

God's Supreme Interest in Man #1

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the concept of schism and frustration in human nature and the ultimate redemption through Christ.

Duration: 55:16

Scripture: Colossians 3:9

Topics: "Plan Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on five distinct points from the Bible. Firstly, there is a reflection on the Creator and the creation, highlighting how everything was originally good and perfect. However, something disrupted this perfection, leading to frustration and ultimately death. The second point discusses the pattern and purpose of the Creator in creating humans in His image and the need for renewal of that image. The third point addresses the crisis in the lives of Christians, emphasizing the need for a transformative process and putting off the old self. Lastly, the sermon explores the role of the Holy Spirit in the renewal and transformation of believers.

Transcript

Verses 8 to 11, But now put ye away all these anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth, lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doing, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. May I say, dear friends, as we approach the message that is in these words, that my real, very strong concern is that we shall touch reality at this time. That we shall go beyond theory, beyond teaching as such, and meet the Lord at the point of deep reality, where his need in us is really met, our need in him is met.

For we are in times when the build-up of Christian truth, teaching, knowledge is immense, and the corresponding reality in life is by no means commensurate. There is a margin, a gap, between what is known and what is lived. And we want to get into that gap, as the Lord may enable us, and close it up, or let him close it up, so far as we are concerned, at this time.

That truth and life shall come close together, indeed become one. That is the object that is in my heart, at this time, not to say so much more, however true it may be, but really to touch very vital issues. Now, there may be a lot said, but I have one thought and object that is governing everything that will be said.

All will be gathered around just one issue, which I trust will become increasingly clear as we go on. Having said that, let us look at this fragment of the word which we have just read, verses 9 to 11 of the third chapter of the letter to the Colossians. And we will analyze it, break it up, and note the five very distinct points that are touched upon by the Apostle in these words.

First of all, there is a retrospect to the Creator and the created. Being renewed after the image of him that created him, that is a throwback to creation and the creator. Just note it, we are going to take up each of these points separately.

But number one is this retrospective touch upon the beginning of everything in the Creator and the created. The image of him that created. Secondly, the pattern and purpose of the Creator in the creation being renewed after the image of him that created.

The pattern, the image, the purpose for renewal of that image. Thirdly, the real nature and effect of the crisis in the life of Christians. Something has happened in the life of Christians which marks the beginning of a process.

A process indicated by these words, being renewed, made anew, made over again. A crisis in the life of the believer, when something happened, he put off and he put on. That's the nature, the meaning, and the effect of the great crisis in the life of the Christian.

Next, fourth, the occupation and energy of the Holy Spirit. Who is doing this renewing work? Being, being renewed. Well, we are not doing it.

Either for ourselves or for other people. Other people are not doing it for us. This is the occupation and the energy of the Creator Spirit.

He who brooded over the chaos and brought out of the chaos the divine order. The same Spirit now occupied with his own energy in making anew according to the image. Renewing the activity of the Holy Spirit.

And in the fifth place, the exclusiveness and the inclusiveness of Christ. Notice the last statement, where there cannot be. That's the right kind of exclusiveness or exclusivism.

A whole realm, system, and order, and nature is excluded. There cannot be. But the inclusiveness is just Christ.

Christ is all and in all. That's the analysis of these verses. Very simple points.

But how very comprehensive. And how very important. Meaningful.

Well, let us begin to take them up. One at a time. Firstly, then, man and his Creator.

The Creator and the created. Perhaps it would be as well if we arranged several other passages alongside of this one. Going back to the beginning of this same letter.

Chapter 1, verse 16. For in him, in him were all things. All things created.

In the heavens and upon the earth. Things visible and things invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

All things have been created through him and unto him. He is before all things. And in him all things consist.

That in all things he might have the preeminence. Through him to reconcile all things unto himself. The center and circumference of all things is Christ.

The Creator of all things. Then, familiar words in John's Gospel, Chapter 1. Verse 3. All things were made by him. And without him was not anything made that had been made.

John and Paul are one. Perfect agreement on this matter. Who was the originator of all things.

Then to the letter to the Romans, Chapter 11. Always good to have, right to have, an adequate scriptural basis for what we are saying. 11 and verse 36.

For of him and through him and unto him are all things. And one more. First letter to the Corinthians.

Chapter 8 and verse 6. There is one God, the Father. Of whom are all things. And we unto him.

And one Lord, Jesus Christ. Through whom are all things. And we through him.

Well, that establishes this. What we have called the throwback to the Creator and the created. Then we have, of course, in order to come to these words about renewing or making anew or starting again a process of recovery.

We have to contemplate that terrible disintegration of the man to whom these scriptures are referring. Yes, the disruption of human life. The disruption of every member of the human race.

We need not argue, I think, from scripture on this. Because the argument is finished immediately. We consider ourselves a mankind as we know mankind.

We are perhaps more aware today than ever of this disruption, disintegration in human life. But there is a fundamental schism in man and in mankind. And schism, wherever it is found, always means frustration.

Frustration is the evidence of a schism, a divisiveness in human life and in human nature. And we see this, of course, right from the beginning of history as recorded in the Bible. All the way through and coming out in our time in a consummate way.

There is frustration in human life. Continuous frustration. Every new step which is thought to be a step of progress, of advancement, of development, brings with it its own frustration.

No matter how far advanced, how fully developed, how phenomenal the enlargement of knowledge and of ability to do, to achieve. No matter how great, how large, how amazing, the frustration goes with it in the same measure. Until we reach the point in the world's development we have reached in our own time, when discovery, when invention, when the mastery of forces in this universe, and the bringing them into the service of man, terrible and completely amazing.

Never, never have believed it. Only a few years ago. There, right alongside of it, is its own doom.

Its own undoing. And those who know most are most terrified of what they have put their hands upon. The fearful possibilities and potentialities that they wish they'd never discovered.

Never known. Frustration runs hand in hand through history with every fresh development and movement. It's there in human life.

It's in the creation. And it's in the universe as it now is. And God himself has taken pains to bring this out for man's realization.

For instance, the law. As we have it in the Old Testament. As we have invested in a nation, chosen for this very purpose, to be God's object lesson to all the nations, to all the world.

The law. The Apostle Paul puts his finger upon that whole system. Its long history.

Its meticulous application. And he says, the law was given in order to show how impotent man is. If ever there was a thing employed by Almighty God to demonstrate and expose the weakness of man, it was the law.

The law. That's the law of Moses, as it is called. The law of God.

And the Apostle, this same Apostle, who has made such a terrible declaration as to the effect of the law, that it has only brought to light man's weakness, impotence, helplessness. Hasn't done anything to save him. Rather, to condemn him.

That man writes a chapter. A whole chapter. In these terms.

The good that I would. The good that I would. And I would with all my heart.

I do not. I do not. And the evil that I would not.

And with all my heart I would not. I struggle and I strive and I labour and I groan. Not to do these things.

The evil that I would not. That I do. O wretched man that I am.

Who shall deliver me. How did ever I know that the thing was right. That it should be done.

How ever did I discover that the thing is wrong. That I should not do it. The law made me know right and wrong.

And left me paralysed. Utterly incapable of rising to it. Either to say no or to say yes.

O wretched man. Isn't that frustration. And isn't that history up to date.

For that's the law of Moses. You and I dear friends are living. In a time and a world.

When there is not a law of all the multiplications of laws. Which can cope with human nature. As if.

O what a time. Of lawlessness. Which is only another way of saying.

Man's utter inability. To answer to the law. Or shall we put it this way.

The law's utter inability. To cope with man. There is this schism in human nature.

Dividedness. Impersonality. In constitution.

That works out in utter frustration. That's a word today isn't it. Frustration.

My work what about. Is covered by that word today. And how real it is in every realm.

Yes. Personal. As I have just cited Romans 7. I. Wretched man that I am.

What I would do. I don't. What I would not do.

That I do. It's all so personal. This division this schism.

In me. In the personal realm. In society.

I need not dwell upon each of these. Society. What a disruptive thing human society is.

What an unstable thing it is. What a restless thing it is. The competitiveness.

Why there it is. It makes you heartily sick does it not. See how in society.

No one can. Can show something. New or fresh.

Without the other person eyeing it. And going one bit or trying to. Out do.

Out do the other. Oh the many sidedness of this. Conflict in the social order.

Amongst people. In the. Economical realm.

I'm not here to talk about. Economics. But let's put another word in place of that.

It means money doesn't it. The realm of money. Surely.

The love of it is the root of all evil. Isn't it the cause. Of conflict.

Of strife. Of rivalries. Of everything that speaks of.

On the one side schism. Divisiveness. On the other frustration.

Frustration. Never before. Had people in this world so much money.

In this country. Alone. Never before in the history of this country.

Had people had so much money. And never before was there so much dissatisfaction. And grasping for more.

Day by day. Our papers are just full of this. Grasping scheming.

To have money. And more money. What does it lead to? It doesn't lead to rest and peace and satisfaction.

Or at all. More. And still more.

How divided human nature is. You'd think if they had so much. They'd be content.

Human nature would settle down as they are. Got all this. Let me be satisfied.

It just works the other way doesn't it. In the economical realm. In the political realm.

There's this schism at work. And frustration. And frustration.

There's a lot we could say about frustration. Frustration in politics. Oh we are not going to stop at politics.

And as I have said before in the matter of science. No matter how far man goes. To the moon or to the planets.

He's got some drive that will send him beyond. All the time. He'll never never come to rest.

There's something in him. That defeats him. Tries and then it's got so far.

And so very far. Still. Still.

He's a restless being. Driven on and on. Never satisfied.

So we could go on with the frustration in the industrial world. And frustration in the national life. And frustration in international relationship.

What a world it is. It's also true isn't it? And why? Come back to where we started. Why? Sometime at some point for some reason human nature became disrupted.

And disintegrated. And schismatic. Divided.

A conflict. Even in the individual. We all here know the conflict in ourselves.

The Bible opens with a picture very different from that. Everything beautiful. God almighty who is meticulously perfect in his requirements.

Utter in his standards of satisfaction. Infinite God being able to look at all things and say it is very good. It is very good.

It's something if the Lord can look upon one little bit and say it's very good. Isn't it? You and I would feel very happy if there was one little thing about us that the Lord could say that's very good. But looking on all things and saying it is good.

It is very good. That's the opening picture of the Bible. Something happened.

Disrupted the universe. Shot through this universe. This schism.

And this resultant frustration. And what is the ultimate frustration? The ultimate frustration is death. There is nothing that speaks more of frustration than death.

It says defeat. It says imperfection. Nothing finalized in this life.

The final frustration is death. They are talking now about science arriving perhaps before long at the point where they will be able to destroy death. Where death will be defeated.

To imagine such a thing. And another way of saying such a thing is to find everything in this universe saying that's a lie. For death has a date with every mortal being.

And you'll never defeat that one. He's defeating you all the way along. You may, by your science, prolong life.

Add to your tenure. But that is not always a blessing, you know. A lot of people today, if the Lord would take them, live by reason.

For a few more years, that is, says the Bible. Yes, this is very nice. Well, that may not be true of all you very old people.

But, but, you know, the prolonging of life is very often a doubtful blessing. I remember many years ago reading something on a sundial in Stirling Castle in the Crown. And it went like this.

Our life is like a winter's day. Some only breakfast and away. Others to dinner stay and are full fed.

The oldest man butts up and goes to bed. Large is his debt who lingers out the day. And he that goes through it soonest has the least to pay.

Well, that's not the Bible. Not scripture. But I don't know who wrote it.

Maybe a morbid view of life. But there's some truth in it. That while it is possible to have a long life with the blessing of the Lord, the length of days is no guarantee of happiness.

And if they're going to destroy death, they think they can. They think they can. Doesn't mean that they're going to be benefactors of humanity.

Maybe very much the other way. And men long to die all the more because of conditions. Well, be that as it may, the point is that the final consummate outworking of frustration is death.

And when we have said all this about the schism and frustration in every realm, to where do we trace it? To man himself. It's just man, isn't it? It's just man. It's this that has happened in man.

This devastation in human nature and human life. Indeed, the image of God has been lost. The purpose of the Creator in the creation itself is such a frustration.

As we see human life today, the divine property in the beginning is under frustration. Well, that's the dark, miserable side. It's so true.

We have to note it before we can get on to the other side. Our scriptures appear. While they touch on that, and my word, don't they touch upon it? You'll see them later.

They toss over to the other side. Being renewed after the image of him that created him. The reintegration.

The reunification in the Creator. In Christ all and in all. You notice every schismatic element is touched upon here.

Every schismatic element is touched upon. In man's nature, they'll see. Perhaps we'll upon that again in a minute.

Or presently. In man's nature. And then, at the end of the paragraph, all the racial divisions, Jews, Gentiles, and so on.

Every disintegrated element, excluded from Christ, the unifier and the unification of all, beginning in the individual, and ultimately manifested in a whole race, beside which there will be no other race, because you cannot have something extra to all. Can you? If you come to all, then there's nothing more. Nothing

more than all.

And how we underline that phrase, didn't we? In all these passages we've read, all, all things, all things, all things, that final consummate. Everything reunited. Now, it's at that point that we begin the great positive revelation of the meaning of Christ.

We light upon the real significance of the Incarnation. Son of God becoming man. Man.

Made in the likeness of man, says Paul. Himself man. And his own favoured, chosen, cherished title for himself, Son of Man.

Son of Man. He loved it, Mary. He constantly used it, in preference to every other title.

Son of Man. Son of Man. Son of Man.

His Possum. His Incarnation. The very object of his coming out of eternity into time.

Out of eternity into history. A very mean, pompous object. Explanation of himself as having come from glory is found in this word man.

Man. That is not just a proper name, Son of Man. That's a purpose.

A purposeful title. That's a meaning. That's an explanation.

That's a definition. Man. Man, Christ Jesus.

This Son of Man is a unity in himself. There is no system in this Possum, in this humanity. He is a one.

Not dual, but one. A unity. An integration in him.

You know the Lord Jesus, in all his life here, never suffered from conscience. I don't mean he didn't have a conscience. Conscience is a constituent of full personality.

But Jesus never, for a split second, suffered from conscience. If he had done that, he would not have been a unity in his personality, in his nature. Because conscience is always a divisive element, isn't it? It suggests strife, doesn't it? Conflict.

Two things. Paul says it either accuses or it excuses. Whichever it does, it speaks of something to be combated in the Possum concern.

Conscience! Oh, have I proved conscience? Argued about conscience? Don't we know all about conscience? It's this conscience that is accountable for 90% of our misery. Isn't that true? Oh, my conscience. What a time it is.

Jesus never suffered from conscience. Not for long. There was no duality in his thinking.

It was single. It was single. One.

A unity. No fighting in his nature. No.

You see, if there is perfect obedience, perfect obedience, there's no place for conscience. Isn't that true? No place for conscience to trouble. A perfectly obedient life.

And he was able to say, as no other part of the human race could ever say, I do always those things which are well-pleasing. And to him, I do always. What a claim.

What a statement. In a world like this, a man, in the human creation, standing up before heaven and earth and hell and saying, I do always those things which are well-pleasing, and Moses and him, because of perfect obedience. And now as our time has gone, or tonight, do you begin to see perhaps a little, a little more of a little, to your own heart, satisfaction? Why the apostle was always, always using one little phrase, and what he meant by it, what it meant to him, what it meant to him, how heart-ravishing it was to him, in its meaning, in Christ.

In Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation for them that are in Christ. Conscience is redeemed in Christ.

In this matter, a condemnation which carries with it more than anything else, frustration. In Christ we stop. There is none in Christ.

And when he uses that phrase, it's always we are in Christ. We in Christ. Are you a man, he says, in Christ? A man in Christ.

In Christ. Positioned, positioned in the realm of all that terrible contradiction and conflict, is arrested, and we're put into a position, in righteousness of God through faith in Christ. Righteousness of God in Christ.

Through faith. Would that I could grasp it. Would that we could all grasp that.

It is reality because there's never a time when the saints of God are more assailed and harassed by accusation and condemnation than at this time. Frustration in the Christian life. Very largely due to a failure to apprehend, to grasp the real meaning of being in Christ.

This one, this one, in whom there is no conscience worrying, in whom there is no system, that's the position that we are brought into. I have more to say about that when we come to the crisis. Oh, the infinite blessedness if only we could grasp it.

And we're all defeated here, we all fail here, every one of us failing here, to grasp this initial, fundamental, blessedness of being, what it means to be placed in Christ. Well, so far as God and we are concerned there's no controversy, no conflict. God is not against us and yet we believe so often that he is.

And the devil tells us a thousand times every day that God is not for us, he's against us, anything that he can use as a ground of argument to bring us under condemnation, a shadow again of that terrible habit he has brought about in human life. The infinite preciousness of our position before ever the work is taken up of perfecting our position in Christ. A new humanity.

A different kind of humanity. In Christ a humanity has been regenerated. In Christ a humanity has been introduced into this creation, the destiny of which is final conformity to his image.

Being renewed, made anew after his image. No wonder with all that he had to meet, encounter and suffer he went tranquilly on his way. Tranquilly on his way.

Not until that day, that hour, that moment when he made sin for us and a curse for us. Taking the place of this disruptive creation when his soul was torn asunder. But not until then was he ever disturbed by any kind of controversy with his father or his father with him.

Frankly dear friends I'm saying tremendous things to you but after all this is after all the simple truth of a Christian's position by faith in Jesus Christ. No more controversy between us and heaven. Heaven and us.

No condemnation in Christ. Created by him. Created by him for a position and a state like that.

And he has come back to redeem from all that contradicts that state to redeem man. To redeem man. I'll stop there.

But what I want and I said I had one object one thought this time around which all this is being governed I want to emphasize this that it's man that God is after. It is man that God is after. Not things.

Not system. Not orders. But man he is after human life.

He's come to get it. To redeem it. To make it again.

It's our humanity upon which he has focused his attention. There if I could go on we should find so much help in the explanation of his dealings with us. What is he up to and after in his attention upon us.

His attention to us. What's he up to? What's he after? He's after a humanity. A man.

A human life. To be the expression of himself. His own image.

Renewed after the image of him. The explanation. We ask a thousand questions to what the Lord is doing and why he's doing this and that and so many things with us.

Why he's taking this way. And all the questions are answered in this one thing. He's after our manhood.

After our human nature. He's after our humanity. He's after this creation.

This truly unique creation. Human beings to make them after his own image. That's why he's dealing with us.

Sometimes it seems he's dealing with us as though we were the only individual in the dark universe. It's all so real. Sometimes so terrible.

So drastic. Sometimes he's singled us out from everybody else to deal with us. Here's the answer.

In Colossians 3. 9 to 11. Being renewed. Made anew.

After the image of him. That creator.

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