

was ignorant and did not understand how to get into the celestial kingdom. He knew nothing about the birth of the water and of the Spirit, that we heard about this forenoon, without which no man can enter into the kingdom of God. Yet he had given much alms, and his prayers had come up as a memorial before God, and the Lord had pity on his ignorance and sent an angel to him. But the angel did not see proper to tell him what to do to get into a more full state of conversion; he simply told him to send for Peter—a man of God, promising him that he would tell him how to be saved. Peter, being warned beforehand, by the vision, went down to the house of Cornelius, nothing doubting, taking these six Jewish converts with him, full of all their Jewish prejudices. When Cornelius had given an account of the visit of the angel to him, Peter began to preach Christ and him crucified, and while he was speaking the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and his household, and they spake with tongues and magnified God.

Do you suppose that the Holy Spirit could have been retained by Cornelius supposing he had refused to obey the ordinances of the Gospel? No, it was only given as a witness and testimony to convince the Jewish brethren, who were with Peter, that the Gentiles might have salvation as well as the Jews; for when they began to speak in tongues, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, Peter turned to his Jewish brethren, and said, "Who can forbid water that these should not be baptized?" And he commanded them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to be baptized. What, a command? Yes. Had Peter the right to give that command? Yes; for the angel of the Lord had said to Cornelius, "He shall tell you words whereby you and your house shall be

saved," and his command to them to be baptized was some of his words unto them.

Supposing that Cornelius had said, "Oh, baptism is not essential, it is not among the fundamental principles of salvation; it is one of the nonessential, outward ordinances, etc., and is of no consequence. I have received the Holy Ghost, I am a Christian, I believe in your words; I have offered my alms to the poor, and they have come up before the Lord; I am good enough, there is no need for me to be baptized," how long would the Holy Ghost have remained with him? Just the moment that he had refused to obey this commandment the Holy Ghost would have fled from him and his house. The only way for him to retain the gift that comes through obedience was to be baptized, though on that occasion it was given without promise, and without baptism. Baptism, recollect, is for the remission of sins, and the Holy Ghost comes afterwards; but on this occasion it was given before it; but he could not have retained it, it would have left him, and he would have been in seven-fold greater darkness than before had he refused to obey the words of this inspired messenger. The Jewish brethren could not forbid water after the manifestation of the power of God on that occasion; their prejudices were done away by a miracle.

Now, because the Lord varied on that one occasion and gave the Holy Ghost before baptism, how many there are who want to do away with baptism, and to seek some other way for those who are convicted and laboring under a feeling of sorrow and mourning for their sins; but there is an ordinance connected with the receiving of the Holy Ghost. If there is an ordinance connected with the baptism of water, so there is in