

Conclusion. the Basis of All

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Cross of Jesus Christ as the basis of all, and how it is the key to spiritual fullness and power over Satan.

Scripture: John 12:24, Romans 6:3, Romans 6:5, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:5, Colossians 2:11

Topics: "The Cross", "Holy Spirit"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the universal resort of the Apostles in addressing the issues within the Church, urging believers to put aside prejudices, superficiality, and traditions to align with God's purpose. The Apostles consistently pointed to the Cross of Jesus Christ as the foundational crisis for believers, leading to an inworking and outworking of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is committed to the Cross, exposing and dealing with the self-life of believers to bring about spiritual fullness and resurrection life. Embracing the Cross is essential for gaining power over Satan and experiencing the deeper realities of Christ's work.

Transcript

Having pointed to the inclusive goal, we cannot close without a further special emphasis upon the inclusive basis. The question that will be in most minds is, How shall all this be made good in the Church, the churches and the individual? There is an answer, but it will challenge us to the depth and at every point in our lives. Much--perhaps everything--will depend upon how seriously we are concerned for God's purpose, and therefore how ready we are to put aside all prejudice, superficiality, scepticism, familiarity and perhaps our traditions. It is the universal resort of the Apostles. Were things other than they should be in their days? Was there a condition in the church in Rome that demanded such a tremendous corrective as that great Letter to them? Was there a state of things in Corinth--divisions, carnalities, disorders, rivalries, dissensions, and worse, calling for such a corrective as the First Letter to the church there? Was there an incipient movement of reprobation from grace to legalism with all the entail of loss of glory in Galatia? Was there a "fly in the beautiful ointment" at Philippi? Was there a threatening of a false spirituality in the form of mysticism at Colossae? Yes, all this and other things, threatening the testimony of the churches and their influence in the world. The Apostles did not excuse, condone or accept it. Their whole attitude was "These things ought not to be." How did they approach these situations? Had they one common basis and means of approach and remedy? Yes, they had! In every case it was the same.

To Rome it was: Romans 6:3-10; 12:1,2.

To Galatia: Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14.

To Philippi: Philippians 2:5-8.

To Colossae: Colossians 2:11,12; 3:3.

Well, there it is, plain, clear and positive: the Cross of Jesus Christ brought by the Holy Spirit right to the root and foundation of the life of every believer. A foundational crisis and thereafter an inworking and an outworking. "We," "Ye," "I"--all the pronouns of direct application. Christians believe in the Holy Spirit. Very many desire to know the Holy Spirit as a reality and power in their lives. But it should really be understood and recognized that the Holy Spirit is committed and wedded to the Cross. His coming awaited the work of the Cross. Only after the symbolic representation of the Cross in death, burial and resurrection with Christ in baptism--so understood--did the Holy Spirit take His place in power in the lives of the first believers. Because the tap-root of everything that the Cross was meant to deal with is the self-life, the self-principle, the New Testament word for which is "the flesh," the Holy Spirit leads those under His government into the experiences which are calculated to expose and bring to the Cross the self-life of the child of God. It is a primary and inseparable part of the Holy Spirit's business to make good and real the meaning of the Cross.

This is not popular to the flesh, but it is the gateway to spiritual fulness, and the deeper the Cross, the greater the measure of resurrection life, power and light. This touches the whole realm and range of Satan's authority. Power over him is inseparable from the Cross. Therefore he will do everything possible to undercut, set aside, belittle and discredit the Cross. The Person of Christ and the Cross of Christ have been the ground of the most bitter controversy in the history of Christianity. Of course, they are really one thing. It is the Person Who gives the Cross its real meaning and value, and it is the Cross that vindicates the Person; provided that by the Cross is meant the death, burial and resurrection to glory. The Scriptures cited earlier and many others make it quite clear that the Cross of Christ is something more than an historic event of long ago. It is something that has to become very real in the experience, and not only in the doctrine, of the Christian. But who could survive the Cross in what it meant in the case of Jesus Christ? It rent, devastated and desolated Him, soul and body, heart and mind. For Him it was a going out into outer darkness and forsakenness. All the eternal agony was concentrated into a few hours and a last terrible moment. There is no other creature in God's universe who could go through that and survive. Thank God, no other creature is ever required to go all that way: He went it for us. And yet there is an aspect of that which concerns our being "united with Him by the likeness of His death" (Rom. 6:5) and "always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10 Margin) and a "fellowship of His sufferings"; a drinking at the cup which He drained. This working of His death in the Church and in the believer will be progressive. The law of nature, which is only another way of speaking of the law of God, is more life, more fruit, more growth, by recurrent Winter and Spring, alternating experiences of death and life, every cycle unto increase. This is the law of the Cross (John 12:24). God is not a God Who believes in theories; He is immensely practical.

One of the greatest enemies to fulness is superficiality. This is an age of "quick returns," easy gains, least trouble, everything with as little effort, trouble and cost as possible. Depth is a lost dimension. Stamina is a minus quality. That is why God allows wars and nature's upheavals and difficulties. Heaven is only going to be entered through tribulation--tribulation is the principle of the Cross which God is sustaining before men's eyes. It will be those who share His travail who will share His reign.

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