

Another Comforter

John 14: 15-17, 25, 26; John 15: 26; John 16: 7-15.

N. Anderson

Our Lord was about to leave His own in the world where evil abounded, and where they would be hated for His sake (John 15: 19-21). So He exhorted them, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14: 1), and again, verse 27, having said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Four reasons He gave them as to why they should heed this word from their Lord.

1. His going away to the Father's house would prepare a place there for them.

2. He would come again for them, that He might receive them to Himself, that where He was they also might be.

3. While He was away they should have His peace in order that they might be in a world of hatred and persecution, in tranquillity of spirit even as He had been.

4. In addition He would beg the Father and He would give them another Comforter-One who could come alongside and undertake for them completely.

They would indeed be better off during His physical absence. They were not to lose by His leaving them, rather were they to be the gainers. So He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you."

We would like to make an aside just here. Our Lord, though having assumed the flesh and blood condition, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1: 14),

did not in so doing relinquish that which was ever His in co-equality and in co-eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus we read of Him saying, "I beg the Father." There are two words used in the course of these chapters, 13 to 17, for "pray" or "ask." One of which denotes the asking by an inferior of a superior, the other which denotes the asking of an equal. The latter is used in this instance. Our Lord was consciously on equal terms with the Father and so He makes His request that the Father would send them another Comforter.

There are two necessary prerequisites on the part of His own. It was not sufficient that they be troubled in heart, let them prove their love for their departing Lord. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Obedience is ever the proof of love. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

The other Comforter, unlike our Lord Who was about to leave them, would abide with them for ever. The disciples would gain then, for they would have two Comforters-the Spirit of Truth to be with them forever, even for the remainder of their sojourn here upon earth, and Christ in the Father's presence as their Advocate (see 1 John 2: 1). Our Lord's advocacy, not being part of our present theme, we leave it-profitable though the consideration of it would be. In leaving it we would just like to add that the same word is translated in either passage as Comforter and as Advocate-Paraclete.

The other Comforter is identified as the Spirit of Truth. What our Lord had said of Himself objectively, "I am . . . the Truth," is here said of the Spirit subjectively. The Spirit would reproduce in the disciples of the Lord a practical answer to that which had been set before them in Him. Furthermore, the Spirit of Truth would not only be "with you"-companywise, but He would be "in

you"-individually. The Son had been with them but He had not been "in" them. The Spirit being "in" them, awaited "that day." For His being "with" the Assembly in its collective character as distinct from being "in" them individually-please read 1 Cor. 3: 16 and also 1 Cor. 6: 19.

Note that the company of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are distinct and consequently distinguished from the world. For "the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 17).

It is averred by some that "He dwelleth with you" was only true while our Lord was here on earth but we would counter such a suggestion by saying that the Spirit being in the saints was in consequence of His dwelling with them. Let us keep in mind that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7: 39)-while as yet our Lord was still here on earth.

In John 14, "Another Comforter" is identified for us by our Lord as the Holy Spirit (verse 26). Note that in this chapter "The Father will send in My Name." In John 15: 26, "Whom I will send unto you from the Father." While we read in John 16: 23, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come." Thus, in John 14 He would be sent by the Father in the Son's Name. In John 15, the Son would send Him as from the Father. And in John 16, He would come. In the first instance He is sent in the interests of the Father. Finally, He comes. How blessed is the inter-communion of the Persons of the Godhead!

In John 14 our Lord outlines for us the ministry of the Spirit of Truth, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This would have particular reference to the gospels. We are not left to the fallible memory of men, no, we have the infallible Spirit of Truth to direct the disciples even in these matters. Hence, at the close of this gospel the last verse says, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

So the Spirit has been selective in that which He recalled to their remembrance. He Who alone is capable of teaching us all things is surely capable of bringing those things to their remembrance which He sees absolutely indispensable. For instance, if we read with prayer and care the first epistle of John we shall find no fewer than nine references to that which is "from the beginning"-the commencement of our Lord in His ministry in this world.

In John 15, the Spirit of Truth, said our Lord, "shall testify of Me" This most certainly covers the teaching of the epistles. Their characteristic feature, among others, is that they are united in presenting Him. His lowly self-humbling leading to His exaltation; His being extolled as Lord and Head; the truth of His priesthood and His being Minister of the Sanctuary as also Mediator of the New Covenant. How enthralling is the teaching concerning His being the Second Man out of heaven, and the Last Adam. His being Firstborn of all Creation, and the Firstborn from the dead. The Head of the New Creation. As such He has accomplished the work of Redemption and Reconciliation. The Spirit then bears witness to Him where and as He is. In this He uses the disciples, "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

How rich their compensation for having companied with Him during those days when having come unto His own, His own people received Him not! How many facets of His glory in His many functions as witnessed by Peter, James and John, Jude and Paul. For all these we are debtors to the Spirit of Truth Who had empowered them in their witness. Granted that Paul had not companied with our Lord from the outset, yet he certainly had seen our Lord in glory!

We turn to the account in this chapter: it would assuredly be expedient for the disciples that our

Lord should go away. If He did not, then the Comforter would not come to them. "If I depart I will send Him to you" (John 16: 7). In this instant we have His distinct sending on the part of the Son. When He was come, His coming would have a distinct bearing on the world. His very presence brings demonstration to the world of three things:-

1. Of sin.
2. Of righteousness.
3. Of judgment. Not "judgment to come," as so often misquoted.

1. "Because they believe not on Me" The crowning sin of the world is unbelief as to the Person of the Son. The blessing of God had been offered to the world on the incoming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had earlier said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I am come not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12: 46, 47). Again He had also said to the leaders of Israel, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9: 41).

2. "Because I go to the Father" The demonstration to the world of righteousness lay in the fact that He had gone to the Father. Henceforth they would see Him no more. The world which He had created, in which sin was reigning, had been presented with its Creator, replete with saving grace. What was its response? "Away with Him. Crucify Him. We will not have this man to reign over us" (John 19: 15; Luke 23: 21; Luke 19: 14). And so He who was so unrighteously treated here, left the world and went to His Father. If then we would see righteousness we do not look around, we look up and see our Lord accepted by His Father. He has reversed the judgment of the world which has rejected His son. He has received Him in perfect righteousness. The world, in rejection of Him, is a doomed system. The Father then has expressed the truth that righteousness is not to be found here. It may only be found with Him, and that as connected with Him in the exaltation of His Son.

3. "The prince of this world is judged." Little wonder then that the world is doomed! Led on by him in self-exaltation and in his hatred of God and His Christ, the Spirit gives convincing demonstration that he is entirely unchanged since his assault against God in the garden of Eden. Then he had succeeded in alienating man from God his creator. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. when he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8: 44). "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John 3: 8).

The prince of this world had also pitted himself against our Lord, not in a garden but in the wilderness. Having met his match and being defeated, he retreated for a season (see Luke 4: 13). We read also, John 12: 31, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." His sentence was reached at the cross; his judgment is richly deserved. The execution of that sentence awaits that occasion of which we read in Revelation 20-he shall be bound for a thousand years and cast into the abyss. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison"-and it shall be evidenced that his long incarceration has not altered him in the slightest (read Rev. 20: 7-10), "and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," thus shall his judgment be ultimately carried out.

Here in John 16, while the door of this world is closed to the saints, that into the Father's world is opened to them, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." Loving consideration of our departing Lord! "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you

into all the truth; for He shall not speak of (from) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." He will lead us into the sweetness of the communion of the Persons of the Godhead. They never act independently of each other, while we do read in our King James translation, "He shall not speak of Himself," there is no doubt we could better read, "from."

It is erroneous to assume that the Spirit shall not speak about Himself-indeed, we are indebted to Him for every word we read about Him. He, then, would lead us into that realm of subsisting communion of life, nature, co-equality, and co-eternity of Deity. "He will show you things to come," pleasing or painful, dark or bright! He outlines to us the future-the coming glory, as well as the ensuing breakdown, and who amongst us has not failed to hold fast that which has been committed to our trust? He, while shewing us things to come, gives not only warning but also recovering truth. How often does our Lord say, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Assemblies." "He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."

How full and heartwarming is the Spirit's ministry as He repeatedly draws attention to Christ? No matter in whatever aspect we view Him He is so presented to our affections "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Our Lord goes on to say, "All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." This will draw us into the sphere of eternal life, where the Father and the Son are at home in unalloyed bliss. John tells us, by the Spirit, in chapter 1 of his first epistle, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

In 1 John 5 we learn that our Lord, no longer on earth but now in the glory, and having gone there via the cross, has given us the Spirit Who joins His witness with that of the water and the blood. "These three agree in one . . . and this is the witness, that God has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

We thank God for that other Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and His present ministry which gives us the value of the Gospels, the Epistles, and the prophetic portions of the New Testament including the book of Revelation.