

'A Candlestick All of Gold' Its Testimony

by T. Austin-Sparks

The testimony of Jesus is the fulness of Christ, which is all of God, universal, and the answer to the creation's need.

Scripture: Exodus 25:31-40, Zechariah 4:1-7, Romans 8:19-22, Hebrews 9:24

Topics: "Spiritual Fulness", "The Testimony of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the golden candlestick as a representation of God's original testimony, highlighting its role in both the establishment and recovery of God's purpose among His people. He explains that the candlestick symbolizes the fullness of Christ, who embodies all of God and serves as the link between heaven and earth, meeting the needs of all creation. Sparks urges believers to recognize that the true testimony of Jesus is not merely a system of teaching but a vital, living impact of Christ in their lives, calling for a purification that separates the divine from the human. The sermon challenges Christians to seek a testimony that is entirely of God, reflecting the essence of Christ in their lives and communities. Ultimately, the message is a call to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ, allowing His presence to be evident in all aspects of life.

Transcript

Reading: Ex. 25:31-40; Zech. 4:1-7.

Let us here say a word quite briefly as to the two places in which this candlestick is presented. In Exodus we have the beginning of things; the Lord is setting up His testimony originally, bringing it in for the first time. In Zechariah, as in all prophetic ministry, it is a matter of recovery, the testimony having been more or less lost. The candlestick of gold is God's original and full thought, to be recovered when that fulness of His mind has suffered loss in the midst of His people and in the midst of the nations. I just mention that, because the Lord is always reacting to what is original and basic, always seeking to recover, never content to move on with anything less than that original revealed mind of His. It is in connection with that thought of recovery that we have felt through the years that the Lord laid His hand upon us and brought us into being as a ministry and as a part of a vessel - to seek to show again in a practical way what His mind is as to testimony in the earth; and right back there, at the very beginning, it was this "candlestick all of gold" which the Lord made basic to this ministry.

The Testimony - The Fullness of Christ

In our previous meditation, we were speaking about the form of this candlestick, and there are some other things which have to be said about that. Those who have been with us through the years, will recognise these things as having been brought at different stages particularly to our view. I think there are three phases represented by three lines of consideration of this candlestick. So far as spiritual history is concerned, what was third for us has come to be seen as first with the Lord. The Lord did not begin with us at His own beginning, but He led us to His beginning. We came eventually along two distinct lines, by two distinct phases, to that beginning. I will not mention the other two just now, but speak briefly concerning the primary and all-governing aspect of the testimony of our Lord Jesus - the fulness of Christ.

What Christ Is

(a) All of God

In an earlier meditation we said that the fact that the candlestick was all of gold means that it represents something that is all of God; and in contemplating this candlestick as Christ, the very first thing that we have to be impressed with is how utterly of God He was and is; all of God - fulness, the fulness of God.

There are two primary numbers in this candlestick, and they are three and seven, the numbers of Divine fulness and of spiritual fulness respectively. There are three branches on either side of the stem and with the stem they make seven. There is the fulness of God and the fulness of what is spiritual. That is a key to the life of our Lord Jesus. He was here in the days of His flesh amongst men as the candlestick of God, revealing as by a living flame what it means to be all of God. You know that in the description of the candlestick it was to be in its own light, that the light was to shine upon itself - "to give light over against it" (Ex. 25:37); upon other things, yes, but upon itself. It was to stand in its own light and its light was to pour down upon itself; and the Lord Jesus was found from time to time saying things which corresponded to that. The testimony could be seen as in Himself, the testimony bore witness of Him. He could consistently walk in the light of God; where He was concerned there was nothing whatever to cover from the Divine light. The testimony was true in Him, because in Him all was of God, as could be seen in countless details. You have to study very closely His inward and His outward life to see how it was all of God, how He was constantly putting back everything else that might be of Himself or for Himself, everything that might come from any other source, that might minister to any other object. It was all of God, through and through.

What is the testimony of Jesus? Oh, again let us rid ourselves of all false ideas that it is some particular system of teaching. No, the testimony of Jesus which is to be here, which God would have in His house, in the midst of His people, in the midst of the nations by reason of His people - in the very first place it is that here is something which is delivered entirely and utterly from everything of consideration and interest and object and ambition but God Himself. No one must ever rightly and truly be able to account for anything on the ground of man, or any ground whatsoever, save God. It has to be said, 'This is of God; this is all of God; this is the Lord.'

As we were saying earlier, the fire produces this gold. Oh, what a work that fire accomplishes to get rid of the alloy, the mixture, the dross, so that at last it can be said, 'This is all of God, there is nothing of man in this, nothing can account for this but the Lord'. I am quite sure that in the light of a statement like that you can see the meaning of the ways of God. What is He doing? He is seeking to produce a testimony in which the strength, the wisdom, the very endurance, the very ability to go on at all, is of God and not of man. All of God - yes, the fulness of Christ is that.

Oh, our ideas about the fulness of Christ! 'Oh, for the fulness of Christ!' we cry. It cannot possibly be until there is an utter emptiness. If He is to fill all things, everything else has to go out. It will not be "all things", and it will not be "all and in all" if there is something else. The fulness of Christ demands a full place. But the point is this - the fulness of Christ is something which is to be entered into, to be experienced. What fulness! 'I have seen the face of Jesus, tell me not of aught beside' - do you mean that? Sentiments, hymns, poems! Are you quite sure they are true? Ah, we are put to the test over that - what we want beside Him. We do not know our own hearts. However, the true testimony is all of God. It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus, and it is the Lord Jesus Who is being contemplated.

(b) Universal: The Satisfaction of Heaven and Earth

The next thing is the fulness of Christ in the matter of universality. This is only saying the same thing in another way. You have this candlestick represented as in two places. In Exodus it is in the sanctuary, in the holy place. What does the holy place of the tabernacle represent? It is the place between heaven and earth. Outside the holy place you come to the world, the outwardness of the testimony. It is the world that brings you to the holy place. Beyond the holy place is the Most Holy Place, that is heaven itself; "into heaven itself" (Heb. 9:24) as the apostle said. The holy place is the link between heaven and earth, the boundaries of earth and heaven meeting there. The person of the Lord Jesus unites them. He stands as the Son of man between heaven and earth, and unites them and comprehends them in their entirety. Fulness, heavenly and earthly, is found in Him in a place not all of either, but uniting both, satisfying both.

He is not wholly of this earth, of this world; He is apart; and yet, so to speak, He has His hand upon it. He is representatively related to it, it meets in Him - He is at the point where all the nations find their fulness. The world finds in the Lord Jesus the answer to everything. There is not a nation, not a tribe, not a people, not a language, not a constitution, national or temperamental, in this whole creation in any age, which cannot find the answer to its need, its true need, in Him. He is outside of time, He is above time, He is as good for the twentieth century as for the first and every century between - just as apt, just as suitable. All the conditions of all the ages of this world met on earth in Him.

On the other hand, heaven is satisfied with Him, all heaven's fulness is found in Him. Heaven had a need at a point; heaven waited breathlessly while something was carried out upon which, in a sense, its very existence seemed to depend. Heaven was tremendously and solemnly interested in that drama of the Cross; nay, more, in the whole drama of His earthly life. Heaven is always watching, concerned; angels are intent. Heaven met in Him, and now all heaven is satisfied because of Him. God finds His satisfaction in Him.

So the Lord Jesus is just there between heaven and earth, meeting all needs. How universal is the testimony of Jesus to answer need!

We find the candlestick mentioned again in Scripture - in the book of the Revelation; and we find there confirmation of what I have just said. If you wanted to present two pictures of the candlestick, as in Exodus and Revelation respectively, you would put the former in the holy place of the tabernacle. Where would you put the other? You would need to have a map of the whole area then known as Asia, as representative of the creation, the world, the nations, and there you would put a candlestick in Ephesus and another in Smyrna, another in Thyatira, in Pergamos, and so on; and yet you would see one Man covering the whole of that area - the candlesticks, so to speak, being brought into that one Man. It is Christ in testimony in all the nations. It is not now only centred in one place, in the holy place; it is now in the

nations. The first is in the holy place - everything is in Him. But when He is seen as the seven candlesticks in the nations, it is He in everything - a picture of God's ultimate intention that the fulness that is in Him shall be found everywhere, in the nations, in the whole creation. Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" waiting for its redemption (Rom. 8:19-22). The creation groans. What is it groaning about? Why do we groan? Because, in some form, we want something we have not got. If we are in pain, we groan because we want to be free from pain. We groan if things go wrong - we want them to go right. The creation is groaning because it has not got something which is necessary to it. What does it need? - Christ, that is all. He answers to the creation's need. Christ in all the nations - that is the ultimate vision. The universality of Christ - that is the testimony. All heaven's need, all earth's need, all man's need, all the creation's need, met in fulness in the Lord Jesus. That is a comprehensive statement, but it is also a challenge to us. Is that the testimony we are talking about?

A Vital Impact of Christ, Not a Teaching

What do we mean by the testimony? Is it Christ in fulness known in that way by us? You say, 'Well, what is there particularly different about that so far as this vessel is concerned? Is not all Christianity supposed to be that? Is it not all centred in Christ? Is not its witness that Christ is all, to be all, and that Christ meets all need?' Yes, it is quite true as to language, quite true as to terms of Christianity; but there is a good deal extra to Christ in Christianity - how much we do not know.

Many of us would strongly affirm that, so far as we are concerned, Christ is all, but we do not know our own hearts. The Lord has only to put His finger upon something very precious to us and a big battle flares up; it is not so easy then to say, 'Christ is more than that to me.' The issue becomes very practical and personal. But you can spread that out over a wide area - all the extras to Christ that there are in Christianity from centre to circumference; and only the fires of God can discover what are the extras that we Christians and Christianity must have.

Oh, look on Christianity today as we know it in this world! Do we not have to say that there is a lot that is called Christianity that is not Christ? There is a lot added in. There is not this fiery work of separating between the pure gold and the dross. It is a pure gold testimony wrought in the fire that God is after, and only His eyes know what has to be dealt with in the fire. There is a difference between the general, ostensible Christian testimony about the Lord Jesus and the actual spiritual one - a great deal of difference.

I do not know that in this life we shall ever get to the point where it is so utterly Christ that there is nothing else at all, but God is working toward that. All of God; all is spiritual, nothing carnal; all is heavenly, nothing earthly. What is in view is not a movement, a mission, a work, a sect, a 'fellowship' as an institution, something here on this earth. It is something which is behind the very people who constitute the physical body of it all, something intangible but very real.

There is something about this candlestick which is more than itself. It is its spiritual and heavenly nature. In a word, you do not meet a thing at all, you meet the Lord. You are not impressed with the thing, the organization, the company of people, or the place, or anything like that; you just meet the Lord. 'The Lord is here' - that is the testimony of Jesus. Do you not covet that for yourself personally? Surely if people were able to say of our passing this way - a way which we shall pass only once - that we brought the presence of the Lord with us, that there was something of the fragrance of Christ about us, something that suggested the Lord, would not that be the greatest thing that could possibly be said?

Would not that be the answer to our heart's deepest desire? If, by our being together as companies of the Lord's people, everyone coming into touch with us could say, 'It is not the people, nor the phraseology, nor the peculiar teaching, but somehow or other it is the Lord you meet there' - well, there is no end greater than that. For the Lord to do that necessitates deep, fiery work. That is the candlestick all of gold. It is the Lord Jesus. The Lord give us grace to seek that it shall be so, that our presence here is His presence.

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