

Graduation From the School of Sonship

by T. Austin-Sparks

The purpose of graduation from the School of Sonship is to prepare sons unto adoption to take the throne, to govern God's universe.

Scripture: Daniel 7:27, Romans 8:19, Romans 8:21-23, Ephesians 4:13, Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 2:5-11, Hebrews 3:1, Hebrews 12:5-6, Revelation 12:5

Topics: "Sonship", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks discusses the transition from spiritual infancy to the School of sonship, emphasizing the importance of this graduation as a preparation for ruling with Christ. He explains that this process is not merely for personal blessing but for fulfilling God's eternal purpose, which culminates in the manifestation of the sons of God and their placement on the throne. Sparks highlights the current global struggle against Antichrist forces, urging believers to recognize their calling to take spiritual dominion and prepare for their future roles in God's kingdom. He encourages the church to embrace the painful yet necessary experiences of growth, as they are essential for becoming responsible sons of God. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the significance of sonship and the responsibilities that come with it.

Transcript

READING: Rom. 8:19,21-23, Heb. 1:2; 2:5-8, 9-11; 3:1,7-8; 12:5-6; Rev. 12:5.

In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the School of sonship unto adoption. We are now going to follow that on to the next stage.

We were seeing a little of the nature, meaning and need for transition from spiritual infancy to the School of sonship. A very real experience is that transition and a very deep one for those who enter into it. A whole new set of conditions perfectly strange to us is connected with that further movement in the life of the child of God which marks the passage from spiritual childhood to spiritual sonship, or the School of sonship. I suppose most of us remember when we went to a new school, or when we went to school for the first time. Everything was strange, everything was new. We had to take up things from the very first point. It was an entirely new world: and so it is in the life of the child of God. It is an entirely new world, a new set of conditions, something with which we are altogether unfamiliar when that point is reached where God takes us in hand to see that we are no longer children, but are brought into the School of sonship with adoption in view; adoption, of course, according to the Divine meaning of that word, not our natural

meaning.

The Purpose of our Graduation as Sons

Now we are going for a little while to consider the graduation from the School of sonship, graduating to that for which school has been going on, all that child-training which, as the Lord Himself knows and let us know that He knows, is for the present not joyous but grievous. But there is the graduation day. The whole creation waits for that graduation day with bated breath and an inward yearning, the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, the PLACING of sons to which we referred in our previous meditation, which is the meaning of the word "adoption"; not bringing into the family, but the placing of sons who have qualified through the school. And what is the graduation of sonship, unto what is it? It is unto the Throne.

"Not unto angels" (not unto angels of any rank, not even the highest rank of archangels) "did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou settest him apart?"

That is the true rendering of the latter sentence; not "visitest him" as we commonly use the word, but "settest him apart"; that man, in a word, is in view with God from eternity for this purpose, to have the throne, the government, the dominion over the world to come in union with God's Son, as the sons brought by that Son to glory.

There is the Heir in Hebrews 1:2 -

"...whom he appointed heir of all things..."

There are the heirs in chapter 2 -

"...bringing many sons unto glory..."

The throne is that which is in view at the end of school, the graduation, and it is that which is referred to in Rev. 12. The governing principle of Rev. 12 is sonship brought out to completion, a man child.

"She was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron." (This is sonship.) "And her child was caught up unto God, and unto the throne." That is the graduation.

The Man Child of Revelation 12

Now, I am going to stay for the miserable business of getting rid of a few misconceptions about this chapter. The accepted and firmly held view concerning this chapter is, that this woman is Israel and that this man child is Christ. I will not impute motives and reasons to the holders of that view, but it does seem to me that only a prejudiced mind could hold it, a mind not willing to accept what is, I think, quite patently the truth.

This book of Revelation begins with a pronouncement from heaven that what is going to be shown is "things which must shortly come to pass," and that pronouncement was made years and years after Christ had gone to heaven. It was future. Moreover, when Christ went to heaven, Satan was not cast out of heaven as is the case in Rev. 12; for, nearly forty years after Christ went to heaven, Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, and in chapter 6 we have this revelation of the nature and sphere of the Church's warfare: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies." Satan was not

deposed when Christ was caught up to the throne. Thirdly, the dragon was not cheated of his prey in the case of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was slain by the dragon, and it is a part of the great and glorious truth that it was through death that He destroyed him that had the power of death, namely, the Devil. Satan, the dragon, thought he had swallowed up Christ perhaps, but he discovered that he had been swallowed up. But the Lord Jesus did not escape the great red dragon by a rapture: not at all. The dragon got him so far and slew him. But therein is the glorious sovereignty of God, and that is another line of truth altogether: God's sovereignty wrought in the very presence of Satan's triumph. But that is not this.

Then this woman is a paradox, a contradiction. She is at one and the same time in heaven clothed in glory and on the earth clothed with trouble and travail. She is clothed with the sun in heaven, and yet in the next breath she is travailing on the earth. Is not that just exactly what we have in the letter to the Ephesians about the Church? In the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus blessed with every spiritual blessing, and yet at the same time the letter shows us very clearly right at the heart of it that the Church is down here and in conflict. She has an earthly walk and is meeting things down here while at the same time in the heavenlies. A contradiction apparently: at one and the same time in heaven glorious and yet on earth in tribulation. That is the Church. Well, is not that enough, though there is a lot more here?

I know there is another interpretation; that this was not only Israel but Christ Himself, and that we are the seed of Christ. But that is only just allowed to go so far. It does not carry us through satisfactorily. But this is the main position held about Israel and Christ, and I say I do not see how it can hold water in the light of even the two or three things that we have just noted.

You see, you have a correspondence here. In Rev. 2 you have these very words addressed to the overcomers in the Church at Thyatira - "He that overcometh... to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Then in the letter to the church in Laodicea we have these further words: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne." There is the throne for overcomers and the rule of the nations. Then those very words are reiterated in Chapter 12 about the man child caught up to the throne to rule the nation with a rod of iron. And I do not see that we can divorce those words from Hebrews 2 - "Thou madest him (man) in order to have" (that is the sense of the word) "dominion over the works of thy hands." Of course there is the union between Christ and His own: that is what Hebrews is speaking about. "Christ as a son over God's house, whose house are we..."

So then, having said that much - and I think it is enough, I am not dealing with all the data and points in this chapter - having said that much, we want to come right to our point in this meditation.

The graduation from the School of sonship is to the throne, and it is that throne, with what it means with regard to vocation, to service, to purpose in relation to God's eternal intention, that is in view while God is dealing with us, when God takes us out of the comfortable, pleasant time of spiritual infancy and childhood, where everything is done for us, and puts us into that experience where the thing has to be wrought in us and where, through this deep exercise of our spiritual faculties or senses, we become spiritually responsible sons of God. It is with this in view that God deals with us as with sons. Now, do grasp the meaning of that, what it implies. It implies one or two rather important things.

Spiritual Increase Related to the Throne and the Glory of the Lord

Firstly, it does mean that the deepening of spiritual life, as it is called, or any other terms used for the same thing, is not a matter which is just to issue in our fuller blessing. So often people will bring it right down

there to that level of fuller blessing, and we are very often tempted even there, in the time of fire and adversity, to react to this whole thing by saying, Well, if I have heaven, why need I trouble about all this, and why should I go through all this? Here are plenty of people just very happy and contented, they are saved and they know they are saved, and here am I who have sought to go on with God, and I am having the most awful time. It seems to me that I have got the worst of the bargain, by wanting to go right on with God! If we look at it like that, purely from the personal point of view of blessing, we have missed our way, and we shall get into difficulties; because, as we have always sought to point out, when you come out of this spiritual infancy into the School of sonship, you graduate from what is personal as to your own interest and blessing into what is for the Lord and not for you. From that time forward the whole motive is, not what I am going to get, but what God is going to get. That is Ephesians. "That ye may know what is... the riches of the glory of HIS inheritance in the saints." Not what I am going to get now: that will follow, that will be all right, the Lord will be faithful, but it is something else. We have come into the school on the basis of God's eternal purpose, and God's eternal purpose does not begin and end when He has got us born again. God's eternal purpose is only reached when He has got us in the throne. Thus it is the Lord, for the Lord, and what the Lord is after that is the one consideration. It will be glory for me, but that is not the motive of it now. It is this great purpose with which we are called: that is what is governing everything, and it is in the terms of the throne.

So the transition from infancy to the School of sonship, being a very painful thing, and fraught with all sorts of difficulties, brings us nevertheless into relation with that which has been in God's mind from before the world was where we are concerned. Chosen in Christ Jesus "that we should be to the praise of HIS glory." All the dealings of the Lord with us in this school have that throne in view.

World Dominion the Pressing Issue of the Hour

What I want to say with special emphasis now is that this matter, as I see and feel it - and I leave it to you to judge whether there is any truth in this - is most fitting in relation to what is happening in the world today. It does seem to me that this is a time when this issue is put in a way in which it has never been put before; that is, the issue of the dominion of this world, the issue of Antichrist, is so patent. It is the control and domination of this inhabited earth, and everything connected with this fresh drive to that end is to set aside God and His Christ. It is an evil thing, and it does not need a spiritually minded preacher of the truth to discern that; for many of our leaders of the State today have seen it and are using these words. How far they see, we do not know. But they are seeing that all that Christianity stands for is at stake. They are saying, This is a Satanic thing! and they are using the very phrase - Antichrist. It is discerned by men as to what the nature of things is, and we are able, in a special way as enlightened by the Lord, to see what the end of this is. It is the most far-reaching and terrible bid for the throne of this world that has been known. That is what lies behind it and that is what is in view. Therefore I say that this word is most fit for a time like this, and I am asking myself and I ask you prayerfully to consider whether there must not come something in the nature of a summons to the people of God to recognize this fact, with reference to their calling, namely, that they have to get behind that which is behind the present situation, and that the saints must take the kingdom spiritually now, in a spiritual way, in order that they may come to the place of the throne for the age to come.

We here perhaps - though let us not think too highly of ourselves, more highly than we ought to think - but it may be that our little gathering here with all its earthly insignificance has yet a significance which is very far reaching, seeing that we are here in the audience chamber of God concerning this great matter of the dominion of this world. In a small way, it affects us very seriously. I ask you to pray about this, very

earnestly and continually that there might be a movement of God's Spirit within the circle of His own people in a new way, to produce this man child that overcomes and takes the throne. It is quite clear, from Rev. 2 and 3, that all do not come to that position, and equally so from all these exhortations and warnings about Israel missing the goal in the wilderness, falling by the way, as warnings to the Church to beware of the same calamity. "Today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." I wonder if any of us have a hardened heart, not against the Lord in a general way, but against this. You harden by using special terms. Oh, how people have sought to close the door by sticking labels on!

Get rid of terms. Call it Selective Rapture, if you like: I do not call it that. Call it Overcomer Testimony, if you like. It makes little difference, if you mean by that, That is an interpretation, that is a peculiar teaching! Well, that is a hardening of the heart. What if this should happen to be true! We have to look this thing square in the eyes. Is there any possibility that this is true? If there is, it is a tremendous thing; the biggest issue in the history of this world is bound up with it, nothing less than the dominion, the throne. I suggest to you that there is a good deal today which would lead us to open the door to possibilities, to suppositions.

An Object Lesson and the Need for Open-hearted Inquiry

You know certain nations at our own door are suffering untold misery, because as long as seven years ago they were told of secret propaganda going on within the borders of their own country, and working its way secretly and subtly into high places, but would not believe it. They were told what that was going to end in, what the object was, what the result would be, and they said, No, impossible! I ask you this: If nine months ago a prophet had stood up in some prominent place in this world and prophesied the history of the following nine months, what would have happened to him? Seven or eight countries overrun and surprised, and this final terrible collapse of France! He would have been put in a lunatic asylum or have been lynched, he would have been shut up for safety. But it has happened: the unbelievable has happened and is happening. No one would believe it or accept it. See how they are suffering for saying, Impossible! Ridiculous!

Ah, I say to you that this should be a lesson to us. That is a trick of Satan. It is a part of his strategy, to work subtly and at the same time to make people believe there is nothing, that all is well; to be working underneath to the internal disintegration and downfall of a people, and yet on the surface to be making nice speeches. This is a Satanic method, and again and again Satan has gained his strategical advantage by that same means. And I say to you that at least we ought to come to a thing like this and say, Well, it is just possible that may be right, and if there is the remotest possibility of its being right, it is such a big thing we had better attend to it! I know many have managed to get past that, but I say again, from the lowest level of making this appeal, that it just may be that the Lord's Word is true after all. It just may be that this is the true revelation of God's thought and intention, that He chose an elect people, a company which has come to be called the Church, He chose that company, that Body, that corporate entity in Christ before the world was, with a view to it coming through at length to take the throne as His vessel and instrument for governing His universe. I say, that may be true. All I ask you to do is to consider the possibility of its being true, and if only you will allow that, it will give you real pause: and then to see that this is quite true so far as the Scripture and the experience of the Lord's people is concerned in a spiritual way. God is doing a certain thing in His people, in many at least who are pressing on with Him, those of whom we were speaking in our previous meditation who are marked by a purposefulness with God. In these He begins to do something deep and strange and painful, the end of which is never, never reached in this earthly life, the value of which is never entered into by anybody during their time here on earth. It is unto something: it is the preparation of sons unto adoption to take the throne; and I urge you to pray with regard to your own

place in this, and to pray for a movement of God's Spirit within the compass of His people to produce this man child. The Church, as a whole, is moving steadily into this travail.

Then will you not pray that the Lord's people may be enlightened on this matter, enlightened as to what the issue is. It is between Christ and Antichrist, between the Church which is Christ's Body and the whole Antichrist system; for it is quite clear that Antichrist, though he may be an individual opposed to Christ personally, is also a church, a system, a terrible system. Satan has his church opposed to Christ's Church. Blessed be God, we have this assurance, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"!

The Explanation of the Mystifying and Painful Preparation

Well then, that is the matter before us in this School of sonship, namely, the throne. My dear friends, I want to get hold of that in my own heart, and I want you to get hold of it. You see, we are so prone to make our sojourn on this earth the big thing; I mean in the matter of what we are able to do, how much we can do and realize and see in our lifetime, and when we find the Lord shutting us up and limiting us and seeming to put us in prison, oftentimes under the strain and pressure of it, when the iron enters into our soul as with Joseph, we begin to think we have missed the way. Life is going and it is all unfruitful; we are not doing anything. It is other people who are doing the thing, we are not. Thus we make so much of this present life in the matter of what we are able to do, as though that were everything, whereas (and this, of course, is no argument why we should be slack about doing) so often the Lord has got His greatest effectiveness in those who have been just shut right up, unable to do anything outside. Is not that the truth about Paul himself? Of yes, it is, and Paul, as we have often pointed out, was the embodiment of the revelation which was given to him of the dispensation of the Church, and when we come to the end of his life, we have Paul, who had had such a wide scope of ministry, who had been able to do so much, we have this man, with all the values that are in him put into prison. But we get the concentrated essence of value from those prison experiences. We get the letter to the Ephesians, and that was worth Paul's going to prison, and anything like that will be worth all that we undergo in the School of sonship which sees a very great deal of what is here on the earth closed down, if only the heavenly may become the far more real and valuable as an expression in us and through us.

But I say I want this to get into my heart, into your hearts, that the Lord is not so much concerned - please do not misunderstand me - the Lord is not so much concerned with how much we do now in this life. He is more concerned with the measure of Christ to which He can bring us in this life... "till we all attain unto the... measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). It will be Christ corporate who will come to take the kingdom of this world in the coming ages, and it is unto that - the fullness of Christ - that God is working pre-eminently in our experience, and that is the thing that matters most. It is the most difficult thing for us to accept; a supremely difficult thing for any active temperament to accept. To some it is martyrdom not to be doing something. It may be God's way of getting the enlargement of His Son in His members, the patience of Jesus Christ, among other things.

God has this great thing in view. The issue comes up acutely and in an intensified form as we get near to the great end. In order to answer Satan, to have His answer in a corporate Man, God has to prepare you and me and a company of his people to take the throne, to be caught up unto God and to His throne, to rule the nations with a rod of iron. That, of course, has reference to tomorrow, the tomorrow of the ages I mean, and there is something beyond that, namely, our reigning with Him for ever and ever, another form of reigning. I aspire rather to the day after tomorrow than to tomorrow. Ruling with a rod of iron may appeal

to us naturally, but we would sooner have the glorious reign where nothing wants a rod of iron. "Now unto him... be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages" (Eph. 3:20-21). It is a big thing for which we go to school for a few years and suffer as we are suffering. It is easy to say that, but it is a painful thing, this school. The Lord knows what He is doing with us. It is the matter of this overcoming, and, in the light of this school or this schooling, we can appreciate the word "overcomer." There is a lot of overcoming to be done. We have to get on top of a very great deal, and the getting on top of many things is leading us to get on top of the Devil and his kingdom. Presently, in the great hour when the sons are manifested, when the man child is caught to the throne, the creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

See then the meaning of the day in which we live. See the meaning of the suffering into which we may go yet more deeply, and how it is to be God's answer to this working of Satan that has been going on ever since he made a bid for the place of God's Heir, the Heir of all things. Ever since Satan made that bid and was cast down from the higher to the lower heavens it has been going on, and now it is being brought out in a new way. That is what it is, and you and I, as part of Christ's Body, are called to be God's answer to that, and it is to be so now in a spiritual way. Presently it will be in the full way, the literal way, that the saints will take the kingdom, and He shall come whose right it is to reign. The dominion shall be given unto the saints of the Most High.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/graduation-from-the-school-of-sonship/>

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