

As It Was in the Beginning - the Cross

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon highlights the indispensable role of the Cross in understanding the Holy Spirit's judgment and guidance in Christian life.

Scripture: Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Galatians 2:20, Philipians 2:5

Topics: "The Cross", "Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the centrality of the Cross in New Testament Christianity, arguing that the Holy Spirit's judgment is always based on the Cross of Christ. He explains that the Cross represents God's definitive 'No' to the old order and 'Yes' to the new life in Christ, serving as the ultimate arbiter for all matters of faith and conduct. Sparks urges believers to recognize the importance of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance, which is always aligned with the truth of the Cross. He warns against the dangers of neglecting this truth, as seen in the early church, where a lack of sensitivity led to confusion and spiritual dullness. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the Cross as the foundation for all Christian life and decision-making.

Transcript

When we refer to the "beginning" -- meaning the beginning of Christianity -- we, of course, instinctively think of Pentecost, that advent of the Holy Spirit. We then proceed to think of the early record of the Holy Spirit's "Acts". For a return to or recovery of such a condition there is often expressed a desire, even a longing, and in many basic respects rightly so. We here are seeking to underline some of those fundamental factors. So, we come now to point to the one which is very vital and important to the whole of New Testament Christianity. Doctrinally this would arouse little controversy among Evangelicals, but the very acceptance of the doctrine as a matter of course may mean an inadequate recognition of its cruciality. We can only trust that as we proceed, a new recognition of the greatness and imperativeness of this truth may break or dawn upon our readers.

This great truth is that

The Holy Spirit has one court of appeal from which he will on no account depart.

The Holy Spirit has an arbiter, a judge, an umpire, to which He will unswervingly appeal for a verdict on every matter. As in a game or contest with two opposing sides the appeal of "How's that?" is made to the umpire; or as in a court of law the appeal for a decision is made to the one who is there to give judgment:

so it is with the Holy Spirit. He has a fixed basis for His verdict, and His verdict is fixed as to death or life, as to rejection or acceptance. It is of supreme importance whether the Holy Spirit says "Yes" or "No". Go through the Book of the Acts and note where and when that verdict was given, one way or the other and see the result. There was a sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit then which meant everything for arrest or release by discovering whether His finger indicated "Yes" or "No".

What was the Holy Spirit's ground of arbitration, judgment and verdict? It was ever and always the Cross. The Cross combining the death and resurrection of Christ was God's almighty and categorical "No" or "Yes". The death of Christ was that eternal "No" to an entire order and source of things. The resurrection was His wonderful and glorious "Yes" to another order.

The Holy Spirit Always Appealed to the Cross

This is seen -- if we have eyes -- everywhere in the New Testament. Take in your hand the fact that the Cross set aside one entire humanity in Adam and gave the only place to another "Adam", a new and different humanity, and with it go through each book of the New Testament. Often, most often, you will find the Cross definitely mentioned in some way, such as "The Cross of our Lord Jesus" or "Christ crucified", etc. Sometimes it will be by implication, such as in Philippians 2:5-8. Sometimes an exhortation, a command, an admonition, an appeal, will involve the Cross for a response. The Cross runs the whole way through, and it has a very great many applications and connections. On ALL matters of life, conduct, service, movement, spirit, speech, judgment, etc., it is as though the Holy Spirit is saying: "That was crucified with Christ"; "That does not live before God"; "That belongs to a source which was 'buried with Christ'." Or, on the contrary, "That has My verdict of life and peace because it is 'risen with Christ'; it has God's 'Yes'."

At Corinth there was so much carnality that sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit's judgment was dulled or numbed. Hence the apostle -- before coming to them -- made a positive resolve "to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, AND HIM CRUCIFIED". "Christ crucified -- the wisdom of God and the power of God." "We preach Christ crucified."

This is an example of what we mean when we say that the arbitration, the judgment of the Holy Spirit is always by reference to the Cross. This can be noted in its manifold and specific connection in every other book. Violation of this position invariably resulted in confusion, complications, and frustration. Lapses there were, and sovereign acts of God saved the situation ultimately, but the record leaves these lapses as warnings for all time.

We cannot relegate the Cross to history, as an event, a bit of Christian doctrine. It is an abiding judgment-seat; the Lamb is on the throne now, and will be the final verdict of judgment. The last view is of "The Lamb in the midst of the throne", and the whole scene will be one of God's mighty and eternal "Yes!", when everything of the "No!" of God will have been actually removed.

Let us come with the Holy Spirit to the Cross with all our matters, and ask Him to register its verdict as to whether it is alive or dead unto God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/as-it-was-in-the-beginning-the-cross/>

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