

# Christ in Heaven and Christ Within

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of balancing the objective and subjective truths of Christ's work, lest we settle for a superficial understanding of salvation and neglect the deeper realities of Christ's work within us.*

**Scripture:** Romans 6:1, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 1:27

**Topics:** "Balance in Spiritual Truth", "Christ's Work in Believers"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the duality of Christ's work: Christ in heaven and Christ within believers. He explains that while Christ's completed work in heaven assures believers of their perfect salvation, the subjective work of Christ within them is essential for spiritual growth and maturity. Sparks warns against the dangers of overemphasizing either aspect, which can lead to spiritual shallowness, delayed maturity, and a lack of true transformation. He encourages believers to maintain a balance between the objective truth of their salvation and the subjective experience of Christ's life within them. Ultimately, understanding both aspects leads to a fuller realization of their identity in Christ and the hope of glory.

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## Transcript

"Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20).

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:1-6).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2).

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34).

We feel the importance of saying a word with regard to Christ in heaven and Christ within the believer, that is, what is objective and what is subjective. It is tremendously important that we should keep a proper balance of truth. A very great deal of our trouble is because of there being an unbalanced emphasis upon some aspect of truth. It is good to know the truth, and it is good to rejoice in it, but it is just possible that even truth may get us into trouble. There are many perils lying in the direction of truth, even spiritual truth; and there are not a few of the Lord's people who have fallen into those perils. It is not that they suffer from want of light, but they are suffering very much because they have not got their light properly adjusted and balanced. Thus it becomes very necessary for us to get things in their right perspective and proportion. Preponderance on any one side will always lead to spiritual injury, and very often to disaster. The history of many instrumentalities which have been raised up and used by the Lord is eventually the sad story of a loss of power and effectiveness because of striking an unbalanced emphasis, of putting some side of truth in a place out of proportion to that which is complementary to it.

### Complementary Truths

It is not just a matter of being all-round, that is, of having everything and being in everything; but in the constitution of a body we find that one law is balanced by another. All the laws, of course, are necessary, and it is important to give due place to every function in our bodies; but there run parallel laws and functions, one balances the other. There is that which is complementary to something else. These two things are, as it were, twins, running together, and to over-emphasize or over-develop one means to throw the whole order out, and to bring about quite serious limitation and weakness, and to make things far less effective than they should be.

So it is in spiritual matters. There are always balancing truths. There is one thing, but there is something which goes with it, and which keeps it in its right measure, and causes it to fulfil its purpose and to serve its end most effectively. There is this order in the Divine creation - one thing is necessary to another to make that other fulfil its purpose to the full. That is where balance has to be observed and maintained.

### The Adversary Using God's Work Against Him

Then we must remember that the adversary is always wanting to use God's own work and God's own truth against God Himself. That fact is made very clear in the Scriptures, and we may observe it in experience and in spiritual history. This line of action is more successful for the adversary than perhaps any other, because the result is that he immediately prejudices God's work and God's truth. He closes the door to the acceptance of what is of God simply by using it against God, and one of his most successful methods is that of securing an over-emphasis or an unbalanced apprehension of Divine truth. You will see what I mean as we go on.

### A Peril With Every Blessing

So that with every Divine blessing there is a peril. Wherever there is something which is really from the Lord, that has linked with it its own peculiar peril.

Now these are merely general observations, as leading up to this brief meditation along the specific line of what is objective and what is subjective as to the work of the Lord Jesus for and in the believer. We will look at both of these separately very briefly, seeing what the blessing is and what the perils are.

### The Objective Side

We take the objective side first, the Lord Jesus presented to us as in heaven. We know that He is there, and we know that a very great deal is said in the Word about His being there; but why is He there? In the first place: How did He get there? Now you will notice if you look into the Word that whenever the heavenly side of the ascension of the Lord Jesus is presented, that is, whenever the matter is looked at from above, it does not speak about His going up or His ascension, but it speaks about His being received up. In the first chapter of the Book of the Acts it is recorded that as the disciples were looking up into heaven after the Lord Jesus had been taken up from among them, two angels appeared and said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was received up..." (The Authorized Version says "taken up"). That is an angelic, or a heavenly, standpoint, and the word "received" represents something more than just the fact that He ascended to heaven. It carries with it this fact, that it would be impossible for the Lord Jesus to be received in heaven if He had not perfectly accomplished the work which He came from heaven to do. In effect, heaven would have been closed to Him; heaven would have had to say to Him, 'But You have not done the work; there can be no reception until You have'. But it was because He had perfected the work which He came to do, and there was nothing more to be added to it, that heaven received Him, and it was a great reception! Psalm 24 gives us some idea of what that reception was: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." You see, it implies the work that He has done by His Cross, in overthrowing all His and our enemies, meeting all the demand of human need in the matter of salvation, perfecting our salvation. And so He is received up, and is at the right hand of God; and the right hand is always in Scripture the place of strength and honour. He is at the right hand of God because the work which He came to do was finished. That is, our salvation has been perfected by and in the Lord Jesus. There is nothing whatever for Him to add to it. That is the most elementary thing to say, and yet it is so foundational. So many of the Lord's people have not yet entered into the joyful appreciation of that - that the Lord Jesus really has given the last stroke and the last touch to our salvation; that when heaven received Him, heaven set its seal to the perfected work of His Cross; and that He is there in possession of a salvation which has not still to be accomplished but which is final, full, complete, utter.

### Perfect Salvation When We Believe

Our salvation rests upon our faith acceptance of that, not of anything subsequent to that. In the day in which we believe in the Lord Jesus on the ground of the perfection of the work of His Cross, we receive perfection of salvation, and enter into all that salvation to its very last degree. We shall never - though we were to live for centuries on this earth, - we shall never in Christ be one little bit more perfect than we are in Him in the very moment that we believe. All that is made good to us in the day that we believe. There are no questions, no hazards, no risks, the thing is settled, it is ours; full and complete in Christ. The Blood of the Lord Jesus has dealt with the whole sin question, root and branch, once and for all, for us. The question of condemnation has been for ever settled. You cannot have anything more utter than this - NO condemnation! "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It does not say: 'There is no condemnation to those who have faithfully been going on with the Lord for years'. It says: "to them that are in Christ Jesus." And when are you in Christ? You are in Christ the moment that you believe in relation to

His work on the Cross for your salvation, and in that very moment you enter into the place of NO CONDEMNATION, and freedom from condemnation cannot be more complete than that.

The tremendously important thing is for us to have that settled in our own hearts. We are saved, we are forgiven, we are delivered from condemnation. In Christ we are perfect. He is our perfection, and that perfection of His is ours through faith. The people who have the purest, clearest, fullest heart-grasp of that are the happiest people, the people who know joy. The people who have not grasped that are disturbed people, they have not the fullness of joy, they are always afraid, anxious, worrying about their salvation, doubting; and the enemy plays many tricks with people who have not settled that once and for all.

Now that is the blessed truth of what is objective in salvation for the believer as in Christ. I am so glad that He is in heaven "far above all" with this matter. If He were here in this world I might think that anything could happen: but He is not, nor is He in any realm where anything can happen; He is beyond all happenings in the matter of salvation. That salvation of ours in its perfection has been put beyond the reach of anything that can throw a doubt upon it, or raise a question about it - beyond the touch of anything that can bring it into uncertainty.

### The Perils Of The Objective Apprehension

But there are perils associated even with that blessed truth, because it is only one side of the truth. It is the first side; it is the thing which must come first, but it is only one side, and therefore it is just possible to make salvation one-sided by putting all the emphasis upon that and not giving due place to the other side.

#### 1. The Peril Of Shallowness

What are some of the perils? Well, we begin with the simplest, the peril of superficiality, of shallowness. What Christ has done for us may be a matter of very great joy and rejoicing and satisfaction; but contentment in that realm and with that side alone may just prevent that deep work which is necessary, which comes by the complementary side of the truth of Christ's work, the subjective. Thus it is found that many people, who are rejoicing to the full in the finality of their salvation in Christ, are living very much upon the surface, and not learning a very great deal about the deeper realities and fuller meaning of Christ. That is the first and perhaps the simplest form of peril.

#### 2. The Peril Of Delayed Maturity

Closely related to this is the peril of making the Christian life static, settled, where it has reached the point of accepting all the objective truth by faith and staying there, and not going on beyond that in spiritual experience. The truth is there, but it is objective, external, although there is great joy, and assurance in the heart; but the Christian life has stopped with that, it has settled down. That is a very real peril, and you find it marking a great many of the Lord's people. Their attitude is, "I am saved, nothing has to be added or can be added to my salvation; I need have no more doubt of my salvation, I am accepted in Christ, and I am perfect in Him; what more do I need? I just rest upon that and enjoy that day by day." Well, that is very good, but you see it can bring a check, so that you live on one side of things, and the whole of the Christian life stops there.

#### 3. The Peril Of Contradiction

There is a further peril into which some fall who have apprehended in a very true and blessed way the greatness of the salvation which Christ has accomplished as theirs. Because they know that the question

of salvation is eternally settled, and there is no room whatever for any doubts or fears, and nothing can ever alter the fact; and that their salvation does not rest for a moment upon anything that they are or do, but upon what He is and has done, - all of which is undeniably true; nevertheless, because they are perfectly sure and have no doubts whatever, there is found a lack of sympathy and they become hard, cold, and legal. Sometimes they become cruel, and too often inconsistencies arise in the life; that is, their attitude says in effect, "I am saved, it does not matter what I do, I shall never be lost." They would never dream of saying that in so many words and yet very often it works out that way, that their very certainty of salvation opens the door for inconsistencies and contradictions in their lives which never reach their conscience, simply because they say they have no more conscience of sin, that the conscience has been once purged, and so one should never be troubled with conscience again; salvation is absolute, nothing can touch it. Subtly, imperceptibly, without their reasoning or thinking, that attitude does creep in and you find with some that if you bring home to them certain things in their lives which you see to be glaring inconsistencies they will hardly believe them, they will possibly repudiate them, or simply say, "well, nothing alters the fact of my salvation." Life is thus thrown into an unbalanced state, and the peril comes right in with the very fact of the fullness and finality of salvation.

#### 4. The Peril Of Truth Taking The Place Of Life

There is another peril; it is that of making progress a matter of truth rather than of life. Progress, of course, is recognized as necessary. No true believer would sit down and say, "Well, now there is no more progress to be made." But for many who have so strongly taken up the position upon the objective work of the Lord Jesus in its perfection, the matter of progress is not a matter of life, it is rather a matter of truth; that is, to know more rather than to become more. Thus you find that a very great many who are in that position have advanced tremendously in their knowledge of truth, but they know a great deal more than they are, and somehow or other their own spiritual growth in Christlikeness has not kept pace by any means or in any proper proportion to their progress in the knowledge of things about Christ. That is a danger which comes in with this very thing of which we are speaking.

#### 5. The Peril Of Missing The Prize

Then this further peril - that of giving less importance to the prize than should be given to it. Salvation is not the prize. Salvation never was a prize. You can never win or earn salvation; it is a free gift. But to settle down with salvation in its fullness and its finality means for a great many a failure to recognize that there is a prize - that of which the Apostle Paul spoke when he said: "I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the upward calling..." (Phil. 3:14). There is something more than salvation, something related to the Lord's full purpose in glory, something related to the ultimate full manifestation of the Lord in His people; and that is not simply that they are saved people, but that they have attained (and Paul uses that word) unto something. Paul was never in fear of losing his salvation. When he said: "Lest... after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (I Cor. 9:27), he was not thinking of losing his salvation, but he was aware that there was something that he could miss; he could fall short of something, that which he called "the prize"; and he related to its attainment a growth in his spiritual life: "Not that I... am already made perfect." If we settle down in the attitude that says, "My salvation is perfect, complete, and final in Christ. Nothing can be added to it and I rejoice in that" - this may well mean that we give less importance to the prize than we ought to give.

So you see there are perils which come in with what is perhaps the greatest of the blessings.

## The Subjective Side

That does not cover all the ground, but it must be enough on that side for the moment. We turn just for a moment to the other side - Christ in us, or the subjective work of Christ. What does Christ in us mean? We know from the Word that it means conformity to the image of Christ. Paul uses the phrase: "Until Christ be (fully) formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). In salvation we have everything as to our own perfection in Him. When we receive Christ we receive within us potentially all that is in Him as to His present character - not only His position but His character, mark you. It is not WHERE He is but WHAT He is. It is not now what He possesses but what He IS. He possesses our salvation, but we know what He is, and "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2). So that all that He has given to us potentially when we believed is there to be developed; and, as Paul says, Christ is to be fully formed in us, and we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son. That is a very wonderful thing. It is: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ in us means that eventually we shall be like Him to the full. But this is not the FACT of our being saved, this is the OBJECT of our being saved. This is not salvation in its fundamental and initial meaning; this is salvation in its outworking to its full meaning, the image of Christ, God's Son.

## Identification With Christ

How do we accept that? We accept that by recognizing the second side of Calvary's work. The one side - the objective - is what Christ has done for us, apart from us, in His own Person. We accept this other side of conformity to His image - the subjective by accepting that Christ not only did that FOR us but AS us, that is, representatively. We come to Romans 6 and recognize that when Christ died we died, when Christ was buried we were buried, when Christ was raised we were raised. That is His representative work. Now we accept all that in simple faith at the beginning; but, mark you, that does not become operative in any full measure until the objective side has been settled. There must be a settlement, definitely, positively, finally, that our salvation in Christ is perfect and complete, before there can be any full measure of the out-working of Christ in our hearts. The Lord must have that basis upon which to work.

This is where the danger comes in with a great blessing. Oh! it is a great revelation, a wonderful unveiling, that God has chosen to make us like Christ - not only to save us with a perfect salvation so that the question of sin and condemnation is answered finally and for ever, but to conform us to the image of His Son; what a revelation, what a blessing! Yes, but God cannot do that second thing until the first thing is settled, because it is in that realm that there is unspeakable peril. What is the peril? It is this.

## The Peril Of The Subjective Apprehension

If the Lord were to get to work to empty us of ourselves in order to make room for the Lord Jesus; to show us ourselves in order to show us the Lord Jesus; to make us to know what we are in ourselves in order to make us know what Christ is in us; to make us know our weakness in order to make Christ's strength perfect in it; to make us know our foolishness in order to make Christ as our wisdom, perfect in us; if He were to start to do that and the question of our salvation were not settled, the devil would jump in at once and use God's very work against us, and when the Lord was dealing with us to make room for His Son, the devil would begin to say: "You are under condemnation, God is against you, these very dealings of God with you are proofs that your salvation is not certain." And so it is with a great many in whom the Lord begins to work out things. They allow the enemy to jump in and take hold of the very work of God and turn it against God, by bringing up doubts in their hearts as to their salvation.

Do you see that? So often that is done, and the peril is there, running right alongside of the greatest blessing all the time. It is thus that the enemy tries to use God's truth against God.

Now the subjective side of God's work demands for its effective outworking that we are settled once and for all as to our salvation; that comes first! If you have only the one side; the objective, and all your emphasis is upon that, you may be shallow and you may not grow spiritually. If you dwell only on the subjective, you become introspective and begin to doubt your salvation; your eyes are always turned in upon yourself, and the result is that you begin to look for something in yourself that can commend itself to God; and therein lies a denial of the perfect work of salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus. You see it is an undermining and undercutting of the whole of the work of Calvary. These two things must go together. On the one hand - fully and finally in Christ we are as perfect in the hour when we believe as ever we shall be. On the other hand - all that is in Christ is going to be made, not THEORETICALLY true, but ACTUALLY true in us by the Holy Spirit. But the second demands the first, and we must keep the balance. We must rejoice always in the fact that our names are written in heaven, that we are saved with a perfect salvation; but, on the other hand, we must remember that there is something that the Lord wants to do - not to make salvation true, but to make the image of Christ an inward thing. That is the outworking of salvation.

So this balance is necessary, and we must give equal emphasis. If we over-emphasize the subjective we take something from the glory of Christ. If we over-emphasize the objective we take something from God's purpose. It is a matter of the work of God in Christ, and the purpose of God in Christ: and these two things must both have their place.

May the Lord give us understanding, so that we come into a place of rest and are delivered from the perils which lurk in the vicinity of every Divine blessing.

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