

Gods Order in Christ - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the solution to the problem of sin and division, bringing about unity and oneness between heaven and earth and between people out of every nation.

Duration: 51:29

Scripture: Isaiah 14:12, John 3:14, John 8:28, John 12:32, Revelation 7:9-10, Revelation 14:3

Topics: "Order In Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the immense power of evil forces in the world and how they laugh at human efforts to undo their work. He highlights the futility of trying to repair the damage caused by sin and the downfall of leaders and nations before this force. However, the speaker also points out that there is one thing that can overcome this power, and that is the cross of the Lord Jesus. He refers to the conflict between heaven and earth that arose with sin and the discordant note that disrupted the harmony. The speaker suggests that this discordant note can be found in the prophecies of Isaiah, specifically in chapter 14. He also mentions the story of Job and how his attempts to justify himself and find fellowship with others failed until the Lord intervened and reminded him of the harmony that existed before sin entered the world.

Transcript

In the Gospel by John, the Gospel by John in chapter 3 at verse 14, And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. Chapter 8 verse 28, Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then ye shall know that I am he. Chapter 12 verse 32, And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.

When we think of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we naturally and rightly associate with it the whole matter of sin. Rightly because the scriptures say so much about his bearing of our sin in his body on the tree. But there are very many aspects of sin set before us in the word of God.

Sin is said to be many things. Our sin has many forms. It covers a lot of ground.

It relates to quite a lot of matters. It has quite a lot of different effects. But there is one thing about every aspect of sin which they all have in common, as to sin's nature and sin's effect.

That common element or factor in all forms of sin is its disruptive effect, its divisive effect. It is divergent. It breaks up the unity of life.

Every form of sin does that. Sin, however it is expressed, works out that way. In the Bible, sin is regarded as spiritual disease.

We know that the great, perhaps the chief, illustration of sin in the Bible is leprosy. And we know that the effect of leprosy is to disintegrate the body, to completely break down its unity, destroy its integration. And that is what God thinks about sin.

Having chosen that as the chief illustration of sin in its effect, he has put his finger upon that deepest and that universal element in sin. And that shows to us, surely, very possibly, very clearly, what a terrible thing in the sight of God. Divisiveness, disruption, disunity, disintegration really is.

How contrary to the divine nature, how abhorrent it is to the divine nature. We have vivid pictures of the leper in the Bible, how the leper had to be put outside altogether. And if ever coming into proximity to other people, the leper had to cover his mouth with a linen cloth and go on his way crying in his hollow voice, unclean, unclean, unclean.

God laid hold of that as the great symbol of sin and sin's effect. To disintegrate the individual affected and to disintegrate the society to which he belonged. Break up fellowship, break up relationship.

We'd have no more terrible picture, perhaps, of God's thought about divisiveness, the effect of sin. Well, that is the setting, you see, of the cross. Here we have Jesus saying that the effect of his being lifted up, that is of his cross, would be to bring together, will draw all men unto myself.

The cross would destroy that factor in sin which scatters and divides and breaks out and counter it and reverse the process and reunite. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself. Cross would do that because it would deal with the disease that disintegrates, the sin which divides.

Now, that statement I've made is a very, very great, a very strong statement, a very terrible statement. I have spoken like that because you know, dear friends, we, we treat this matter far too lightly. Oh, if I were to speak about sin, sin, and speak on and on about sin, of course you would all thoroughly agree with me and say, oh, let us get as far away from that as we can.

Let us do everything possible to get rid of that sin. Who wants to have to do with sin? Who wants sin? We would all say no. Why do you use the word sin? But God calls division that.

And are you quite sure that we are as desperate about this matter of division as we are about what we call sin? Are we taking that as seriously as we do what we would call sin? If we mention some things that are called sin, we read the headlines of our papers and, and we won't read any further because there's something in us that revolts against what's there, that the world calls sin even. We feel that we are touched with uncleanness. We, we don't want that.

We are only too sorry that it's brought out like that, that it fills our papers, that people want that sort of stuff. We hate it. We loathe it.

But God says, the common, the common factor in sin in all its forms is this. It separates. It divides.

It breaks up. It breaks down. It disintegrates.

And it's the effect that God hates. He hates so much. We shall see why in a moment.

Why it is like that. But there it is. Coming back to the cross of the Lord Jesus, there's one word that we always associate with the cross and his walk in the cross, and that word is atonement.

We make his atoning work a fundamental of the Christian faith. We say that it is one of the main planks in the platform of Christian truth. His atoning death.

Can't make too much of that. But what do we mean? What do we mean? Well, I suppose we mean that he atoned for man's sin. That would be quite true and right.

But dear friends, that is only a very small part of the meaning. The word itself, the word itself gives us the full meaning. Atonement at one meant.

At one meant. Set at one. Atoned for sin.

Thank God for that. That our sin has been atoned for. We haven't got to atone for our sin.

That's very blessed, very precious. We'll cling to that. But that may just take us so far.

Just take us so far. And put us in a certain position that we call justification. Righteousness by faith.

But atonement means more than that. It means that this common universal factor of separation in all its directions and aspects has been dealt with in the cross. And that the universal effect of the cross is setting at one.

Making at one meant. The cross is therefore the great reuniting or uniting power of God. And not to recognize that, and certainly to violate that, is to render the whole meaning of Calvary in vain.

That's a terrible thing, isn't it? That's a terrible thing. In God's sight, that is what disunity means. What divisiveness means.

Making the cross of our Lord Jesus of none effect. If it is true, and it's his own word, his own word, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself. If that is true.

If we haven't found our focus and our unity in Christ, the cross has not done its work. Not done its work. The cross, we have said, is therefore the great power of unification.

No, this brings us back to all that has occupied us in these gatherings. One great thing that has been the fruit of sin in this universe, which has polluted, corrupted, and defiled this whole universe. That disintegrating work of the evil power and powers from the beginning.

Causing that this has become a universe shot through and through with conflict and strife, division, and all that belongs to that. A disintegrated and shattered creation, which with every attempt of man through the ages can never, never be repaired. All men's greatest efforts, institutions, and organizations to counter that become perfectly laughable.

A united nations. What a misnomer. A united nations, the charter of which is for the protection of weak peoples.

Today, Tibet, making the united nations charter a laughing stock. Just as the old league of nations was. I am not touching politics, I am only illustrating.

Men's greatest, yes, best meant institutions and organizations, they just become laughable in the end in the face of this immense power in this universe of disintegration. Forces of evil laugh at everything that is done to undo their nature and their work. That came in at the beginning, and it has grown and become universal, and today, more than ever, in spite of every effort, men are finding that it's a hopeless thing to try to repair this damage.

One after another, leader and country goes down before this force. Broken. Broken.

It's too great. There is only one thing that can meet it and solve it, and does, can and does, though it gets a chance, and that is the cross of the Lord Jesus. The first great schism which came in with that sin was between heaven and earth.

Heaven and earth became not only closed to one another, but in conflict with one another. No, no way through. No way through for men.

No way through. Heaven is closed for men, by nature. No correspondence, no fellowship, no communication, no open way from earth to heaven until the cross comes in.

And with the Lord Jesus lifted up, the link is made again to a man whose name was Nathaniel. He said, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile, more actually, behold an Israelite in whom there's no guile. You remember? You remember Jacob? And then he went on to Nathaniel.

Thou shalt afterward see the heavens open, and the angels of God are ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Exactly the same title you see, he uses of himself, the Son of Man be lifted up, that Jacob has been dealt with. The supplanter, the trickster, the man who broke up the family, the man whose presence wherever it was was a disintegrating factor.

Couldn't get on with anybody. Nobody could get on with him. He was that in the world while he was Jacob.

Always a disturber. Restless, dissatisfied, selfish, cunning. Jacob is dealt with.

Dealt with. The Israel appears. The vision or the dream that he had is now possible of realization.

Heaven can come down to him, and bless him, and take him on his way, and fulfill all the promise and covenant he's come at length to know the meaning of communication between heaven and earth. The ladder set up. Now Jesus took that right over to himself and said to Nathanael, day is coming, Nathanael, when you, true Israelite, will come into all that, you will see the heavens open, and you will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Only a figurative way of speaking and saying, day is coming, Nathanael, when this closed way between heaven and earth will be opened again. When this great scissor and conflict between heaven and earth will have been healed, and they will be united by the Son of Man. I, if I be lifted up, for all men unto me, the heaven is open for all men again.

The division has gone. The sin has been dealt with. That marvelous effect, that terrible effect of sin in separating heaven and earth and closing each to the other, is remedied in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

I need not remind you that in the Bible, again and again, we come upon a closed heaven. Closed heaven. You only have to lift out one of those many occasions in the life of Elijah, because of Israel's sin.

Sin. Elijah said to Ahab, there shall not be rain on the earth, but according to my word, and the heavens were closed. Read the story, and it's a very terrible story.

Of that closed heaven, that withheld blessing, that no communication, terrible story. See, a closed heaven, whether it was literal in the Old Testament or spiritual, is always the mark of judgment for sin. The division between heaven and earth.

A judgment for sin. The cross of the Lord Jesus sees that judgment taken on himself, and heaven and earth united again. And while that is a very wonderful statement of truth, you and I here tonight, I take it more than ninety percent of this company, knows in experience how true that is.

What is our very first consciousness when we receive the Lord Jesus into our lives, into our hearts? Heaven is not so far away as we thought it was. Heaven is not closed as we knew it was. Put it as you like.

Heaven's open. Heaven's open. It's the experience of every truly, newly born again child of God.

Heaven has come down their soul to greet. It's an open heaven. Sin which separated these has been dealt with, and the at-one-ment between heaven and earth has been made.

But not only so, an at-one-ment between man and man, we have seen earlier how with the coming in of sin, man was set against man. Started in the family, and spread and spread. This schism, this strife, spread until it became universal.

Man against man in his heart. Jealousy. Envy.

Covetousness. Pride. Oh, the unholy brood of this sin.

Divisiveness. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself. Heal that between man and man.

Bring man and men together again. We have already, last night, referred to it, but it will bear another reference. You remember the words of the Lord to Job? And Job had exhausted all that he could say, trying to justify himself, put himself right with God and men.

The whole thing had collapsed, broken down. Wasn't getting very far with that. Between himself and the other men, there was no healing, no fellowship.

Every effort to get fellowship, to get right, to get a ground of oneness failed. They've all been trying it. All these men, for all these perhaps weeks or months, they've been trying to find a common ground on which they'd all agree, and it's all failed.

And when they've all failed, and they've all come to the last word that they can say, the Lord steps in. The Lord says to Job, who is this, the darkness counseled with words without knowledge, where were you when I laid the foundation of the world? The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. What a picture, what a description.

Before all this came in, all this Job, and you've been trying to get over, it was a state of beautiful harmony. The morning stars were singing, singing in glee, singing whether in unison or harmony, they were singing.

There was no discordant note, no discordant note then.

It was a unity of song. It's how it was before. From there we leaped to Revelation chapter seven.

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man can number. Let's get it correct, and trust this old memory. Now, here it is, which no man could number out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands, and they cry with a great voice, saying, salvation unto our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Here's at the end, as at the beginning, a great song, whether in unison or harmony, it doesn't matter. There is no discordant note. That's gone.

That strange note that came in, and spoiled the harmony of the creation, and of men's relationships, that has been eliminated, and things are now as they were, perhaps better than they were before all this came in. Now, here we have the two songs. The song of a creation in harmony, without sin, and therefore without any division or discord.

The song of redemption, with no strange note in it, all singing together, all singing together. Why? Because the focal point is the Lamb, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men out of every nation, and tribe, and town. But what was the discordant note? If we can just put our finger upon that, we've got the heart of the whole matter.

If we can just see what that foreign, that strange note was that came in. As the divine octave was being played, suddenly another sound came in that did not belong to it at all, and threw it all out. Threw it all out, and spoiled the whole thing.

What was it? We can put our finger upon that note. It's described for us. I'll give it to you.

It's in the prophecies of Isaiah, and in chapter 14. This is it. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, day star, sun of the morning, sun of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the nations, thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven.

I will also exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit upon the mount of congregation in the uttermost part of the earth. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.

I will be like the most high. What's the discausant note? Spirit? Once, twice, thrice, I will. I will.

Heart of it all. The heart of it all. I will.

As over against the will of God. That always does the mischief. That always lies behind division, schism.

Somewhere, somehow, if only we could probe to the heart of the root of anything like that, we'd find something like that. I. I. To that, it's traced. The whole bible shows that.

But dear friends, this is the wonderful thing. That over against that I will, I will, thou saidest I. We have the cross, and we have the wonderful description of the one who went to the cross, being equal with God. He thought it not something to be grasped, to be on equality with God, but emptied himself and ultimately became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

And as he came to it, in the dark night before, in the garden, he said, not my will, not my will, but thine be done. Thou saidest I will, he said, not my will. Cross of the Lord Jesus was just, shall we say, not only the elimination, the annihilation of that strange note, bringing all the discord in every relationship.

I. I. That was slain in the cross, in the person of the Lord Jesus. Get that out? Oh, if we could get it out of ourselves and out of everybody, why, the song would start right away. We know, we go about this world, we go into all the nations, and when we meet the children of God, of any and every nation, or town, or people, children of God, we all sing the same song.

We've got something that finds us in tune with one another. Mark you, while we keep on the ground of the cross. We get on some other ground, we find that that's spoiled.

But while we keep on the ground of Christ, together, have a wonderful fellowship. It's proved, it's proved. Not only have we the proof that the great schism between heaven and earth has been bridged or closed, when we come to the Lord Jesus, we know that we have the opened heaven.

But as we move about the world, we know that the effect of the cross is to have created a marvelous oneness between men out of every nation. Try it without the cross and see what you can do with it. Oh, governments have tried it with armies.

Today we are smarting and stinging the awful shame and reproach, the breakdown of trying to overcome some animosity by force. You cannot legislate this thing out of God's universe, and you cannot drive it out by force. You only deepen the malice, and strengthen the hatred, and make it of still longer duration.

Those wounds last a long time. They've tried that all through the centuries. It doesn't work.

But take the cross of the Lord Jesus in hand. It works. Fundamentally, basically, there's something that all believers have in common, which makes them one, keeping on that ground.

It's true, isn't it? Well, this is elementary, I know. But this is what he meant. If I be lifted up, I will draw.

I will draw. I will not alienate. I will not scatter.

I will not divide. I will draw all men unto myself. There is, after all, a magnetism in the cross of the Lord Jesus, isn't there? What I have been saying, of course, carries with it a big challenge to the self-life, doesn't it? The self-life, which lies behind our divisions.

And oh, do take this to heart, dear friends. You and I, will you tonight covenant with the Lord in this place? You and I have got to set ourselves to fight this battle of oneness. We have got to set ourselves, that by the grace and help of God, we will leave nothing unturned, to give to the cross.

Christ crucified his rights in this, in overcoming divisions where we find them, between ourselves and others. It's got to be the desperate battle, for it is a desperate battle. But the cross can win in this, if only it does its work in us.

If only that I thing in us. So deceptive. So deceptive.

Of course, it's the other person always that's wrong. We are always right. And that's just where the I has its greatest strength.

We would get down and say, very lightly, I am, after all, the responsible one. At least open the way for such conviction. If all that I have said tonight is true of God's attitude and God's interpretation of sin, if this is true, it's a very terrible thing, isn't it? But it's a very great thing that the cross means.

And if we are going to be really companions of the cross of our Lord Jesus, we've got to give ourselves to this, that by his help, we will not countenance any kind of division, except the division between what is of God and what is of the devil. I will draw. The cross has an appeal, hasn't it? Because, you see, the cross is the great revelation of divine mercy.

And all men need that. And most men know their need of it. If we can only present the cross right to them, it will make its appeal.

All men need and know that they need the mercy of God. Let us present Christ crucified as the great revelation of divine mercy, divine grace. And it will draw.

It will draw. It is the great revelation that God is not against men, but toward men, for men. Proof that God wants men.

He's not against men. And is not this a universal need of which most men are conscious? Oh, to really know and to be able to believe that God is for us. God's on our side.

God is not against us. The devil's first insinuation in the garden was that God was not really for the man. He was really not for him.

In forbidding him to do this, he was really against his height. It's an awful insinuation. And you notice the effect of many of this world's strongest religions is to put men in fear and dread of God.

They're always trying in some way by some means to get even with God, to overcome that something about God that's against them. Appeasement. Appeasement.

That's the word in that whole awful realm. Appeasing God somehow. A God to be appeased.

Oh no. We've got a better gospel than that. This is not a God.

Our God has not got to be appeased. He's for men. He's toward men.

He has demonstrated it in the cross. His arms are stretched out wide toward men. His great word through those human lips is come unto me.

The cross is the great revelation of the fact that God has taken responsibility for us. For us, Him, and for everything. He had to do that.

It's a deep, deep wonder about the cross to know God decided to make man. He took tremendous risk because to have man according to his own will and mind, he had to give him a free will. Man should never be forced or coerced or made to go one way like a machine that man could choose.

All the greatest things for God lie in the direction of man choosing, willing, desiring, preferring. So God took the risk of giving him a free will, knowing exactly how it might work out. Shall we say how it would work out? But seeing all the terrible consequences of the responsibility that he himself took in so creating man, the lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

The cross is not an afterthought, it's an eternal provision in the mind of God. Something right back there, before man sinned, that when man misused his great trust, and it would lead to all this, the remedy was on hand from eternity. The cross is the great proof that God has taken responsibility, not only for creating man, but for all the results of his so creating man.

That's good, you know, of course that's theology, but it's good gospel. Aren't you glad that the Lord himself has taken responsibility for you, for your sin and for your make-up? Only you come to the cross of the Lord Jesus, that's where you'll meet God taking over responsibility for you. I think that's grand, a provision that we may have the answer of a good conscience.

Isn't that tremendous, a good conscience toward God? The Bible says good conscience, the answer of a good conscience toward God. What a lot men do to get that. See, the whole Roman Catholic system is built upon that.

The priest will be your conscience, you need not worry, he'll be your conscience. Just divest yourself of any concern at all, you need not have it, the priest will be responsible, but it doesn't, just doesn't do it, does it? Just doesn't do it, but it's something false. And the tremendous, tremendous success of that system, its sweep over the earth, is because men everywhere want a good conscience and want someone to take responsibility for their consciences, and clear them of a guilty conscience.

That's all a travesty, the truth is that at Calvary, in Christ, God took responsibility for everything for us, and it's there that we find the ground of a good conscience toward God. It's a tremendous thing, the Apostle speaks of, no more consciousness of sin. Using that word consciousness in this sense, no more evil conscience.

Wonderful, the cross is just that, and so we could go on, but dear friends, all this is gathered into the one unity with God, fellowship with God, and the fellowship established between God and us, and between us and God, is to spread and spread through the family, through all our relationships, just as the opposite spread at the beginning. The disintegration started with one and spread and grew and grew and grew. The cross reverses it, and puts it right in the individual, and then expects that the cross will mean that it expands to all relationships.

If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. Oh, how imperfectly I tried to present this, and I do trust that through so many words, so many words and impossible explanations, you'll catch a glimpse of the great meaning of the cross, and what it involves us in, this matter of giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all. Amen.

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