

Gods Order in Christ - Part 9

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's order in Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit in establishing this order, and the significance of the church as the vessel of God's order.

Duration: 44:43

Scripture: Numbers 10:9, Psalm 27:4, Isaiah 14:13

Topics: "Order In Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and abiding in the word of God. They highlight the battle between life and death and the need for spiritual togetherness among believers. The speaker discusses the disruption of God's heavenly order by Satan and the importance of humility in restoring that order. They also emphasize the role of the church in representing and depositing the work of Christ. The sermon concludes with a challenge to individuals to consider the practical and challenging nature of being a true representation of the church.

Transcript

Our dear friends, as we come to the end of these days together, in which very much has been said, it is my desire and concern that everything shall be brought into some very practical issues. I think all that we have been saying has its very practical meaning. What I mean is to have before us one or two quite concrete issues from it all.

I do not propose to give another discourse, but to try to gather things up in this way that we are faced with these concrete issues from the whole message. We have been ranging great distances of divine truth and purpose. We have been occupied with one particular matter, that of God having from eternity a condition realized in an ordered way, the perfect expression of a heavenly order, which was instituted and carried so far at the beginning of history, and then was broken into and upset by one with a great following who revolted against what God had purposed concerning his son, and in a vaunting pride sought to displace God's son and to supplant him, take himself that place, exalting himself, saying, I will ascend, I will be equal with the most high, pride found in his heart.

If we had pursued the course that we were following this morning and this afternoon, the things which brought the disruption and therefore their opposites to recover the order, the next would have been humility as over against pride, for there is nothing more disruptive in God's universe as it has proved than pride. It was pride which said, I will, and which in so saying meant, I can, and I ought. Well, we know

something about that.

That brought in this terrible history of disruption. The son of God in his cross reversed that completely in humbling himself, becoming not master, but servant, emptied himself. Well, that is an indication which we shall not follow further this evening, but it has to do with this terrible state of things which has come in.

Disorder, derangement, conflict and confusion, and how God's son, who was the heir of all things appointed by God before the world was, himself came and took up the challenge, both of that disputer of his rights and the state of things resultant from that rebellion. Took it up and in his cross fought through to victory, to secure in himself and by his cross ultimately the realization of God's purpose in an ordered universe. That is what we have seen, that God is a God of order and that all his purposes and ends can only be reached and realized along the line of heavenly order in expression.

Now we have therefore seen what the significance and meaning of Christ personally as Christ and his work relate to. They just relate to this matter which had its culmination in the cross and its victory. This matter of again making way for that heavenly order to be re-established and let it impress us sufficiently again.

It is concerning that that the Holy Spirit is here. His mission on this earth is to work out all that Christ did in his cross and that comprehensively relates to getting a divine order. No life under the government of the Holy Spirit will be a disorderly life.

No company of the Lord's people under the government of the Holy Spirit will be a disorderly company. No department of life under the Holy Spirit's government will be other than an ordered thing, growingly an expression of a heavenly order. The Holy Spirit is committed to that and he is the custodian of it and the New Testament is a marvellous revelation of that one thing, where in the New Testament you have the divine order developing under the government of the Holy Spirit.

You find a wonderful spontaneous and organic development and progress. Those first days, months and years of the dispensation of the Spirit which we read in the book of the Acts were a time of wonderful spontaneous growth, development, progress, fruitfulness and we see a wonderful system at work. The Holy Spirit, the master strategist, his way of making contacts just at the right moment.

Oh, it's a wonderful story of a heavenly order in operation under the hand of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament shows that. But it also shows that where that order was interrupted or interfered with, trouble at once arose, unrest, progress ceased and everything was in suspense.

So it was at Corinth for a time. You see it both ways. And that is of tremendous importance to you and to me and to all of us, dear friends, to recognize that, that our own personal spiritual progress, development, attainment of the divine purpose in our lives means that we are to be fitted into the divine.

Order like wheels in a machine or members of functions in a body. This will not happen willy-nilly on the one hand and it will not happen unrelayed on the other. We have got to come into a great heavenly system of things and be a part of a whole and not just bits in ourselves, independent, freelancers, a law unto ourselves, but a part of a systematic whole under the government of the Holy Spirit.

That is the only way to keep on growing, keep on growing, to go on and on and on. There are many things that start and stop. Go individuals, just go so far, go further.

There are many ministries, just get so far and stop. There are many servants of God, start all right and stop, because in the main they are unrelated, they just become at a point misfits, they are not in a pattern, a great divine pattern in which all the parts are really, vitally, and let me say consciously related in a very real sense. Now that is exactly what Christ fought through in his cross.

This whole disintegrated, broken up system of things to secure a new creation in himself in which a divine order would be expressed. And it is therefore not a far cry from Calvary to Pentecost or from the cross to the church. The cross is accomplished and it has accomplished that in essence, actually and potentially accomplished that.

And it is almost as though, indeed it was, as though there were a vessel already prepared and waiting in the councils of God to receive the deposit of Christ's work in the cross. The church spontaneously comes in when Calvary's issues are settled in Christ. I say it is as though this vessel to receive the deposit of the meanings of the cross were waiting, waiting tensely for the moment of its birth.

Do remember that the church is not a New Testament idea. The church is an eternal idea. It is only born in time, it was not conceived in time.

We, that we of the apostle, that we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we as the church, God conceived that vessel long before Calvary became an actual necessity. But in his foreknowledge, he conceived the vessel in which he would deposit all the values of Calvary and develop them corporately and universally so that the church is the eternally foreknown and forechosen elect, elect vessel in which this new heavenly order recovered should be deposited and developed until at last all that was true of Christ would be manifested in his church in fullness and by the church, the church in that union with Christ as body to head. Will this tremendous work of the evil one and the evil powers be shown to have been destroyed? He is working in the church, that is in you and in me and all who are baptized into one body by one spirit.

He is working in us to displace the disorder that Satan has brought in and to establish a heavenly order in us individually and collectively. That's the meaning of the Holy Spirit's activities in our lives. Making effective the cross on both its sides, destroying the works of the devil and establishing the works of God.

So I say the vessel seems to be there just waiting to be born. When Christ has been glorified, the Holy Spirit came and it was so spontaneous. So spontaneous they did not have a great organization to bring a church into being.

They did not do anything at all to say now we must make a church. It came in like that spontaneously as though it was just waiting for the moment of its birth. For the simple reason that Christ in his accomplished work and the church are identical in the purpose of God.

They are part and counterpart. But what is this church? Here we've got to be very practical. Of course I have used the word in its universal sense and its divine conception as a whole.

Not the church which we are familiar on this earth. It is that church in the thought of God, in the mind of God. What is intended to be wherever God can have it on this earth.

And aren't you, this is the test of the word itself, of the title. The test of the right to use it, to apply it. Is the work of the cross there manifested in a heavenly order? A spiritual order? Is that there? That is the only justification for using the word in its New Testament meaning, the church.

Now we have seen that when Satan struck his blow at God's order, the first result and effect was to get man out of his divine environment. God was his environment. He lived in God.

God inspired him. He lived and moved and had his being God in a very, very real way. God was his environment and environment is a lot, isn't it? You and I know that quite well.

We know it. How often we say, oh do let me get out of this. Meaning something in which we can't live, we cannot breathe.

This is not our life, let me get out. And then on the other hand, let me get. And we know where we want to get.

That's our life. Now God is the environment of his own people. But the effect of Satan's work was to take man out of that divine environment.

Put him outside of it. And outside of that environment, he had no protection. He had no protection.

He was uncovered. Uncovered. And it's proved to be a very, very terrible thing to be without divine covering.

Without divine encompassing and overshadowing. To be open, to be exposed without God. That, dear friends, had its culmination in the cross.

That is exactly at the heart of that terrible cry from the cross. My God, why hast thou forsaken me? It was in the consciousness of his naked soul. The covering of God had gone from him.

You've got to taste a little of that to know what it means. It's a terrible thing not to be able to find God when you need him most. To find that he's gone.

He's not there. You don't know where he is. He's just not available.

A terrible thing. That is exactly what happened at the beginning. Man lost his God and lost his covering, his environment of God.

And the Lord Jesus tasted the full meaning of that. For no man has ever yet tasted it. And thank God, by his grace, it is not necessary for any man to taste it.

That forsakenness. Because Christ did it for us. But that is the awful thing that happened.

See, he entered into the full consequences and meaning of what happened at the beginning when Satan pulled man out of his divine environment. Robbed him of his covering. Now Christ took that up.

And he plumbed the depth of that. And swallowed that up in his cross. For every man.

And in so doing, restores that environment to man. The work of Christ is to bring man back into God. Into God.

His old home. His own place. His right environment.

When man gets there, he knows he's home. Once he gets there, he knows that's his place. It's coming home.

Man's soul says this is home. It's true. Christ, in his work and in his person, accomplished that.

Restoring. Bringing back into God. That which had lost God.

That's all the teaching of Christ, isn't it? In parable and other ways. But we have said that what Christ did himself in the cross is to be deposited in the church. And the church, as we know, has got to be in representation.

Everywhere on this earth. The churches are following a divine plan, a divine order. In the divine order it is necessary to have them.

They must be. Church is not just one general thing. Abstract.

It's here. And there. And there.

So far as this company is concerned, it's Richmond, and Deal, and Sandown, and Glasgow, and how many other places. It's a very practical thing, this matter of the church. A very practical thing.

Very real thing. What we have in the book of Numbers is the arranging of the whole nation into tribes. And putting them in their place for their inheritance.

And that is just what the book of the Acts is. The arranging of this new nation in its locations. Orders in location.

Churches. And this first thing has got to be true. If the local company, and shall I say to say that if you are not really in the good of a nucleus of Christ in any place, you are missing the way to spiritual fullness.

It's essential to you. You are just a lord to yourself, an individual, a freelance, either in Christian life or in Christian work and ministry. Unrelated.

On Christ ground and church ground. You just go so far, and I say again, you may be a misfit. Jumping from one thing to another.

But never fitting into a whole pattern of God. We'll leave that. This first thing has got to be true of every representation of the church, wherever it is.

That it is the divine environment for its members. In other words, it is there that the Lord's children have got to find their divine encompassment. It is there that they have got to find their divine covering.

You and I need covering. There are forces of evil in this universe who are trying all the time to pull us out of our covering. And once getting us out, what havoc they will make of us.

He can break up this oneness, this fellowship, this spiritual association in any one place. He'll make awful mischief of it and bring terrible dishonor upon the Lord's name by what he does in those responsible. This is a most solemn word, dear friends.

We need the church for our safety. We need the encompassing of the Lord's people for our very life. We need it for our physical well-being.

Because our physical well-being is so largely bound up with spiritual matters. That is taught in the word so clearly. The enemy can strike at our bodies if we get out of cover.

We can bring that on ourselves if we forsake that provided encompassment of the body of Christ, of the church, of the Lord's people. All this in the Old Testament about the house of God and about dwelling in the house of God and longing for the house of God has its deep, deep eternal meaning. That it's there that you find your safety.

There that you find your covering. Oh, how I could spend all my time on that. It is a very solemn matter.

The first thing that Christ has done by his cross is to have recovered this divine environment and then he deposits it in the church. It's a dangerous thing to break away from a God-established order of that kind corporately. We've seen havoc along those lines.

Now this is immensely practical. It works, of course, both ways. It's got to be viewed from both sides.

Those of you who are of a local company and especially those of you who have responsibility in such a company, you must remember this. The very first thing that that company exists for is to provide covering and protection for the children of God. To compass them about.

If I understand such things as James 5 about the anointing of the sick, it's just in line with this. It's just in line with this. It is somebody has become exposed and smitten.

And the elders, as the church, representing the church, close round, bring that one back under the divine covering where there is life. See, principles are everywhere. It is tremendously important.

And we recognize this. It works then that way. To get out and to be alone and to be apart means loss at least.

It may mean much worse. And the worst, of course, is for those who know the truth and who have tasted of this and then who violate the principles of the body of Christ. The worst is for them.

It's a terrible thing. That contains the second thing. That when man was drawn out of his environment, allowed himself to be drawn out, responded to that which drew him out and lost it.

He lost the greatest thing that God ever intended man to have. And that was incorruptible life. The life that could not see death.

He lost it. It doesn't need a lot of time or many words to show that that's a thing that Christ dealt with in his cross. We could in one sense say that the whole meaning of Christ's work in life and in death was to recover this lost eternal life.

Isn't that how John winds up his gospel? There he says that everything that Christ said and did and if it were all written, the world would not contain the books, had one object. That believing, believing in him, you might have eternal life. Might have eternal life.

Eternal life. That is, life that cannot die, cannot see death, cannot be touched with death. Incorruptible life.

Life that defies death, conquers death, goes on through death. That life. Christ fought out the battle of death and life, and in his resurrection has brought it back.

Begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection, Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible. That faded not away. I am he that liveth.

I became dead, but behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages. Have the keys of death. This whole matter of what man lost with his environment and the garden and the beginning life, the tree of life, is restored, recovered and restored for man in the man by his cross.

But it doesn't end there. The church is waiting as the vessel for that deposit. That in the body as in the head, in the church as in the Christ, this life shall be found.

This reign of life shall be found. And that the Lord's people may find in that relatedness, that fellowship of the Holy Spirit, that corporate unity, they should find their life. That that should be, wherever there is such a representation of Christ in the church, that should be the testimony that Jesus has conquered death.

And it's not a testimony in doctrine and in word, it's a testimony in experience. I said earlier, this is the thing the Holy Spirit is working out in the Christian life. And oh, how real it is.

How sometimes terribly real it is to come through a death experience and to know him and the power of his resurrection. It's very practical that. It's a part, a part, an integral part of the very history of things from the cross to the New Jerusalem.

Life, but note again, it works both ways. Violate this divine order. Do death spite to this vessel, this corporate life.

Do death spite to this vessel, this corporate life. And your life suffers. Your life suffers.

Your life will be affected. Recognize it. Abide in it.

Fall into line with it. Cherish it. Honor it.

You'll find that there is your life. It's very true. There is your life.

You're in a battle with death. You really are in a battle with death. And while this is such profound truth, it's simple.

It's simple. I was told this evening before this meeting that a lot of people have said we came so tired and we're going away so fresh. Well, I don't know whether that's true.

How far that's true, I mean. How far that's true. But it ought to be like that.

It ought to be like that. I mean, the togetherness of the Lord's people ought to be a matter of life to us. Oughtn't it? Really.

Spiritual life. Well, that is the new heavenly order, you see. We ought to stand for that.

Life recovered and deposited in the church and deposited in every representation of the church. When things were upset at the beginning, another thing happened. Man lost the light of the knowledge of God.

The light of the knowledge of God. He made, or he was tempted to make a bid for knowledge, wasn't he? Knowledge. But under Satan's instigation, it proved to be darkness, not light.

The kind of knowledge that man would be well without. Well without. It was disastrous, that bid for knowledge.

The light of the knowledge of God, which is man's very life, was lost. He was blinded and darkened. That's what the Word says about man.

Blinded and darkened and alienated from God. Well, that's true. Heavens were closed.

A brass dome was placed over man's spirit. No communication with heaven. No light shining through.

The Lord Jesus took up that whole matter of darkness in the cross. And it was darkness indeed. The very phenomenon of the darkness for three hours was but a symbolism.

It was but a demonstration in nature of what was true in the spiritual world. Darkness. Darkness.

Christ entered into it. Not only the literal darkness, but the sun's light veiled into that awful darkness. That outer darkness, he went into that and overcame it.

He wrestled with the dark and the darkness of man's state and destroyed that work of the devil. He came out with the cross on the other side. We can see how soon as the Spirit came, a new reign of light began.

Men are seeing. Men are having their spiritual eyes opened everywhere. Marvelous it began in the apostles themselves who had been blind and in the dark.

Bewildered and not understanding at all. Now they are seeing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The sun has risen again for them.

New light. I don't dwell quite a lot on that. But you see how true it was.

But we come to this practical thing. This is another thing that Christ accomplished in his cross to be deposited in the church. It is in the church that we ought to be receiving our enlightenment and our instruction and our knowledge of God.

I don't mean that you can't learn anything with the Lord alone, but the church is in existence by divine appointment with the place of our education. Not only the teaching from the platform. Not only the Bible teaching.

That's not what I'm thinking about only. It is that. But there's much more in spiritual education than that.

And I'm quite sure that there are many here tonight who would agree with me when I say that we've learned more in fellowship than we have learned in any other way. Our spiritual education has been advanced more in our relationships with the people of God. Yes, we do learn a lot of things, don't we? By relatedness.

We learn love. We learn patience and forbearance. All those graces of the Lord Jesus which could never be learned if we lived on an isolated island somewhere just by ourselves.

Here together that we learn Christ and we see the light of the glory of God in his face. It's a place of spiritual education. That's my point.

Of great value in that sense. So we could go on, but we're going to close. Jane, I say this is a very practical thing.

And it's a very challenging thing to us. I'm sure that you'll agree that this is what we need. What do you need? What do we all need? These things.

These are the things that make up life, that mean life. They are. But, sadly enough, this is not true of so many companies who are supposed to be representations of the Church.

Well, you must decide, dear friends, what it means where you are concerned. And you will, I think, in the light of this little that I have said, recognize why it is that Satan is so dead set against the Church and any true representation of the Church. You, of course, meet difficulties as a Christian, just as an individual Christian you meet difficulties.

But you get on the Church ground and then the story begins. The real battle begins then. Oh, if there is one thing that he is against and will do everything either to prevent or to destroy, it is a genuine expression of the heavenly order in a company of people anywhere.

Upset that he will if he can. Breaking upon that he will if it is possible. He will stand at nothing to do it.

Oh, let us be alive to it. Be alive to it. Because of what this means, what it means to God, the realization of all that was ever in his heart, his Church is necessary to that.

Because of what it means to the enemy. Find all his trouble and pains and work spoiled, rendered nil. When, by the grace of God, two disrupted believers come together again, Satan loses heart.

When two groups of Christians who have been divided come together again on the ground of Christ and his cross, it is a tremendous affront to the powers of evil. Lord help us to see. This is very vital.

Send us back with a new incentive and motive. And by his grace, determination, the Lord shall have, so far as we are concerned, individually and as twos or threes or more, a true vessel in which the heavenly order is found, because the cross is truly expressed there.

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