originator* of life. It is the Lord Jesus Christ—the One that man killed—who is the Originator of all that is divine life in man.

What misleading ideas about christian life are current in Christendom, but those who hold them have not traced life to its origin. If you do not hold every idea in connection with its source, you are apt to form very wrong conclusions, but the matter of life becomes very simple if you hold it in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here definitely said to be the Originator of life.

Well, He is God’s Servant to carry out all God’s promises, and the Holy One, apart from everyone, the Man of God’s graces, the One who is always right, and if you keep that One in the faith of your soul in this way, and also as the Originator of all that is really vital and living, you will be preserved from Satan, I am sure. Now if these various features of the name, all that which God has given you to believe about Him, were held in the faith of your soul, I have no doubt you would be in power.

As it goes on to say, “And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong.” It was the name that did it, but on the man’s side it was through faith in His name. Faith is thus an intelligent thing. The word supplies you with God’s thoughts and ideas concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and you accept them and believe them, and as they are given effect to by the Spirit in your soul, they are held as living realities.

It was faith in the name that made this man strong, and that is the kind of person whom the enemy can do nothing with. He is perfectly sound, and like a man in full health and strength does not easily succumb to disease, because he is strong enough to throw off attacks. It is the same with you spiritually—you are able to throw off attacks when you can stand upright and stand before God and look God in the face without shame and fear, and you can then move on in your soul.

You will not sink down into mannerisms, and into the ruts of the past, if you are going on in faith.

To walk, then, means to move, so that spiritually speaking when you are walking you are moving on in your soul. You must not confound walk and conduct; walk is soul movement. If you can stand upright by faith in His name, and move on in your soul, the third thing is that you are not detained by occurrences. What people say and do, and what occurs amongst us as God's people even, very easily occupies us, and we often feel that we cannot get over this and that.

Well, then, we are not in power, because we are not going on according to faith. No doubt we are living in days when faith is at a very low ebb; the idea very generally is, that everything can be done by means.

It is said—if we have money and men we can do everything—and stirring appeals and earnest endeavours will accomplish anything and everything. FAITH will accomplish everything. It was just the same in the days of Israel; when Saul saw any great man physically, he said, 'That is the man for me.'

Jonathan and good King Asa did not get a host of tall men; they said, "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few ... or with them that have no power" (1 Samuel 14:6, 2 Chronicles 14:11) A host can be defeated by two, or even one of us, just as well as by a thousand, if the Lord does it. Faith brings the Lord in, but sight leaves Him out.

These are days when we need to see to it that we are not settling down in modes and manners and things we have become used to, and mind that we are really going on, holding the Lord Jesus Christ really in the faith of our souls.

He will answer that, I am quite sure. Whatever is done in faith in His name, you may be assured the Lord will answer, and the Lord can use any man He pleases, and make him powerful against all the power of the enemy.

It is a serious thing to be detained by obstacles, or that we should be detained in our souls, bemoaning this and that and making excuses. If you were exercising faith in the Lord's name you would not be in that miserable state. You would, instead of that, be occupying people with the object of your faith and telling them what the Lord can do.

Read Psalm 77 over carefully and see the difference between the first and second part of it, and note the reason why. The first part is all complaining—nobody right, and he is not even right with himself. Then we read: "I said, *This is my infirmity;*" it is all my weakness; I will turn round and talk of *Thy* doings, and will remember *Thy* wonders. He then speaks just as much, or more, about God's doings as of his own before. As soon as he owns his weakness, he turns to the Source of strength.

Men of power are not miserable men; men of power can stand up and walk, they are in liberty and can surmount obstacles and praise God.

We must now close with a few remarks about the name on the side of intelligence, because we have a very subtle enemy, who can make us think that error is truth and that truth is error, so much so that faith in the name of the Lord is the only way to be proof against him.

This last feature of the name of the Lord is the prophet—"Him shall ye hear." You have to go to the Lord with your soul problems, and listen to Him, and He will tell you God's mind—He will explain

all scripture difficulties to you, and when the devil is giving you his interpretation, the Lord will give you the right one, and He will give you such light and power in your soul that you will know that His explanation is the right one.

It is marvellous the subtle interpretation of scripture the devil can give you, but you need not be trapped by these things, as there is a Prophet who can tell you all God's mind. "Every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed" and the application of that spiritually is that those who do not listen to that Prophet miss their way in the christian path and fall out of rank in the march. I can understand why people drop out of the separate path, and are turned aside by error and misapplication of scripture; it is because they neglect the Lord as Prophet.

There is only one Person who can solve all problems, and explain matters and make all clear to you, and you have an unfailing resource there. He knows God's mind, and is able to give it us perfectly according to scripture as no one else can.

Put your faith, then, in the Lord's name. He is God's Servant—He is the Holy One—the just One—the Originator of life and the Prophet—the One God has raised up, and He truly gives God's mind to His people at any period of their history or step of their journey, as the need arises; and what He gives will effectually save them from all the attacks of the enemy.

What is wanted today is men of faith, and so of power—not exactly men of means—though that may come in all right if subordinate to faith.

May we not be depending on mere means—thinking we can accomplish this and that by our work, but may we have more simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He always answers faith and never disappoints us on that line. What an encouragement to our hearts! He is today just what He is described to be in this chapter, and what is wanted first of all is to accept the word which announces it, and to be in the faith of it, and so we shall find the Spirit will support our souls according to the faith of His great and glorious name.



PART 2  
FOUR THINGS PRELIMINARY AND PREPARATORY TO  
THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

1 Corinthians 10:, 11:1-3, 23-32.

There are in these scriptures four things which I desire to bring before you tonight as preliminary to the assembly of God. The first is our baptism and what is connected with it; secondly, fellowship, christian fellowship and what is connected with it; and then the remembrance of the Lord; and lastly the announcement of His death.

Now I believe these things are placed in these scriptures in what we may term moral order for our soul's education. We need educating spiritually just as much or more than we need educating naturally in order to fill a place for God in this life. Education generally is in view of enabling a person to fulfil some position in this life, therefore it is not a meaningless thing or a matter of mere accomplishment. In these difficult days it is indeed a very practical thing and has a practical end in view. As a parent my thought of education would be to enable my child to fill some place for a career in this life. This illustrates the divine thought as to God's assembly.

God has to this end and that He may be known, an assembly, what is called His church on this earth; and this epistle is directly addressed to that assembly. It was addressed directly to the church of God at Corinth, but of course you will understand that it is the same church of God everywhere. There is only one church and it is composed of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, and also composed of all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place.

I now desire to guard you against applying or limiting the statements in this epistle to yourself as a christian man in regard to your individual walk and conduct. If you want instruction as to that, you will find it in other epistles—say in the Epistle to the Romans and others; but what is said here is said to the assembly of

God. Each individual who belongs to that assembly is supposed to listen to what is said to the assembly as a whole. It is important to bear in mind that what is said here is said to the assembly as a whole. Each individual is supposed to pay attention, but learning individual truths and learning collective things individually are very different, and have a different end in view.

Here the end in view is that there may be a people of God on this earth in whom the true light of God in Christ shines and who maintain an order which is God's own order.

Now it is a widespread idea that the way things are done does not matter, but it does. God has a purpose and He has a way, and His ways are *His* ways, and are to be observed by His people in regard to the way they meet together, or carry on His work, and the way they do everything collectively as well as individually. We are not here to take our own way, either individually or collectively.

I sincerely hope you will not give place to the widespread thought, that the way does not matter so long as there is blessing. Of course, God is sovereign, and above everything, and is not limited to people doing things His way, but He knows whether they do things His way or not, and if they do not, it must be loss to themselves and dishonour to God. He can, of course, overrule everything, but that in no wise excuses the wrong way. So it behoves every christian to pay very serious attention to this epistle, which opens out so fully the order of the assembly of God. God's order for God's assembly is here written down by the apostle to correct disorder. The Corinthians were taking their own course, and consequently got into disorder, as indeed all christians must, if they will take their own way.

I am not now speaking exactly of the individual pathway, but more particularly in regard to our meeting together and carrying on what we call the Lord's work. There is bound to be confusion unless we take God's way, and He has been pleased to give us His own way for His people. He is the sole Proprietor of the whole of His people, of the assembly which is the church of God; it belongs

to Him, for it is composed of those who are set apart to Him in Christ.

You might say, 'What are they set apart from?' From man, set apart in another Man to God. Sanctified in Christ Jesus means that we are set apart from man, and man as man is not to be allowed to intrude into our minds in regard to those things which concern what we call the 'meeting', to put it in simple language.

It is not, however, our assembling which makes us God's assembly, the saints are God's assembly whether they assemble or not. It is by believing the gospel and receiving the Spirit that each one is of God's assembly. We should then assemble because of what we are, and in accordance with what God says as to His church, or how can we assemble rightly? We cannot do this if we have no idea of what He has made us. That is why I now wish to call attention to these cardinal points of God's assembly.

The first thing then is our baptism and what is connected with it; and in this connection the warnings are here given to those who compose this assembly, lest they should be idolaters—they are exhorted to "flee from idolatry." There is as much idolatry today in christendom as ever there was in Israel of old though of course it does not take the same form. Hence these things happened to them for types, and were written for our admonition. Turn to the books of Moses, and read what is there recorded in the light of this. Why were those types recorded? It is very important to remember that God had the admonition of His assembly in view when He caused those things to be written—for all things are of God (1 Corinthians 8:6).

He knew He was going to have an Assembly on earth, which should be called His Assembly, composed of persons who would be indwelt by His Spirit—and set apart in Christ Jesus from what they are naturally. Of course, such a setting apart can only be realised in heart, mind and spirit; for we cannot in this sense be set apart physically or bodily; only in mind and spirit is it possible. Thank God some of us know a little about it by His Grace.

Of course, I am still a man, and so are you still a man or a woman, as the case may be, and therefore it is only in mind, thoughts and spirit that you can obey your setting apart from what you are naturally; but in Christ and in the Spirit, you are set apart from what you are as a merely natural man, or you would not be of the assembly of God, for this assembly is constituted absolutely by and in the Spirit, and it is most important to bear that in mind.

That is the reason the apostle brings in the cross at the commencement of the epistle, to show that man's wisdom and power is all weakness and folly as to God's assembly. This is demonstrated in a crucified man. Each one is thus proved to be as weak and as foolish as the place He in grace took, in regard to God's assembly. You may be clever or highly educated naturally, but you must not think that because you are wise in this world you are consequently wise in the things of God. You have to put all such thoughts aside as being in your way, and learn to become a fool that you may be wise.

The assembly is a spiritual constitution and it is set up here by and in the Spirit of God, therefore the things which belong to it are only known by the Spirit of God, and He searches all those things which are too deep for the natural man, however wise he may be.

Now it is very important to interpret every passage in the scriptures in relation to its bearings, and the point of instruction in it. The Spirit of God is the One in whom all this spiritual order of things is constituted and established on earth, because the Spirit dwells in each one who composes the assembly; and He searches the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10), therefore no one knows any of these things but by spiritual discernment.

The natural man does not discern the things of the Spirit of God. If you seriously think about it, you will see the force of it, for spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

After Christ's death and resurrection the Spirit came and formed an assembly on this earth, which has a unique character. We know the mass of christians have dropped down in their souls to taking their thought of God's people from what they were before Christ

died and was raised again. Israel doubtless was His people, and was Jehovah's assembly, but of a different character or nature altogether from christians. It was an assembly in the flesh, composed of men and women who had a ritual given them, which they were taught to observe, and which took them a year to go the round. At the present time christians will have a similar order of things which can be naturally discerned, but that is not according to God's assembly in christianity.

These considerations bring me to our first point—our baptism, which signifies that all those who compose God's assembly at the present time have been buried with Christ. Of course, you have not been buried as to your own natural life, or you would not be here; but you have been buried by baptism with Christ. In Romans 6 we have it definitely stated that "we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4).

The apostle brings that thought up here, and so admonishes these Corinthians. He did not wish them to be ignorant that all our fathers were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, nor of what happened to that people who were so baptised. It was all written, too, for our admonition, therefore it commands our attention with all seriousness and interest.

God still has a people on the earth, called His assembly, but composed of a buried people—of course, speaking spiritually—and that is the first thing to consider in regard to God's assembly. If you do not understand your baptism, you will not understand christian fellowship, and consequently cannot truly remember the Lord. Remembering what He has done for you is not at all the same thing as remembering Him. The first thing, then, in this education is that you should learn to be true to your baptism, and you are responsible to be so.

You need to be educated in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as a person who has been buried with Him by baptism, and as having had His name called over you.

Christ is the only living Person who has been actually buried, of course, and He has been buried in order that His people might be buried with Him, and therefore this is now possible, and it is the only way whereby God's people can be put into their proper position in the christian profession on this earth consistent with Christ's death, burial, resurrection, rejection and absence from this world.

It is indeed the only way whereby they can be put into the true christian profession. If you were not buried you would not be in a position before men on this earth consistent with the Lord and Master, for He has actually died and has been actually buried, and raised from the dead and gone back to heaven and made Lord and Christ there. All power is in the hands of a risen and glorified Man—a Man who has therefore no connection with anything on this side of death.

It is a flat denial of your baptism to be connected with anything in a religious sense on this side of death. How can you be connected with anything on this side of death if you have been buried? I am of course, speaking of what you are as of God's assembly, not what you are naturally. You may be husband, wife or mother—all that is the natural side of things, which goes on as long as we remain in this life.

God's assembly is not constituted in these things, and what we are as His assembly, being spiritual, necessitates that those who compose it shall be buried—they must be disconnected from the whole natural, religious order of things.

In the case of Israel, and as typical of christians they were all baptised to Moses in the cloud and in the sea. I have no doubt the sea refers to Christ's burial and the cloud to the divine presence. Now if we have believed the gospel and received the Spirit, we must remember also that we have been buried with Christ by baptism: but in connection with our burial we have had the name of the Lord Jesus Christ called over us—and have thus been really introduced into christianity in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This means that you have been dissociated as a

religious person, as a christian man or woman, from all connection with any religious order of things this side of death; and that you have been put under the authority of One in resurrection.

If you really belong to the various sects or systems or to different sections of christians—call them what you like, certainly the name of that particular section ought to have been called over you at your baptism. Think of the inconsistency of being buried with Christ, and having His name called over you, and then assuming to tell people that you belong to this and that—you are denying your burial certainly. Our baptism is not a mere religious service—it is a very great and serious reality to have been buried with Christ.

Of course these remarks apply only to our religious status as christian men and women on this earth. We have been buried, and therefore our religious order must be entirely of a spiritual character; such an order can only apply to people who have been buried, and who have had the name of a risen and glorified Man called over them. This is indeed a very great matter.

I can see more and more that if we understood and were obedient to our baptism we should find ourselves clear of all those impediments and entanglements which so often beset us in a religious sense, and which so seriously block our way spiritually. It is the religious external order of things which is one of the greatest difficulties of God's people at the present time, and religious attachments, allow me to say, are the most tenacious of all attachments.

If you become attached in your spiritual affections to a meeting, church or chapel, or a religious system, you will find that it will hold you far more tenaciously than even a worldly thing. In a way it appeals to your conscience, and you can therefore easily believe it to be the right thing; and so it holds you down in your soul in an order of visible things.

However, if you bring your baptism to bear on all that, you will say, What am I doing, acknowledging such a thing? Has that any authority over me, when the Lord's name has been called over me?

Just consider the inconsistency of the thing! I think it is a very great privilege to have been buried—therefore none of these things have any claim on me whatever. Who has a claim on me? The One whose name has been called over me. Who has God made Lord and Christ but Jesus? Jesus is Lord, and His name has been called over us and we are responsible to Him, and if we feel our inability to answer to that responsibility, the sooner we humble ourselves before the One whose name has been called over us the better it will be for us, because we are indeed under responsibility to Him, whether we answer to it or not.

You may say, 'I wish I had never been baptised if that is it.' Yes, but you cannot undo it, and I am glad you cannot. If you are true to your baptism, you will be kept from idolatry, but if you are not clear about and obedient to your baptism, you cannot escape it. Idolatry is having religious things on this side of death as an object of our spiritual affections, instead of a Person in another life. It is having visible, religious objects instead of an unseen Person, so that the better the object, the more subtly it distracts or diverts us from the unseen Person.

No doubt then it has become your idol, and you have just to let that go as an object for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will find it will fall into its right place. If it be a visible religious object, it is an idol, for of course the only object should be the one object of faith—the One whose name has been called over you at your baptism.

The Lord Jesus Christ has doubtless done a great many things and given out a great many things since He went back to heaven, through one servant and another. What have God's people done? They have done what they have always done—made a distinct object of what the Lord has given them, instead of the Person who gave it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Administrator of blessing, and whoever it has been given out through, it is the Lord who has given it; and then you see to make a distinct object of that which He has



so graciously bestowed for the blessing of His people, diverting the mind from the Giver, is a most serious matter.

Outward christian privileges will not save you—nor will blessings and gifts—no one can save you but the Lord, the One whose name has been called over you. All the blessed truths you ever learned could not save you—the Lord only can do that. Beware therefore of relying on and trusting in things, however good, instead of Himself.

The children of Israel were not true to Moses, and fell in the wilderness; they went on very well for a time, until Moses was called up into the mount, and was out of sight. They then said, “as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him”—he is out of sight. (Exodus 32:1) The antitype is just the same—the Lord Jesus Christ is out of sight—He has been here, lived and died and was buried here, but He is now a living Person in heaven and so out of sight, and it is His being out of sight that tests people. Moses being out of sight, Israel must have something to look at, and they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play, rejoicing in the works of their own hands.

You may say, ‘Am I not then to enjoy the Lord’s work?’ Well, mind what you are doing! Be careful! If the Lord Jesus Christ, the absent Person, has the paramount place in the vision of your soul, He will save you. The church ends in Laodicea being rich and increased with goods, and He outside of it all. People can read and study and learn all about these divine things and be full of all things about Christ, and yet have no regard for Himself at all. That is the solemnity of the thing—all this will not save them, it is Himself only that saves.

When Moses came down from the mount back to the people, he would not own them; he would not reform or improve matters—the only way *was* and *is* to go outside of all the departure to the Lord. Further down this chapter the apostle warns them and says that these things were written for our admonition. What is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23), and will furnish food for your own

desires. Of course, in the type it was material and actual—in the antitype it is what takes place morally in people's minds and souls.

The fornication referred to here is meant as a type, and in the spiritual sense signifies having intercourse with that order of things as christians which does not belong to us at all. They were in type tempting Christ to see whether He was there; so they had only got the shell without the kernel—you cannot wonder that they began to go back. The apostle says, You must mind—"these things happened unto them for ensamples ... let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is a warning against trusting in the outward privileges instead of trusting in the Lord Himself.

You were baptised to the Lord Jesus Christ, you were buried with Him; it is not association but dissociation, and you must be dissociated from one order to be associated with another order, and this prepares the way for fellowship.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man". Often people take these verses and apply them individually to their sorrows and trials, taking the thing out of its bearing altogether. Here it is the temptation of God's assembly, and what is the character of it? Occupation with the visible instead of with the Person who cannot be seen—that is the temptation. The temptation with the children of Israel was to forget Moses, so they wanted something to look at.

Now we have no excuse—God is faithful, and will not suffer His assembly to be tempted above that which it is able to bear. God makes a way of escape from the temptation while we are in it.

You see that the character of the temptation is idolatry, and lies in making an object of some privilege or blessing or gift, so that we can have something to look at. Our meetings and service may easily be this, that and the other to us—something that we can look at. Satan is always at it to induce God's people to be occupied with something visible, and so distract or divert them from the unseen Lord whose name has been called over them. This is Satan's work undoubtedly.

Well, you are ready for fellowship if you are true to your baptism. Only be true to your baptism, and then you are prepared for the common interest which God has given to the whole of His assembly. Fellowship means a partnership or common interest, and He has given His assembly just one, and only one, common interest, and that is His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The church of God is called to the fellowship of His Son, and that is only to be got at by way of His death.

There is only one fellowship as there is only one baptism and burial. You cannot bury a man twice over; if he is buried, he is buried and out of sight, and in connection with that there is the name of a risen Man called over him whose death is our common interest because He thus tells our hearts of His wonderful heart of love, and it is the knowledge and enjoyment of Himself that is our common interest.

Thus the blessed Person who died for us is more to our hearts than anything on this side of death; there are indeed good things on this side of death, but they are not Him. He has died, and in His death is expressed the great sacrifice of Himself for His own, in order to make Himself more to their hearts than everything else put together.

You cannot have oneness without oneness of interest—if we have different interests we cannot have oneness. I am sure that will commend itself to any man—even naturally, and the oneness of interest we have is the death of Christ—it is really Christ as the One who has offered up Himself and shed His precious blood in the place of us all, so that we may know His heart's affections to the whole of His people. You do not think that God has gathered out a few of His people in these last days to set up a fellowship of their own, do you?

There is only one fellowship, which is arrived at by the fellowship of His death. If God's Son be more to our hearts than anything on this side of death, then we are right as to fellowship. I should think the Person who has given us blessings is greater than all He has

given us—and should He not be more to us than all He has given us? If this be not so with us, we are not true to our baptism.

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” You need not wonder at troubles amongst God’s people, because the Lord is jealous; but if His people were true to their baptism and the fellowship of His death, true to what the cup and the loaf mean, you would find that there would be no trouble amongst themselves. There is only one power against the enemy, and that is the Lord.

“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” All things are lawful, but all things are not profitable—you have to consider how they affect your soul in relation to the Lord. All things do not edify—what edifies, of course, occupies us all the more with the Lord. The apostle did not seek his own profit—pleasing them for their pleasure was one thing and for their profit was another thing; but the object he had in view was, that they might be saved from idolatry, which is occupation with good religious things, being absorbed with them, and losing sight of the unseen Person. He would not engage people’s minds with a visible order, but with a spiritual order and an unseen Person.

Christ is the Head of every man, and the Head of Christ is God, and you may be quite sure that you cannot do better than study such a Man; for that is the way by which you learn God. If you understand a Man who is in every way according to God, you will understand God. This will enable a man to be head to the woman. A man who does not know his Head will never know how to be head to the woman. He must have a Man to take his thoughts from who is according to God. God knew that every one must have a man, and so He gave us Christ, and we may study Him, and be occupied with Him as much as we please, and that will form us according to God.

Then you see, this prepares us for the remembrance, and it will then be a remembrance of Him in all the blessedness of the way His death expresses Him. Surely it is a very great matter that we should answer to these things.

I think it is a most impressive and instructive thing that when I come into the meeting, and see the loaf and the cup on the table, to listen attentively to their voice and let them speak to me of Himself: I do not then take part in the meeting as if the supper were not there. If the meeting goes on without reference to the loaf and cup, and what they teach, it is a very serious and indeed most inconsistent thing. The supper is put there that it may speak to every one who comes in, and it speaks of Himself as the fellowship, with the voice of His death, in order that we may truly remember Him.

If you have any interest but Himself in your heart and mind, how can you really remember Him? I cannot understand how people can remember Him who are not true to the fellowship. The fellowship must precede the remembrance.

All His blessed moral perfections shone out in their fulness under the pressure and darkness and the circumstances of His death, as they could not have done without that pressure. The greater the darkness, the more it served to bring out His beauties and perfections in the most brilliant light, and but for these circumstances we should never have had such an expression of Himself.

We at the supper announce that which His death declares, and we declare that amongst ourselves for our mutual edification and occupation with Christ, in order that there may be an expression of Him amongst ourselves. As your body is for the expression of yourself, so Christ's body is for the expression of Himself, and how can we do this without the remembrance of Him and the announcing of His death? The remembrance must precede the announcing, and the announcing must precede the expression, and where there is that collective expression what a power is felt by any one who comes in, and what a power is realised in our own hearts, and what a tone it gives to our thoughts and ways for the week that follows. Every meeting necessarily takes its character from that meeting when things are in their right place.

Oh that there might be a more powerful expression of Christ amongst us, till He come.

## PART 3

THE CONSTITUTION, LAW AND BENEFIT OF  
GOD'S ASSEMBLY

1 Corinthians 12:1–13, 13:4–8, 14:1–4, 15:29–34, 42–49, 58.

I would first remark that what I was saying last week was preliminary and preparatory to what I desire to bring before you tonight. Our baptism, the fellowship of Christ's death, the remembrance of Himself, and the announcing of His death are all preliminary and preparatory to the assembly—in a sense they are the way of the soul's entrance into the assembly.

Now it is very important that we should seriously recognise that God has an assembly on the earth. This epistle is evidently written to the assembly of God in such and such a place—as in Corinth—and applies no doubt to the assembly of God in this and every place today.

There are those in this city who compose the assembly of God; indeed, the apostle tells us very plainly who compose it, namely, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling and who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and our Lord. That is to say, your Lord is my Lord and my Lord is your Lord. There is only one Lord, and I think that is stated to impress on us our responsibility to recognise the one and only administrative authority in God's assembly.

The assembly, as we have said, is composed of all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and who are also of God in Christ Jesus, and the One in whom they are of God, is of God, made unto such wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, so that if any one boasts at all, he should boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:30, 31), as the One who is of God made all those things to the assembly of God. God has made the Lord Jesus Christ everything to His assembly that His assembly needs during its sojourn down here, whether wisdom to rightly apply what we know; or righteousness to act rightly; or holiness to keep apart from what is

of man; or redemption eventually to give us all bodies like His own. He is of God thus made unto God's assembly everything that God's assembly needs. Now that is a very simple setting out of things.

Then he shows us in chapter 2 that everything lies subjectively in the Spirit, although objectively and administratively in the Lord. We should, of course, make our boast in the Lord, yet it is none the less true that all these things of God lie in the Spirit of God, and we have received this Spirit that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. These spiritual things the apostles wrote down in spiritual words which the Holy Ghost gave them; but note the *things* contained in those words can only be spiritually discerned.

He then goes on to say what the purpose of all this is on the side of testimony to the world. It is that there should be a light of God in the city of Corinth; yea, indeed, in every place where those are who can be called God's assembly. This is where God Himself, as revealed in Christ, should shine out and where God Himself can thus be known; and to that end such are God's husbandry and plants under God's own cultivation; and they are God's building to be built up in God's thoughts and ways in Christ in order that they might shine out as God's temple by the Spirit. Now that is a very simple unfolding of the great purpose of God with regard to His assembly on earth; but being such as we are, if we are to shine out before men in the true light of God in Christ, we must first learn to go on together with each other according to God as so revealed.

Therefore we come—in these latter chapters—to what may be compared to a company of soldiers retiring from the field into barracks, so that we may be mutually educated, trained, disciplined and built up in the various graces and perfections of that blessed One, who is the revelation of Him who is intended to shine out of us. Now this is the idea of the body, and in view of this I commenced with the remark, that what I said last week is preliminary and preparatory to an understanding of the *constitution* of the assembly of God.

Even in natural things and human assemblies there must be a constitution. Take this country, for example, there is what we call the British Constitution, and agreeably with the British Constitution there are British laws. Now when those laws are carried out faithfully there is a certain result—there is peace in the country and a measure of profit and prosperity; but there, of course, the illustration ends, because all such things end with this life. However, this spiritual order of things goes further, and chapter 15 shows the result, which is brought about in souls now by obedience to the Lord Jesus, and by obedience to this spiritual constitution. This grand result will all come out in resurrection, and that is the reason the apostle gives the resurrection character of things at the end of this very remarkable epistle.

The first thing, as we have said, in regard to this order of things is our baptism. We have first to recognise that we have been individually buried, and next that we have a fellowship—the fellowship of Christ's death. It therefore goes without saying that christian fellowship does not lie in anything on this side of death. Let us remember that fellowship is partnership or common interest, which is nothing less than Christ Himself, as the One who has died for us, and as the one and only Object of all divine affections. The apostle says in chapter 1 that we have been called to the fellowship of God's Son, but in order that He should be our one common interest we must approach it by the way of His death; for as His death affects us, we realise Him to be more to our hearts than anything on this side of death.

The remembrance of Himself then follows in order, and along with it the announcing of His death. But all these things are supposed to be preliminary to our entering into the assembly. This can only be in mind and spirit and by spiritual discernment. It is by spiritual discernment, for the reason that the assembly of God is a spiritual constitution.

It is a very important thing for you as christians to recognise that you are a part of an assembly which is constituted by and in the



Spirit of God. It is therefore not formed of anything external or material or corporal, and you cannot see it in its true spiritual character with the natural eye, although you may see the individual persons who compose it; but of course you could not see them thus as members of the body—in that character they are only spiritually discerned.

We are definitely told here that by one *Spirit* we have been baptised into one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, “*by one Spirit*”—the Spirit given to us on believing the gospel—we have each and all been formed into one body. Now that ought to convince us that it is a spiritual kind of body—something brought to pass on this earth by means of the Spirit of God, and here described in connection with the manifestations of the Spirit.

It is plain from the teaching of this chapter that the Spirit manifests Himself according to His own order; so that we need to be careful that we are not disobedient to the Spirit’s order. We would hardly expect the Spirit to manifest Himself where His order is violated, and that makes the knowledge of His order and obedience to His order a very important matter for each one in regard to the free, unfettered manifestation of the Spirit. This Spirit doubtless dwells in each one of us, but that Spirit which is in each one of us has formed us into a body, so that God’s assembly is not one member or a number of units, but a body. This oneness of the assembly of God lies in the Spirit—the Spirit that is in each, is in all; it is not that each one has a Spirit to himself. The same Spirit is in each one, thus constituting each a member, and the whole a body.

This then is the constitution of the assembly of God in this and in every place. Therefore you see what a grave mistake it is to come together supposing that we, in the separate path, are a body—the body consists of *all* saints in this and in every place. It is by God’s own act and by one Spirit that we are all put into our own place in that one body, and that body is Christ’s body, and it is Christ’s body for the expression of Christ, so that the various qualities and graces

of the second Man should be mutually expressed in oneness when we come together, and also in effect afterwards.

At the same time you could hardly expect these qualities could be so expressed, when saints are not in the path of separation, and so gathered together faithfully, in days like these; for you could not possibly get the whole of God's assembly together, either in this or any other place now, by any means. There are many reasons for that—one of the greatest of which is that the vast majority of God's people know nothing at all about the assembly of God, and it is very sad to have to say that they do not seem to want to know, there seems to be no exercise about it. That is a very serious state of things, all being seemingly absorbed and engaged with their own—what I may term religious—interests.

They may indeed put the Lord's name to all this activity, but it is well that we should wake up and see that it is really the Lord's interests we are promoting, and something connected definitely with the Spirit of God. Nothing can be connected with the Lord that is not connected with the Spirit, and if connected with the Spirit it must be something in the Spirit. Doubtless there is a religious order of things on earth today that you cannot connect with the Spirit of God. What is connected with the Spirit of God is beyond death and of a resurrection order.

Therefore you cannot understand chapter 15 of this epistle unless you accept the simple principle—that the assembly of God is a spiritual constitution. It is a constitution—I do not say an organisation—but a distinct constitution, and all who compose it are put together by the Spirit of God. The Spirit is the link between each one, so that we are not independent one of another, but members of the same body. That is as plain as can be from this chapter.

Members of this body can however come together even in these days of ruin and seek in their measure to be (what the mass have no idea of) unfettered with organisations and ways of their own, and treading the path of separation—which is the first step towards any

approach to this kind of thing now. The only way to begin on God's line is to separate from man's line. That is why I say that our baptism, fellowship, etc, is all preliminary to the understanding of the constitution of God's assembly.

What a wonderful thing it is that there is a spiritually constituted assembly here on earth which is called the assembly of God, and a body which is in this epistle named "the Christ", for the simple reason that it is here in this place for the expression of Christ; and that too in all our meetings, whenever we come together, for everything must be in accord with the constitution of the assembly.

If any man violated the constitution in a natural sense he would be condemned at once. To go against the constitution would be deemed far worse than going against the laws. Then if that be so naturally, beloved, I think it would commend itself to you, that it behoves each one of us to pay most diligent attention to what the constitution is, and to be diligent to observe it, lest we should go against it, and form meetings of a character not in accordance with the constitution of God's assembly.

I cannot think it is according to God that one meeting should be a contradiction of another, or that any meeting should be out of accord with what the church of God is. Do you not think the constitution should give character to *all* our meetings? If you follow out my illustration of the British Constitution I think you will see that no loyal person would go against it on the plea that it applied only to certain individuals and to certain things and times, no one would be so insane as to do so.

If you have any idea as to what God's assembly is, you must feel how serious it is to let your service or associations or anything else be out of character with the constitution of it. God has put His people together and tells us what we are, and we are to be obedient to what God has made us. I hope you are prepared to accept that. You may feel you do not understand much about it, but I hope what we are saying will arouse you and lead you to get before the Lord to

teach you what God's assembly is, so that understanding it you may seek to be obedient to what it is.

It is a very serious thing to violate the constitution. The constitution is that all believers in any one place are regarded as a body for the simple reason that all have received one Spirit, and they are a body for the expression of Christ. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"—it is really Christ Himself—in a moral sense of course—on this earth, that what He is may be continued while He is absent, and it needs His body to express Him. You require your body to enable you to express yourself, and it takes the body of Christ to express Christ. One member cannot dispense with another because they are all required to give a collective expression of what Christ is, so that another Man may come out and not ourselves.

When we come to the practical working of this constitution the first thing to consider is the Lord as the Administrator. The Lord in this sense is very different from the Lord in relation to our individual pathway as christians. The Lord here is the Administrator of the assembly, and this ought to give character to every meeting that we ever have. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Administrator. You cannot have a meeting of christians in spiritual order without an administrator—some one must be in charge, and if it is not the Lord Jesus Christ, it must be mere man, in one shape or another. The Lord Jesus is the only administrator of the assembly of God. He is worthy to have it put into His hands, and He is well able to manage it, and is the only One who can.

I do not wonder at the ruptures amongst christians when the Lord Jesus Christ is not owned in this way. This is the first thing, then, to observe. It is here supposed that we are gathered together in assembly, which means that we are together in assembly, which means that we are together in that character, and are responsible to be obedient to the constitution of the assembly of God—that is the point here. We are to regard ourselves according to the constitution,

and then we feel that there is no one able to administer such a constitution except the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now no one can say "Lord" to Jesus as Administrator of the assembly of God but by the Holy Ghost. You cannot say it in reality out of your feelings, or by sight or sense, or as a doctrine; you need the Spirit of God to enable you to say it in truth, because you would naturally like to be a sort of master yourself. As men, of course, we would naturally like to be some one, and take charge and have people under us and have them do exactly as we tell them; therefore we need divine power to enable us to render that place to another, who is in resurrection; and so no one can really do it without the Holy Ghost.

He says, "there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord" all administration is referred to the Lord. If we were looking at the assembly in the Colossian or Ephesian aspect, we should not have such language at all; but this regards christians as assembled together to eat the supper, and also to be obedient to what the assembly is as spiritually constituted, and to be obedient to such a constitution there must be someone who is Divine in charge.

If you have a meeting in the world amongst men there must be someone in charge, there could not be order without; for supposing everyone had his own way there would be nothing but confusion. People say in christendom, you must have someone in charge; yes, but it must be an unseen Person, whose name is the Lord Jesus Christ, and you cannot say "Lord" to Him without the Holy Ghost, for the very reason that He is risen from the dead, and has left this life altogether, and how you are going to say "Lord" to such a Person without the Holy Ghost I do not know.

The first thing you should do when you come into such a meeting is to salute the Administrator: you say, 'Now He is in charge of this meeting'. This can only be done really by the Spirit, and if it is real, you are concerned to be subject to Him. Supposing each one did that, we are all in divine order, and able to obey the constitution, and, of course, what goes with that is that the Spirit is free to manifest

Himself. You will obey the constitution, if you salute the Administrator, and surrender the administration to Him.

You are not then giving things out because you have been thinking about them, or because they are on your heart, or because it is a favourite hymn, etc; nor do you get up to lecture because you think someone has made a mistake. You know who is in charge, and that He is well able to manage all in harmony with the constitution, and only He can.

Now this is not a matter of long experience, you young saints—do not be alarmed—it is not a matter of great attainment, but you can only say this to the Lord by the Holy Ghost, but mind you *do* say it. You say it to the Lord for yourself, each one of you. You say “Lord” to Jesus, and that puts you in your true place. If each one is in order, then all are in order, and the Spirit is free to distribute what the Lord administers.

Now the Spirit can divide to every man severally as He will, and if there is nothing to fetter Him He gives one thing to one and another thing to another, and carries the assembly on under the Lord in harmony with the truth, and God gives effect to everything as the Spirit distributes what the Lord administers.

Supposing the gathering together of saints were carried on in this way, what would follow? Obedience to chapters 13 and 14 and what follows that will be in touch with the resurrection order of things. There will be that going on in the meeting which will be in accord with the display hereafter, when all will be out and in open manifestation in our glorified bodies. Therefore what is going on amongst saints now according to God will not be lost.

Whatever the Lord administers, the Spirit distributes and God operates, and whatever God gives effect to, is not only to come out in testimony here, but to come out in display hereafter.

Therefore the apostle says, “I declare unto you the gospel” If a man declares a thing, he declares not only the doctrine, but also the import. It is declaring all that which the gospel is to effect, and this will come out in display hereafter. There is not a bit of anything

which is according to God, from righteous Abel right down to the last saint who receives Christ before He comes, which will be lost.

One man comes on the scene and gives a bit and passes off, and another comes on the scene, gives a bit and passes off, and do you think any of it will be lost? God can gather it all up and bring it out in display in bodies which are in harmony with what has been wrought in souls beforetime. God's power can do it and it will all come out. We may be going on in weakness and reproach and suffering, but it is all in view of glory, power and honour, and in a spiritual body it will all come out, and come out just as it is.

Of course the best expression is very obscure now of necessity, that we all feel, and the more spiritual you are the more you feel it, but thank God it will not be lost—it will all come out in resurrection just as it is in God's estimation without any obscurity.

It is a wonderful thing that there should be that going on amongst ourselves now, for mutual joy and comfort and edification in the enjoyment of what Christ is, that not only goes on in testimony now, but that will come out in us all by-and-by in glory. That is the reason we have chapter 15 at the close to show where it will all end—so it gives us the gospel in its import and end.

Christ was buried, no doubt, in order that we might be buried with Him. The apostle refers to that in chapter 15, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?"—what is the use of filling up the ranks of the departed if there is to be no future display? What is the meaning of all the reproach and suffering if the dead rise not and there is no manifestation hereafter? But he says, I know better—I have carried my life in my hands every day. The men, beasts, at Ephesus (he speaks figuratively) would have torn the apostle limb from limb because he was so true to the Lord Jesus Christ and to a spiritual order of things; and those Jews who followed him about because he would not favour their line of things would have pulled him to pieces if they had been able.

But why should he suffer like that, if what he was experiencing was not to come out in future display? Is it only for a present

performance? No! It will all come out by-and-by and it is on that ground that he says, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Could you say that a thing is in the Lord unless the Lord deals it out—unless He is the Administrator of it? Therefore what is in the Lord will not be in vain.

That is a great comfort to me, so I need not be moved by what is around me. What I do I seek to do as from the Lord and under the eye of the Lord, and as sure as I do it in that way it is not in vain—not even as to present result. It is a great thing to live in the resurrection scene in the life of your soul. It gives you great comfort and encouragement, for then you are more controlled by what will come out in the day of the Lord than by what is going on now.

Chapter 13 is the law, just as chapter 12 is the constitution. What other law could there be in God's assembly? The law must be according to the constitution, and the constitution according to God, and God is love. I hope you all accept that—He has fully revealed this love in His Son. Did God intend that Jesus Christ, His Son, should pass off this scene and nothing remain on earth expressive of Him?

Now I mean collectively so, for, after all, you find yourself tested when you are together with others, and the real test is whether we can express Christ as a company when we are together; because when you come into a meeting your eye may easily rest on the face of some brother or sister who has not behaved very nicely to you. Well, do you know what then crops up? Feelings crop up; but I say, I have saluted the Lord as the only Administrator of the meeting, and in giving place to Him I cannot take any one or anything into my own hands, and I must be obedient to the law of the assembly, that law which is described in chapter 13. There you read what the law of love does. Now if you do not do what love does, then you know you are not acting in love, and you are not obedient to the law of the assembly. If you were, you would act according to the law of love.



If I am acting in harmony with the constitution, I would do what love does. It suffers long when we are together; we can all love one another at a distance, there is no difficulty about that. It is when we are together we are tested. You may say, 'I have come to meet the Lord'. If you really had, you would be very glad to meet your brethren too, and seek to be superior to their weaknesses.

It is not here a matter of what people are naturally, for it is a spiritual constitution, and if I regard my brethren according to the constitution, I regard them spiritually, and there is no room for mere natural feeling. It is a test when we come face to face with one another, and it is a very good thing to be so tested—people who shirk this testing never get on in their souls at all.

If I am obedient to this law, I shall not permit a feeling in my heart or mind that does not agree with the law of the assembly. It suffers long and is kind, it bears all things, believes all things, but never fails. But do you ever fail in a meeting? Do you ever go away and say, 'I have spoken what I should not have spoken'? Oh yes, many times. It was because I was not subject to the law of the assembly. Now I have to humble myself—not excuse myself—but humble myself. I did not do what love does—I failed. It is no use excusing ourselves. If you excuse yourself you will seek to lay the blame on some one else, but you must begin with yourself.

Supposing this was true with us, and an outsider came in—how would it impress him? He would have to say there was nothing of man there, and it would expose him—his heart would be made manifest to him by what was going on, and because there was an expression of what God is. If a person gets up to speak according to what the assembly is, he speaks to edification—he does not lecture people to put them right. He gives out what the Lord gives and which the Spirit distributes and what God gives effect to in each one, and all are benefited. We are not there as mere individuals, that can act each one according to himself, in the assembly of God.

All must be under the administration of the Lord, and then no doubt there will be edification, and things will be done "decently

and in order" and every one will be edified. We should be obedient to the law of God's assembly, and then things will be done in love, and there will be an expression of what Christ is, and, of course, an outsider feels it, and it shows him up to be what he is in the bright light of God shining forth.

Well now, I would encourage you to obey this constitution and be subject to the Lord Jesus Christ, and surrender the administration of the meeting up to Him, which is indeed a test. We are men and women still, and have our likes and dislikes. To obey the law of the assembly the sacrifice of yourself is absolutely necessary, and it is a testing thing. How long is this gathering together of God's people to go on? Until the Lord comes!—we announce His death until then; and chapter 15 tells us what His coming will be. We shall then all be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and all will come out in full display in the church, even all that which each one has been in his soul spiritually while he had this poor mortal frame. Let us keep our eye on that, then we know that in carrying out what He deals out to us, and in obedience to His administration, whatever is of Himself will be effective now, and will not be lost by-and-by; but whatever is of man will come to nothing as it deserves to do.

May a gracious God enable us to put these things together. They are in these scriptures in beautiful moral order—commencing with His Name and our burial, and a warning as to idolatry; we then have the fellowship, remembrance and announcement, and are taught to give out only that which the Administrator deals out, and so giving place in our minds and hearts to the One who administers, there is profit and blessing.

The fellowship is doubtless expressed by the cup and loaf—and by the remembrance of Himself as the One who has died for us. Then announcing His death as the blessed expression of His moral qualities and graces as they pass before us in the Spirit, our hearts are so delighted with Him that we are able to give place to Him as the only One worthy to be the Administrator and well worthy to take charge.

We can thus give Him the place of Head and Lord, and He carries things on, and God gives effect to what the Spirit distributes, and there is that perfect oneness that can only be realised in the Spirit. There is exhortation, comfort and edification, and what is decent in the sense of what is comely and orderly, such as becomes God's assembly, and thus all is in harmony with that future day of display. I cannot think that any meeting that goes on in this room out of character with the Lord's Day morning meeting is right. Being obedient to the constitution, we act as a Body expressive of the graces of Christ, and do you think we can rightly depart from that character in any subsequent meeting?

We must have a standard, and that is God as known in Christ and realised in the assembly of God, and if we are obedient to what this is, we shall find it gives tone and character to every meeting that follows.

If we are obedient individually to what the assembly of God is, and to the Lord the Administrator of it, we do not drop down to modes and mannerisms, but all comes fresh from the Lord. May our God give us grace to ponder over these things. God has an assembly here—it is described in the Word, and if we learn and understand and attend to it, and see what it is, and answer to it, we shall find the Lord will give us some sense of the joy that belongs to it. The great thing is that each one should do the right thing himself, and keep his proper place in real, true subjection to the Lord, in God's assembly.