

Consummated Union

by T. Austin-Sparks

The consummation of union with Christ is the ultimate realization of God's original intention for humanity, where all things are as they were meant to be, and everyone can say, 'This is how it ought to be!'

Scripture: Luke 9:28

Topics: "Union with Christ", "Glory in Suffering"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the theme of 'Consummated Union' in his sermon, illustrating how God's original intention for humanity was to be transfigured and glorified through Christ. He explains that through the union with Christ, believers are destined for glory, which is not just a future hope but a present reality experienced through the Holy Spirit. Sparks highlights the transformation of our physical bodies and the corporate glorification of the Church, culminating in the ultimate vindication of Christ in His saints. He encourages believers to recognize that their union with Christ is the foundation for experiencing glory in their lives, even amidst trials and suffering. The sermon concludes with a call to live in the present reality of this glory, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone" (Luke 4:28-36).

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him... For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:17,19-21).

"...When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed... in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10).

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

"The Lord Jesus Christ... shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:20-21).

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10-11).

We have, first of all, to take a far backward look to remind ourselves that, when God made man, He constituted him with a view to transfiguration: that is, with a view to Divine glory. That was His intention. But man revolted against God and committed spiritual suicide and, in his rebellion and failure, forfeited that wonderful destiny and, as we have read, God instantly pronounced "Vanity" upon the whole creation, or, as we expressed it earlier in this series, wrote at the heart of this creation and of man: "Disappointment." But God made His appointment with another man, the Man after His own heart, His own Son, who became Son of Man; and in that other Man, the Man Christ Jesus, eternal union was secured between those whom God foreknew as believers in Christ and His Son. He secured in His Son a new creation which could be transfigured or glorified. When we see the Lord Jesus in transfiguration on that mountain, we see in Him personally what the first Adam ought to have come to - man glorified, man transfigured; and when we read all these things later about being glorified together with Him, His bringing many sons to glory, our bodies being made like unto the body of His glory and the heavenly Jerusalem having the glory of God, and all those wonderful things, we just see the realization of the original intention. This is what God meant to be from the beginning, and which might, without any trouble or tragedy, have taken place so much earlier, through man's triumph in the time of his probation and testing.

But it is all now consummated in Christ Jesus, the Man in the glory. Glory, as we are never tired of saying, is the gratification of God the Creator and of His whole creation. Glory is simply being able to say, in the full wonderful enjoyment and realization: "This is how it ought to be!" That is glory. You know that even in little ways. You perhaps do not call it glory, but you feel it. If anything is just as you feel it ought to be, then inside you have a touch, a tinge, of glory. But conceive of mankind as a whole, and the whole creation, being just as they were meant to be, and everybody, without reservation or question, being able to say, "Well, this is as it ought to be!" - and that is glory. And when God can say - and His standard is very high, it is absolute - when God from His standpoint can say, "This is exactly as it ought to be, as I intended it to be": well, that indeed will be the day of glory.

That, then, is the consummation of this union with Christ, the union which we have been considering from its various aspects. The eternal union of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; the creational and racial union of our being a new creation in Christ Jesus as the last Adam, the second Man; the marital union when the bride shall have made herself ready, when all those affectional relationships between Him and her and her and Him have been brought to fullness, when no longer any question or doubt, hesitation or reservation of confidence exists: a perfect merging of two lives, His and His Church's - the marriage supper of the Lamb: this is the consummation of that. Further, the vocational union where the house of God has been established and God's heavenly order has been set up and manifested; the functional union of the Body of Christ, where that Body has served for the manifestation of Himself as its indwelling personality; and vital union, organic union, where His life, His Divine heavenly life, has brought the organism to its perfect expression and fulfillment. These are the aspects of union, all of which are taken up in this ultimate consummation - the consummation of all His glory.

Now you see that, in the passages we have read, all of which deserve much fuller consideration than we are giving them, this consummation is viewed in various ways and connections.

First we note the individual consummation, spiritual and physical. There are the individual sons being brought to glory, and in being brought to glory the individual physical body is transformed. It is a wonderful statement: "the body of our humiliation (shall) be conformed to the body of his glory" - all doctors and nurses out of a job, and all undoubtedly very glad to be so! All that realm of things finished, wound up; bodies of glory, glorified bodies "like unto the body of his glory." It is called the change from corruptible to incorruptible. How marvelous - incapable of being corrupted!

Oh, we would like to stop for a little while on the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus. It was a most wonderful thing, that raising of the Lord Jesus from the dead. Joseph begged the body of Jesus, and then, being given it, he and Nicodemus bought a hundred pounds' weight of embalming spices. It is a fairly good weight, a hundred pounds! You can picture those two old fellows carrying that tremendous load. And then they wrapped Him in the linen garment, and inside the garment all that weight of spices was wrapped up. And when they came into the tomb; after His resurrection they found it all there in order - no scattering of the spices all over the tomb; it is all there in order, the shape is unaltered. He has come through it all. Just as He passed through the closed doors later on, He has come out and left the shell. That is some indication of what a glorified body can do.

To be "conformed to the body of his glory": that is an individual consummation of union with Christ. The spirit is already joined with Him. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17), and that union of spirit is going to be consummated in a glorification of body, a new body of glory. That is the end of it. We have seen the corporate aspect of it. There are sons, but there is a seed. It is the same thing under another title or designation. It is the corporate Body of Christ: the Church glorified, "having the glory of God." The Church, having been His Body, having been in this manifold union with Him, is going to be a "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"; the Church of glory having the glory of God.

And then - wonderful passage! - Christ is going to be vindicated in His saints, Christ vindicated in those in whom He has been dwelling. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed": Christ vindicated in His saints - a glorious thing. We who, here and now in this world, have been despised, who have been thought little or nothing of, we who have been set aside, who have been maligned, have been persecuted, who have suffered simply because Christ is in us, simply because of our

union with Christ - oh, what it has meant, what it has sometimes cost! - that Christ in us is going to be glorified in us and marveled at in us. The scene is going to change: the indwelling of Christ is not always going to be a thing which means suffering, adversity, persecution, sorrow and trial. The indwelling of Christ ultimately in the consummation is going to be a most glorious thing - glorified in His saints and marveled at. We can understand that, if we view Him objectively, we shall marvel at Him when we see Him. But here the statement is that He is going to be marveled at in all them that have believed. It is the vindication of Christ and the vindication of the saints.

Now let us note that this is not only a future prospect. We could get excited about our visions and our dreams, our illusions - as they might be. We could have these wonderful ideas and conceptions, simply because they constitute the Christian faith. Christians believe such things as these. These are the things which go to make up what is called the religion of Christianity. But it is not just that. Oh, no: Christianity is, being different from all other religions, subject to experiment. It allows of being put to the test, and it stands up to the test and bears present evidence of its full reality. The hopes and expectations and anticipations of Christians are not just and only lying in the future. In the day in which you and I become, or in which any man or woman becomes, joined to the Lord, in a definite act, there is instantly an evidence of the ultimate glory.

Your experience and history may bear that out - so much so, that you find yourself looking back to those days, to the beginning, almost with longing eyes, with a wistful heart. There are people who sing, and who sing quite in accordance with their spirit:

"Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view

Of Jesus and His Word?"

"Return, O holy Dove, return

Sweet messenger of rest!"

They go on,

"The dearest idol I have known,

Whate'er that idol be,

Help me to tear it from Thy throne,

And worship only Thee."

Yes, many have come to have to sing like that; but whether you sing like that or not, whether that is true or not - and it ought not to be true of Christians - there is always a looking back to those first days. For many of us it is like that. I remember so clearly my own first days and months, when the Lord got a full, clear, free way in my heart and life; they were wonderful. Not that they have not been wonderful since! But what happened? Why, we just had a taste of the glory! The evidence was born there and then that we were made for glory: our coming into the new creation in Christ Jesus is at once sealed and stamped with the

destiny of the new creation - glory. God's new beginnings are always with glory.

But this is not only at the beginning - it happens repeatedly in the course of the Christian life. Sadly enough, we do not just go straight on without some tumbles, falls, blunders, sinning, slipping up, making grievous and sad mistakes in our Christian life, and when we do it the enemy is not slow to rush in and seek to put us right out altogether. We begin to feel very sad and very sorry for ourselves, and down we go; our spirits droop, and we get locked up with this thing. The glory has gone, and we think it is never going to come back again. But then somehow the Lord says something to us, He speaks to us again His word of reassurance, and the thing is put right; we lay hold in faith again, and the glory comes back. The Lord has not forsaken us, the destiny is not lost - it comes back again.

We go away from the Lord and we are miserable. There is no glory in being away from the Lord. You can see the difference between people when they were going on with the Lord and what they are now. But come back and you find glory is waiting. It is the experience again and again in our lives. The glory is waiting: we were made for it: our union with Christ is the assurance of it. Our drifting from Christ suspends the glory: we come back and it is there again. Get a controversy with the Lord, or let the Lord have a controversy with you - something about which the Lord has spoken, something that He has indicated as not according to His mind, or perhaps some experience, trial, difficulty, through which He allows us to pass - and we become bitter, sour, grieved; we allow ourselves to be gripped in the cold hand of that grievance with the Lord, and the glory all goes. But when we come back and put right the thing that the Lord has required, or return to the Lord and hand over the grievance, and say, "Well, this is only ruining the whole of my life, spoiling everything; it must not remain I am going on with the Lord whatever it costs" - the glory comes back.

This glorification at the end is no fiction and it is no mere future expectation. It is a thing to which the Holy Spirit is witnessing all the way along. And may that not be one of the reasons why He brings about these crises in our lives - so that we shall not take too much for granted, that there shall be something continuously or repeatedly wonderful in our union with Christ? But what is the real purpose of these crises? Why does the Lord bring these crises in our lives? When we come up against things or are taken through difficult experiences and the necessity arises for some fresh adjustment, some fresh letting go, what is it all about? Well, you see, it all amounts to just this - making more room for the Lord Jesus because it is Christ who is the ground of glory: God's appointment is with His Son. Away from His Son it is disappointment: but when the Son gets a fuller place, a larger place, in us - perhaps through a crisis, through a battle, a re-adjustment - when He gets a fuller place there is still more ground for the glory of God. It is Christ in us who is the hope of glory; it is Christ in us who is the ground of glory. It is, in other words, our union with Christ that is to issue in glory, and as that union becomes deeper, stronger, fuller, more settled, so the ground for glory increases. We seem, as we go on in the Christian life, to have deeper crises all the way along. Somehow or other we come to the place where we think we have touched bottom, we can never go deeper; then we do get taken into something deeper, and the situation seems more hopeless than ever; but the Lord brings us through, and there is more life than ever, more of the Lord than ever, more glory than ever. Well, the word in the New Testament is: "the Spirit of glory resteth upon you" (1 Pet. 4:14). The way to glory is the suffering: as it was with the Head, so it must be with the members; as it was with the Master, so it must be with the servant; as with Him, so with us. It is the suffering and the glory - that is the way.

I will close there. It is the glorious end that is in view, and the end, let me repeat, can be put to the test now. You will perhaps remember my saying on former occasions that with me the matter of the Lord's

coming does not rest and remain just as a matter of prophecy. I do not find a very great deal of exhilaration and inspiration in studying prophecy about the coming of the Lord. That is all right - do not misunderstand me! If you like to study prophecy, study it; but it does not always result in glory. But I do find this, that when we sing about the Lord's coming, it is not just the effervescence and enthusiasm of a few people singing. Something extra seems to come in, and that something extra is the Spirit of glory: because the Holy Spirit is not past, present and future - the Holy Spirit is timeless. The Holy Spirit is eternally - now - eternity in any one minute. With the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Lord Jesus is as though it were now. Speak of the coming, and the Holy Spirit says, "Yes, here is the evidence of it!" He gives it in the midst of the saints, and something of the glory is there when you sing about the coming of the Lord. It is not just a reminder that things are going to be better in the future. It is a touch and a taste of that future coming into the "now." That is a good note on which to close: a note of the present reality of these things, all put to the test and experienced now, because the glory is not only future. We have the Spirit of glory resting upon us now, to attest the end all along the way. May the Lord keep us Christians like that, living in the spiritual good of our faith; not upon doctrine alone, not upon truths, but in the reality of those things in the Holy Spirit now.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/consummated-union/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net