

Holy Spirit and the Crisis of Pentecost - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's ways, even in times of difficulty and reduction, and the focus on the intrinsic measure of sonship for eternity.

Duration: 45:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:17, Hebrews 6:10, 1 John 2:4, Revelation 1:10, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Pentecost"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the implications and significance of the statement that God's people should grasp the spiritual content rather than focusing on outward appearances. The speaker highlights the idea that the journey of spiritual growth and transformation may be difficult and painful, but it is necessary to eliminate vanity and artificiality. The sermon explores the concept of groaning, which represents the struggle and striving in the spiritual journey. The speaker also discusses God's original purpose for humanity and how the fall and change of human nature contribute to the challenges faced in fulfilling that purpose.

Transcript

Today we are giving our attention to the great crisis of Pentecost, the advent of the Holy Spirit, and the supreme significance of the Holy Spirit's coming. From the several passages which we read earlier, I want to just take out for the moment that paragraph in the 8th chapter of the letter to the Romans, the profound and inexhaustible passage, Romans 8, at verse 15. Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.

For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in the hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now.

Not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption to wit, redemption of our body. And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity.

The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. This passage, amongst other things, says this main thing. That there is in the whole creation a groaning as of travail.

But that there is a particular groaning in the children of God. We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, and that's why we groan, groan within ourselves and the Spirit is groaning. Three groanings.

Creation, children of God, the Holy Spirit. And what is it all about? What does it mean? It is all centered in one thing. The manifestation of the children of God.

That is, bringing right out from limitation and fondage and frustration into full revelation and emancipation of Sonship. We said this afternoon that the end of all things, from the creation through the redemption and the advent of the Holy Spirit and the coming again of the Lord, the end is that which God designed and determined concerning man, Sons of God, in full expression. Holy Spirit is here in the Word shown to be the Spirit of Sonship.

Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are Sons or Children of God. We receive the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Father. That is, the all-governing and dominating thing in creation, in salvation, and in ultimate restitution.

That is a statement. It's a wonderful statement. It's a tremendous statement.

But it is very important, dear friends, that you and I and the Lord's people should be able to grasp something of the implications and the significance of such a statement. It is, if really grasped, calculated to make some tremendous revolutions in our whole way of thinking and perhaps acting, to completely turn upside down and inside out our conceptions. For a few minutes I want to give myself to that very thing.

Let us again say it. The end which God set in the creation of man, toward which he has been walking through all the ages, for which he sent his Son into the world. That is, for which God came himself in Sonship.

In Sonship. Peculiar conception, for which the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, is here and at work in the world. The object of it all is that there shall be, eventually and ultimately, a peopling of God's created universe with children of God, Sons of God, in that essential nature and character and relationship to himself.

You got that? If we really do grasp it, it will help us a lot in many things. It will correct us in many things. Of course it will make its own demands upon us.

And they will not be easy to meet. The thing that matters to God, the thing, the only thing that matters to God is the measure of Sonship in believers. Man puts a tremendous amount of weight upon means.

Means. God puts all the weight upon the end servant. The means for him will be acceptable, blessed, used only in the measure in which they are really contributing to that end.

Make no mistake about it. Man thinks in terms of big movements, of many institutions, organizations, of wonderful machinery, of the outward framework of things. And if a thing is big, man's conception is that it

is successful.

Therefore, if it spreads and spreads and becomes very impressive to men in this world, man calls that a success. God looks at things altogether in the other way. Now I'm keeping very close to the book in what I'm saying.

But I see in the consummation of all things in the book of the Revelation, the one test of everything, churches and everything else, is the measure of Christ, of Sonship. The real spiritual measure, and when we speak of spiritual measure we just mean this. Sonship, the measure of the Son of God.

That's where the book of the Revelation opens. And everything is brought to judgment on that. Not that you have a name, not that you are wealthy, not that there is this and that and so many churches.

It is a measure of intrinsic spiritual value. For God, He is quite prepared to ignore, pass over, leave, or abandon a thing which has ceased to serve that original and all-governing purpose of producing sons. And increasing sons, and increasing the measure of sonship, that's the purpose of everything with God from creation onward.

The whole Bible bears down upon this. And so, it is not the number of churches, or institutions, or the movement, or any of the things. The thing that governs with God is this essential spiritual sonship.

How much of it? The reproducing of His Son. For at the end of the times, God has spoken son-wise, son-wise. And He is speaking son-wise.

In your experience, He is speaking son-wise. He is handling you son-wise. He is dealing with us son-wise.

With all our works, He is dealing son-wise. What a lot this explains. Look at Paul, look at John.

At the end, at the end, Paul has been used to bring into being these many companies of God's people all over Asia and beyond. There they are, many of them. Some of them very large, some very small.

And here is Paul now in prison. His liberty of movement taken from him. Unable to continue his active missionary work or apostolic work among the churches.

And he writes that all they which be in Asia be turned from me. Only Luke is with me. Then this is the failure of a man's life work.

Closed down on him. It says he has spent his life, his time, his strength, everything for naught. Things have become so small.

That's how man looks at it. And that's how man judges. Any man with a worldly mind looking at a situation like that would pronounce the verdict.

His life is a failure. His work is a failure. The whole thing has ended in, well, ignominy.

Is it true? Is it true? What does God think of it? There is an essential and intrinsic value that is infinitely more than all the range of distances and number of communities. And worldly judgment as to success or failure. There is something that is going to appear in eternity as altogether outweighing that and giving the lie to this failure.

Failure? No failure there. There has been produced sonship through that ministry. And sonship is an eternal thing.

Because it's a work of the Holy Spirit. A work of heaven. Though all the frameworks and outward forms, the means, the means employed may break down.

May even disappear. May seem as nothing. The world passes its judgment.

Wait for eternity. Wait for eternity. You and I, dear friends, in this hall today are very largely the fruit of that ministry.

And it has been so all through the centuries. Or John. Now John was very much bound up with the church in Ephesus.

John was its leading elder. John lived and gave himself for Ephesus. Amongst other things.

John is in Patmos. A prisoner in exile. Writing at the dictate of the risen Lord to his beloved Ephesus.

And saying to the church for which he gave his life. I have this against thee thou hast left thy firstborn. Think of a man having, who had given his life for a people, having to pass on that from the Lord.

Hard and worse than that. Going to lose your place and your function as a lampstand in this world unless you repent. Failure? Yes, written on John in Patmos, written on the church in Ephesus.

Is that all? If that were all, God is unjust. It is not true that he is written. God is not unrighteous.

That he should forget your work and labor of love for the saints. If that's all, God is unrighteous. Let the framework go.

Let the churches as such go. Let the means, the vehicles, the channels, the institutions go. That is not all where God is concerned.

You can have them and you can have them in immense numbers and in great measure. Everybody says that's a success, that works. And God may think very little of it indeed.

Very little indeed. His standpoint is ever and always intrinsic value or the essence of sunshine. Dear friends, if the Lord had his way, I believe that he would have a minimum of means and a maximum of spiritual value.

A minimum of means. It is sometimes a dangerous thing to help a means and make the means easy. I mean you can give money, money to support, build up and enlarge a means that does not really serve this ultimate purpose.

And you're making it easy for something to become big that is missing God's end. You may be passing through an extremely difficult time. God stripped you down.

It might be a very dangerous thing for somebody to come and make it easy for you. That is why all our help of whatever kind it should be, all our help should be guided by the Holy Spirit. And not on the impulse of compassion, not because we are sorry and sympathetic, but by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord, if he is in charge of a thing, will keep all means very closely related to spiritual ends. The means, building, any kind of instrumentality. It's not going to be something in itself if the Lord is concerned.

You're going to have a real discipline on every step of development, every fragment of progress. You're going to take that step in conflict, in travail, in drowning. Well, when you come to think about it, you say well that's a very painful way, it's a very difficult way, but wouldn't we have it otherwise? Do we want big empty shells, or do we want whatever the shell is, let it be.

What is necessary, just what is necessary, what we really want is the content, that spiritual content. This will interpret a great deal of the difficulty of the way. Perhaps every penny that you get will come through travel.

Because the Lord is keeping everything so closely related to spiritual life, spiritual growth. He's not going, if you really mean business with him to have the Lord in, he's not going to let you get on easily into something that is merely outward. And the framework, he's going to kill it, and kill it, and kill it with his son.

And groaning? Now let us spend a few minutes with this groaning. What is it? What is it? There is one thing, dear friends, which I think is unmistakable to all who are a bit interested in the psalmist question. What is man? What is man? That thing that is so unmistakable about man is that there is something in him which is a sense of significance, a sense of significance as to himself.

That he means something, or was meant for something. That he is not just a thing coming and going. There's a significance attached to him.

He has that sense in him. It is manifested in many ways. Take alone the will to live.

The will to live. You have to go a very long way in this before you come to the place where you lose the will to live. Isn't that true? What will a man do for his life? And it is an evidence that man has lost all sense of life when he loses the sense of meaning in his being alive.

The will to live. What a strong force that is. We revolt naturally against the idea of death.

Even the death of a criminal is one to people of the world. Revolt against it. Death, death.

No, cannot accept it. The will to success. There's a driving force in man naturally toward success.

To achieve something. And to be. Just to be.

The ambition, the expression of this sense that a man is meant for something. Isn't that true? Speaking quite generally of man. What is man? He is the embodiment of a sense of meaning, of purpose, of significance.

That he has his being for something. It's true. I've been reading the life of Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin.

And in that the biographer says that Sir Alexander Fleming was perhaps next to Lord Roberts the most humble man of the past century. But presently the biographer goes on to say that Fleming was governed by a deep-rooted ambition to reach the top. And he was ever so pleased when honour came his way.

The humblest of men. Sounds like contradiction, doesn't it? But you see, it's there. It's there in man.

The humblest of men naturally has this. Let us put it in another way. A sense of frustration is the most terrible thing that can come to us.

Abandoned to wickedness is so often, more often than not, the result of a sense of frustration. It's this instinct for achievement working in the reverse along evil lines. No one, and I haven't found the person yet, who takes kindly to being insignificant and being allowed to feel that they're insignificant.

This thing that we now call an inferiority complex is only the defeat of this sense that we ought to be something, isn't it? Well, we could enlarge upon that very much, but it's all so much bound up with our subject. Oh, what people will do to be noticed. What they will do to be noticed.

Or to make an impression. Words like that, isn't it? It wouldn't be safe or kind to explore that very far. We're all more or less like this.

Humility or meekness is the most precious because it is the most costly virtue. What a commentary all this is upon that Bible word, vanity. We have read in this passage, vanity.

What is vanity? Well, it has two complexions. One is, all is vain. All is empty.

All is nothing. We say we have laboured in vain. Nothing.

But there's the other complexion of vanity. Make-believe. Pretence.

Artificiality. Vanity. Vanity.

That word is placed right at the heart of the groaning. Notice it? Or right alongside of this groaning in every realm. And the Bible opens that word vanity out along three lines.

Firstly, God's original purpose and intention for man. The Bible reveals very fully what that was and is. And it comes out in a very clear way through the Apostle Paul.

Whom he foreknew. Them he foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son. Sonship.

God's thought and purpose for man. Man's fault from the way of its realisation. And in that fault the change of his nature.

So that as such a being he could no longer arrive at sonship. No natural man fallen in Adam can ever be a son of God or a child of God. Paul has carried that hope away.

But then God intervenes in his Son and in terms of sonship to bring about by new birth. By new birth. What he originally intended.

Children of God. Born from above. Born of the Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost with this whole thing in view. God's intention and thought concerning man in terms of sonship. Because your sons God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts whereby we cry.

By whom? Spirit we cry Father. That dates right back to the beginning. In introducing into this penitent and believing child the Spirit of Sonship.

That is the ground and the basis of all the Holy Spirit's work to the end. He's working in us on the basis of the Spirit of Sonship. To develop that sonship in conforming us to the image of God's Son.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. We should be called children of God and such we are. But it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

It was there in the Divine Mind. It has begun by the action of the Holy Spirit now. But it has a future.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But if he shall be manifested we know that we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is.

Conformed. That's the end. The beginning.

The middle. And the end. All with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Sonship.

Explaining everything. Go back to your lonely place. With a little handful of believers.

And while seeking to find more. Being devoted to what building and increase is possible. Remember this.

That smallness of means and framework never means smallness of spiritual measure. And that's what weighs with God. Go to your prison.

Where an awhile great servant of God. Who has been used over great areas to bring into being many, many churches. Is now incapable of doing anything.

Shut in his prison year after year. And ask, is it all for nothing? Is everything lost? What waste? What loss? What a tragedy! If only she were loose and out, how much more would it mean? If, dear friends, it is true that God is set more upon the intrinsic measure for eternity. Than upon the means, the outward ways of work.

There's your explanation? The mystery of God's ways? I see no other answer to our multitude of our problems than this. What is God after us? In the end, what is he after? The manifestation of the sons of God. The groaning is that.

Now to step back for a moment. That groaning, what is it? It is this groaning for something that God meant. Which has been lost in the fall and yet the very instinct of which remains in man.

I was meant for something. What? I don't know, but it's in my being that I'm not just here for nothing. I must do something.

I must be something. If it can't be good, it must be bad. It's an amazing thing, that, isn't it? Amazing things.

What distortions there are as the result of this instinct of purpose. What people will do rather than capitulate to nothingness. All the wicked things, as well as all the grand things.

It's there. That's the groaning. But note, the unregenerate man doesn't know what it's all about.

He cannot explain himself. He does not understand himself. He has no interpretation of himself.

But, the spirit of sonship in the believer explains it all. He knows the mind of the spirit. The mind of the spirit is just as he knows exactly what we were meant for.

And, is it not true that when we are born again, we begin to sense newness of purpose in our being alive. A new kind of urge in another direction. It's taken up and poised and directed toward what God wants.

It's taken up by the Holy Spirit. And renewed, and strengthened. You and I, with all our discouragements, and all our sufferings, and all our agonies.

Somehow or other, are still carried on by this urge. We just cannot let go and give up. Though we might often decide to do so.

We are kept going by an urge of the spirit. And not allowed to give up. What is it? It is nothing other than the spirit of sonship moving toward sonship to the full.

Personal and corporate in the church. I trust that this does throw some light on some of your difficulties and problems and situations. I say it's not easy to accept this way of outward reduction in order to have inward increase.

It's not easy. It is not easy to be deprived of many helps that would make it so much easier for us. Because the Lord is not going to allow us to lose any degree of what he meant.

And of what he has called us to. And started in us by his spirit. A difficult way, the way of sonship.

So Paul links this. I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory. With the glory.

What is it? The liberty of the glory of the children of God. Sons in manifestation. Lord give us understanding and the Lord give us help.

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