

Sermon Outlines The Two Comforters

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." (John 14:16)

One has only to observe the size of a crowd watching the progress of a building on some city street to realize the interest that such an operation - has its commencement, development, and completion - has for the average man. The foundation of the structure must be deep, and broad, and strong; and its walls and its roof must be solid, and firm and lasting.

Through each succeeding Church year, the members of the Church are called upon to consider the history of her building. The Incarnate Word is her foundation - deep with the mystery of God, broad enough to reach all, and solid with Divine strength. The Church's walls may be identified with Christ's Life, His Death, His Resurrection, and His Ascension - all of which are solid in material, firm in execution, and lasting in nature; and these lead up to the "roof" or climax of the structure, the descent of the Holy Spirit of God.

All of Christ's life prior to the Cross, although perfect, was preliminary in the sense of His own frequent statements (e.g., John 7:39; 12:32; 14:12, 26, 28, 29; 15:26, 27; 16:7-28). The word used by Him to describe the Holy Spirit is translated into English as "Comforter." This term, however, is too narrow to cover the whole significance of the Greek word that is transliterated "Paraclete," "one called in to help." The Holy Spirit is a Consoler, but He is far more. Perhaps the very best modern term would be "Representative" - one who takes charge of a matter for someone and sees it through; for the Holy Spirit is God's Representative in the life of the believer and of the Church as a whole. This reminds us of the word "Advocate," used of our Lord in 1 John 2:1. It is indeed the same word, "paracletos"; so that we are not surprised to read in our text the promise, "He (the Father) shall give you another Comforter." Yes, there are two Comforters, or Advocates, or Representatives - Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Further, the word for "another" does not connote one who is instead of someone else, but rather a second person who is in addition to a first. Neither does it suggest another of a different kind (eteros), but rather, another of the same kind (allos). For a passage where two Greek words translated "another" appear in contrast, see Galatians 1:6-9: "A different gospel which is in no sense an addition to the true one" might be the literal rendering. In brief, then, the Holy Spirit is an additional Comforter of the same kind as Christ, which is consistent with the essential oneness of the Holy Trinity.

Note their relation to each other and to the believer:

I. Jesus Christ is our Representative with the Father.

He was the Paraclete "called in" by the Father to obtain our salvation. Christ with the Father is the guarantee for us of:

1. Forgiveness - the past pardoned.

- a. High Priest celebrated Day of Atonement outside, then passed through to Holy of Holies. So Christ ascended into heaven "now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).
- b. There He guarantees acceptance of sacrifice of Himself, and man is at peace with God.
- c. Said He would offer Himself - "gave Himself a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) and did (1 Tim. 2:6).
- d. Man could never have entered heaven if Christ's ransom had not been accepted. So Christ in heaven guarantees pardon for sin.

2. Grace - the present supplied.

- a. High Priest had to return after sacrifice, which was impermanent because sin was recurrent; so Day of Atonement took place annually.
- b. Christ's sacrifice was "once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

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- c. Because He lives - just as He lives - as long as He lives - we “shall live also” (John 14:19) - “after the power of an endless life” (Heb. 7:16). So Christ in heaven guarantees grace for living.
3. *Glory* - the future revealed.
 - a. High Priest’s mediations all speak of past and present. Future “was not yet made manifest” (Heb. 9:8).
 - b. So Christian’s past and present obviously supplied, but what about future - e.g., longings, loved ones, questionings?
 - c. Christ answers all questions. He was our “Forerunner” (Heb. 6:20) “within the veil” (Heb. 6:19) - which figure denotes that others come after. He is our Firstfruits (1 Cor. 16:20, 23), the pledge of our own ascension into glory.

Thus Jesus Christ, representing us to the Father, obtains for us forgiveness, grace, and glory. But all of this would be merely objective, outside realities for us, rather than possessions to be obtained and appropriated by us, were it not that.

II. *The Holy Spirit is Christ’s Representative in Us*

He is the Paraclete “called in” by Christ to bestow the salvation obtained by Christ. The Holy Spirit in us guarantees what Christ did, makes it ours, and makes Christ real in our lives.

1. *Acceptance* - forgiveness assured

- a. Gospel heard - need felt - conditions, faith and surrender, fulfilled.
- b. Then Holy Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit” (Rom. 8:16). Cf. Gal. 4:6; 1 John 5:6.
- c. Then come consciousness of forgiveness and restoration to Divine favor.

2. *Life* - grace given

- a. When Divine life is born it abides - is an indwelling Presence - adheres and inheres.
- b. Holy Spirit makes Christ real, makes Him to us what He was to disciples, and more, for presence is internal and permanent - “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:16, 17).
- c. Life - growth - power - obedience - comfort - all! (Cf. Gal. 2:20)

3. *Hope* - glory begun

- a. Soul looks on to future as well as back to past and around on present. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast” (Wordsworth).
- b. Holy Spirit points way. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:27.
- c. Sweet fellowship assured continuously, permanently, eternally.

Thus the Holy Spirit, representing Christ to us, bestows forgiveness, grace, and glory obtained by Christ in His death. Objective facts become subjective possessions; outward revelations become inward experiences.

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Conclusion

So two Comforters - and both necessary. We may tabulate as follows:

<i>Christ in Heaven</i>	<i>The Holy Spirit on Earth</i>
Linking us to God Representing us to God Presenting our prayers to God In our Way to God Reveals God as Father Personifies the Truth of God Has completed the work of salvation He laid the foundation of the Church Is preparing a place for us	Uniting us to Christ Representing Christ to us Inspiring our Prayers to God Leads us along the way of life Reveals Christ as Lord Points to Christ as Truth Instils trust in the work of Christ Builds us upon the Foundation which is Christ Is preparing us for that place

Come, Holy Spirit, come,
 Let Thy bright beams arise,
 Dispel the sorrow from our minds,
 The darkness from our eyes.

Convince us all of sin,
 Then guide to Jesus' blood;
 And to our wondering view reveal
 The secret love of God.

Cheer our desponding hearts,
 Thou heavenly Paraclete,
 Give us to lie with humble hope
 At our Redeemer's feet.

'Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,
 To sanctify the soul,
 To pour fresh life in every part
 And new create the whole.

. . . . W.H. Griffith Thomas, D.D.