

make him or others doubt that it was something more than military prowess that drove the Germans back from the very gates of Paris.

## The Strange Paradox

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Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you.—St. John 16: 7.

It was a sorrowful group that was gathered around our Lord. He had been telling them of His approaching departure, and sorrow had filled their heart. We are not surprised that it was so. They had left all for Christ, and now they were to be left behind by Him. They had drawn upon themselves the world's hatred by clinging to Christ, and now they were to be left to bear the brunt of the world's opposition without Him. To lose such a friend at such a time seemed a real disaster. The barometer foretold a hurricane, how could they do without their trusted Captain? But in so reasoning they were woefully distorting things, and the Lord Jesus set Himself to put things before them in the right light. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth." I am not deceiving you, I am not keeping anything back. I have forewarned you plainly as to what lies before you. The world will hate and persecute you even until death. But my departure will be a gain and not a loss. "It is expedient for you that I go away." It was a strange riddle, a perplexing paradox. We echo the words of Keble, "My Saviour can it ever be, That I should gain by losing Thee?" Yet in the experience of every true believer the riddle has been explained. The clue is found in three all-important truths.

The real success of Christ's Mission depends entirely upon the work of the Holy Spirit. There is something of a veiled threat in this passage. You are weeping, you cannot bear to think of My leaving you, you would fain keep Me in your midst. If so, the Comforter will not come, and His presence is absolutely indispensable. Our Lord expected them to recognize this. The Holy Ghost is the only Lord and Giver of Life, without Him there can be no spiritual life. This mention of the Holy Spirit is not accompanied by any teaching as to His personality or the vital necessity of His operations. In the Old Testament there is no proof of the existence of God. The Personality of God is taken for granted, so in the New Testament there is no proof of the Personality of the Holy Spirit. That is taken for granted, for the first readers of the New Testament were men and women who had experienced for themselves His regenerating power. So here Christ takes it for granted that the disciples will recognize that the Holy Spirit is absolutely indispensable. Without the Holy Ghost there can be no Church of Christ. He is well called the Creator Spirit. His chief work is to create the Mystical Body of Christ, that is, the Holy Catholic Church. Christ's own mission was very circumscribed and definite. He came "to give Himself a ransom for many." He seldom ministered to the Gentiles, He only reached a very small circle of Jews. It was not His mission to win men, His mission was to die for men, to make atonement for sin. The winning power of Christ depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit.

We hear from time to time about the triumphs of the Gospel, and the progress of Christ's Church. The real success of every evangelistic enterprise is commensurate with the work of the Holy Spirit. Where there is

no work of the Holy Spirit there is no permanent blessing. In every congregation the majority of worshippers have been baptized; whether their baptism has real value depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit. So is it with the attendance at Gospel preaching. The value of the hearing of God's Word depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit. So with the Lord's Supper, the real blessing in the partaking of the Holy Communion depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no blessing apart from the work of the Spirit. The coming of the Comforter is essential. The real success of Christ's mission depends upon the working of the Holy Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Ghost was dependent upon the departure of Christ. How simply He speaks of that departure. "I go away." We know that in it was all the tragedy of the Cross and all the triumph of the Resurrection, and yet the Saviour speaks of it as a voluntary going away. If I go not away the Comforter will not come. That is the teaching of the Evangelist in the comment he introduces in St. John vii. 39. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." We may not be able fully to understand why it was necessary that the departure of Christ should precede the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was partly because until Christ was glorified the Holy Ghost was otherwise engaged. He would have no leisure for the needs of believers, because so entirely taken up with the needs of the Son of Man Himself. All through His earthly ministry our Lord was dependent upon the help of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation was the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." In His public ministry He was dependent upon the Holy Spirit. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. In the sacrifice that atoned for sin the Holy Ghost had an important part; it was through the Eternal Spirit that the Saviour offered Himself without spot to God. The work of the Holy Spirit seems to have fallen into two parts. The first part was that of bringing to Christ glory. While the Eternal Son of God was in the flesh the chief work of the Holy Spirit was to watch over Him and to be with Him and to enable Him to triumph in the great fight which He waged for us men and for our redemption. The second work of the Holy Spirit, that which has been His chief care since the Day of Pentecost, is to bring glory to Christ by revealing Christ to the heart of His believing people. Again, until Christ was glorified the work of redemption was not fully completed. The humiliation of the Son of God had one supreme purpose—i.e., the redemption of man. As long as that humiliation lasted there was no sufficient evidence that the redemption was completed. When Christ returned to glory, leaving for ever behind the dust and heat of the conflict, then it was manifest that redemption was complete. Then the Holy Ghost could be commissioned to carry on His work. He was, so to speak, armed with effective weapons. "The Spirit and Blood make my cleansing complete." The Spirit cannot work apart from the precious Blood, which achieved our redemption. Until the High Priest had entered within the veil the full power of the atoning work was not manifest. The work of the Spirit could not, therefore, begin until Jesus was glorified. Again, the Apostles were not in a position to receive the Holy Spirit until Christ had left them. As long as Christ was with them they would walk by sight. When Christ had left them they began to realize more deeply their need of Him, and they learnt to walk by faith. Then it was that the Holy Spirit could begin His ministrations. Then it was they were in a position to appreciate the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is more beneficial to believers than the personal Ministry of Christ. "It is a good thing for you," says Christ, "that I go away." What a contrast to St. Paul's statement to the Philippian Church. He was contemplating leaving them, but he said: "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Christ said: "It is expedient for you that I go away." St. Paul said: "It is expedient for you that I continue with you." And we can understand the reason of the difference. St. Paul knew that when he left this world, when death dropped the portcullis between him and the Church on earth, his power of helping his friends below would come to an end. However much he might wish to do so, he on the heavenward side of that iron gate would not be able to help those who were on the earthward side. But with Christ it is totally different. In the case of St. Paul death brought about a real separation. In our Lord's case death, followed by resurrection on the third day, caused no separation at all.

There is real gain to the Church through the Ascension of our Lord. We gain a closer and a more constant Presence. While Christ was upon the earth His Presence was only a local Presence. If He was at Bethany He could not be at Nazareth; if He was in Capernaum He could not help those who were in Jerusalem. But now His Presence is universal. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name there He is really and spiritually present. The real spiritual Presence of the Risen and Ascended Lord is the strength and bulwark of His Church. We gain also in that Christ has by His Ascension received fuller authority and power. He ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. From that vantage ground He is able to do more for His disciples than He would ever be able to do if He were with them in the flesh. It certainly was so with those early disciples. Christ was more to them after the Day of Pentecost than He was while He was with them upon earth. We are in the same position as they were; we have to fulfil the same ministry, we have to face the same difficulties, we have to overcome the world's opposition and apathy and unbelief, but we need not envy the Apostles, for we have the same endowment of power which they possessed. The promise holds good, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." "When the Comforter is come" our sorrow is turned into joy, and our lives become rich and radiant with the Presence of the conquering and all-sufficient Christ.

## "YE DID IT NOT"

BY C. MAUD BROWN.

A poor blind man—he passed me by the wayside.  
He could not see me—how I turned away;  
Soon he was lost to view, and then the day died,  
Soon on us both night's dark'ning shadows lay.

But since that hour his list'ning face is ever  
Rising before me as I come and go,  
Why did I let him pass? He who will never  
Pass me again—no rivers backward flow.

I might have cheered with unexpected kindness  
That lonely heart whose hope had long been  
dead,  
And cast a gleam of sunshine on his blindness,  
Who by no kind or friendly hand was led.

He passed me by so slowly, stopping, stumbling,  
His face as anxious with unspoken fear;  
In heavy clouds a distant storm was rumbling,  
And dangers that he knew not might be near.

Why was I silent? Were the Angels weeping?  
Was it not such the Saviour died to win?  
Poor, lonely, blind—Christ have you in His keep-  
ing,  
He would have helped you—great has been my  
sin.