

# Christ and the Rights of the Father

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes Christ's role in fulfilling God's rights through His life, baptism, and obedience amidst temptation.*

**Topics:** "Dependence On God", "Obedience"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that Jesus Christ lived with a dual purpose: to fulfill God's rights and to serve as the Cornerstone of a spiritual temple, embodying God's will. His baptism symbolized a complete dependence on the Father, rejecting any notion of independence, and affirming His commitment to God's will. Throughout His life, Jesus faced temptations that tested His faithfulness and obedience to God, demonstrating that true life comes from doing the will of the Father. Sparks encourages believers to recognize their identity in Christ and to live for God alone, as this is how God asserts His rights. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a life of unwavering obedience and trust in God's faithfulness.

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## Transcript

It is important to recognize that the Lord lived on this earth with a double purpose. For the first time there was a Man on this earth whose whole life was an expression of what God wanted, in Whom all the rights of God were fulfilled. This was what God had intended from the beginning. In Christ He saw it.

On the other hand, Christ therefore became the Cornerstone of a spiritual temple, a temple in which God's rights are fully respected. Christ was never intended to stay by Himself. He was intended to become the Head of a body, the grain of wheat with much fruit, a vine with many branches. But what applies to the Head must also apply to the whole body; what applies to the body, also to the individual member. The Vine is to be recognized by its branches. By way of summarizing we can say: Christ, in living fellowship with His own, is purposed to be an expression of God's rights. God is to be everything and in everything.

That is why Paul does not address the Corinthians as an assembly of individuals, but he writes to "the church of God." She is the church of God. The Lord desires His full rights in everything that belongs to Him.

If Christ is the Head of the church, then what should be true for all the members must first be made real in Him. Let us therefore now draw our attention to that through which God assures His rights in Christ. Herein a completely new outlook opens up for us on the life of Jesus Christ. We see that everything depends on the rights of the Father being expressed from moment to moment by Him. Let us briefly prove

this by mentioning a few points.

Right at the beginning of His life we want to see two things: firstly the position that Jesus takes, and secondly the consequence of the stand He has taken.

This relates to His baptism. We do not have to say much about baptism as such. We can summarize it in a few words.

What did He want to express through it? Nothing less than that He Himself, with everything that He was, had died. However, this is not about a dying to sin in Him. He was without sin. Since it could not be about dying because of sin, and since baptism is nothing else but a picture of death and resurrection, in the case of Jesus Christ, therefore, it must have a special background. This is indeed the case. It would have been possible for Jesus Christ to live a personal life, that is, a life of His own choice, without the unbroken relationship with the Father, according to His own human will. In itself that would not have been sin. He could have acted independently of the Father.

Now, here we see the meaning and purpose of the baptism of Jesus Christ. His baptism was to express that He wanted to live in utter dependence on the Father, that He had died to everything that did not stand in close connection to His Father. It is futile to ask if a life independent from God would have led to sin, as it was in the case of Adam, because precisely through baptism the Son of God testified that He was not thinking of independence in the slightest and that He had died to every possibility of it. He refused to possess any will of His own. He gave the Father that which He demanded. He gave Him an unrestricted right to dispose of Him as He wished to. "Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

This is the negative side to start with. The positive side, however, is in the fact that God now had such a Man, that somebody was there, a Man on this earth, in Whom the rights of God had been completely kept, Who could say: "Not My will, but Thine." In other words: "I don't want to live an earthly life as I want to my liking, but a life in full subjection and dependence on God. Not I, but God!" Paul writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5, at verses 14 and 15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again."

Let us express that in the shortest way possible for all of us: From now on I live for God! Nothing outside of Him, everything for Him. This is the way in which God comes to His rights. With reference to Jesus, this was the meaning of His baptism.

We see the Lord taking this stand from the beginning and from that moment everything had to be in agreement with this foundation. This means testing. That is why the road from the Jordan led to the desert. "He fasted for forty days and forty nights. Then He was hungry" (Matt. 4:2; Deut. 8:3). A state of physical weakness is always a good prerequisite for temptations from the enemy. The devil selects his occasions in such a way that they seem to promise success. He would have little to hope for, had he come forty days earlier, when Jesus stood in the full power of Him Who had spoken from an open heaven: "This is My beloved Son." When, however, circumstances seemed suitable to him, he questioned the sonship of the Son of God with the word: "If Thou art the Son of God..." (Matt. 4:3). A promising position for the enemy! A person who is close to dying of hunger and thirst, for whom something has to happen quickly, if he is to stay alive! At that moment the devil attacks. That is temptation.

Do we not have the right to dare to do something for the sake of staying alive? The enemy whispers to us: "If you don't do it, you will die." For us, however, everything should revolve around the issue, without which nothing existed for the Lord Jesus: to persevere in dependence on the Father for as long as He wants.

There are times when we feel as though we are pushed into a corner. Maybe we have taken a position of absolute obedience towards God. We have declared to God that we are willing for His will to be done. It does not take long before we find ourselves in an impossible position. Such a position is basically about nothing less and nothing else but our faithfulness towards God. Are we prepared to die rather than take our life into our own hands and give up our dependency on God, to perish rather than do something which God has not told us to do?

In connection with this temptation there is the possibility of a new discovery. We find this in the answer Jesus gives the devil: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The enemy could have answered: "Without food you will die." But the Lord knows another kind of food. Obedience means life. Jesus did not turn the stones into bread and yet still lived another three and a half years. Later when the disciples returned to Him, when He was sitting on the edge of the well of Samaria and asked Him to eat, He could tell them, from a deeper experience than they could imagine: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). It is manna for us to be faithful to God. There is life in obedience.

The second temptation.--The devil set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down" (Matt. 4:6). The devil puts himself on the same ground as the Lord. He uses the Word. The temptation becomes therefore more intense. Besides the Lord, probably nobody knows the Word as well as the adversary. Therefore spiritual discernment is needed. This we have in the answer: "It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God" (Matt. 4:7; Deut. 6:16). In which context is this Word written? Israel was in trouble. The question arose, whether the Lord was in her midst or not; in other words, a questioning of the faithfulness of God, whether God keeps His Word or not. Is it not significant that the Lord uses exactly this passage to answer the enemy? The devil says in other words: "If You believe that the Father is with You, then try it. If You are really convinced that He is on your side, then do something for once that will show this." A big temptation that our Lord did not succumb to. But what must we do? We find ourselves in trouble. Do we believe that God is faithful? Do we consider the possibility that God could deny Himself? When the Lord says: "I am with you," let us believe it. Let us never do anything to put God to the test. The Lord has a right to demand such a position from us. Jesus gave His Father this right. He held fast to the position that He had taken: "Not My will, but Your will be done."

The third temptation.--The devil took Him to a high mountain. "All these things I will give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." The answer: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:8-10).

Here too the context is important. The words are in Deuteronomy 5 verses 8 and 9. There we read of the worship of other gods. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness... for I, the Lord, am a jealous God." Let us take note that God jealously demands all worship, to be recognized and honoured as the only true God. With this passage the Lord defeats the enemy. God demands all our worship.

World dominion is bound up with this last temptation. How can we gain world dominion? Who will rule over the kingdoms of the world in the end? He, Who has maintained the rights of God to the full. "The kingdoms

of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. 11:15). This is true for the church. She is destined to reign. The pressure of the enemy in connection with the offer of world dominion has to do with his demand of worship. Let us be assured that every pressure in our life serves the purpose to get us to worship the devil. Is this possible? Now, let us suppose we were in difficult times. It is possible for us to evade the difficulties. If it were faithfulness towards God and God-given revelation that brought us into this difficult situation, we could perhaps alleviate this situation through compromise. We could give in to something. Certainly, it would be unfaithfulness. We would steal from God what is His. But the difficulties! That is the enemy. That is the pressure: to bring us to a place where we rob God of something, or in other words, where we give the devil something. Ultimately it is about the issue of whom we worship, whom we trust completely, unreservedly. Our Lord Jesus Christ kept His position faithfully. At the Jordan He took this stand. "Nothing for Myself, everything for the Father. I live to do the Father's will." And then comes the test, the temptation. Then everything gets examined and tested as to its reality. But the day came when the Father could give His Son the confirmation from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And He was transfigured before them."

We too will be put to the test. For us too it is about the proof of the reality of the position to which we testified. We testified to have died to sin, self and the world. From now on I live for God only! This will be put to the test. It will be well with us if in faith we hold fast to this position, if we stand firm in everything that has been given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we have the victory. In Him we have everything. Oh, that we could wholeheartedly and with uninterrupted willingness say together with Paul:

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15).

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