

# Holy Spirit, Church and Nations - Part 5

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The Holy Spirit's purpose is to guide the Church into all truth and possession of its inheritance, but this comes with conflict and challenges that require spiritual leadership and the willingness to overcome.*

**Duration:** 44:17

**Scripture:** Joshua 1:1-5, John 16:13, Acts 1:8, Colossians 1:28

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a spiritual energy and hunger to know and apprehend the word of God. He draws a parallel between the book of Joshua in the Old Testament and the New Testament, particularly the Gospel of John, highlighting the theme of the Holy Spirit leading God's people into their inheritance. The speaker explains that just as the Israelites lost their inheritance due to unbelief, many Christians today have been 'dying in the wilderness' for the past 2,000 years. He then focuses on a specific passage in Joshua where Joshua encounters the Prince of the host of the Lord and is instructed to remove his shoes because he is standing on holy ground. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for a spirit of youth and energy in pursuing and understanding the inheritance that God has for His people.

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## Transcript

Will you turn again to the book of Joshua, and remembering the chapter which has been read to us, chapter 1. Just add to it two verses from chapter 5, verse 13. It came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as prince of the host of the Lord, am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did wash it, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? Prince of Jehovah's host said unto Joshua, Put off thy shoe from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And Joshua did so. So today we are led to a fresh contemplation of the matter of the Holy Spirit, the people of God, and their inheritance.

The New Testament, especially from and with the Gospel of John onward, is the counterpart of the book of Joshua. When you come to the end of the four Gospels, you find yourself at that same place as you have just before the book of Joshua opens. That is, one nation has come to the border of the land of promise, which border is in this case symbolically the Jordan.

And that nation had been turned back, and lost everything to unbelief. That is how it was before this book of Joshua opened. That is exactly how it was at the end of the Gospels.

The nation to whom all the promises were offered for fulfillment came to that border land, and to unbelief was turned back. Lost everything, and for the last two thousand years have been dying in the wilderness, experiencing a living death in the wilderness. But a new nation springs into being.

It is that with which we have to do when we open this book of Joshua. And it is that with which we have to do when we pass from John into Acts. A new nation risen out of the death of the old, and now going in and on to possess.

The ark of the covenant went its lonely way through the Jordan. You remember that the Lord commanded that as the ark was to move ahead into the river, the flood, a space of two thousand cubits was to be observed between it and the people. It was taking a lonely way, a way which it alone could take.

We all know that that ark represents the Lord Jesus himself, and its passage through the Jordan typifies his passage through the cross. I am alone, he said, yet not alone for the Father is with me. There is a space.

He took a lonely way through the cross. Really no one else can go that way as fully as he went it. Thank God it is not necessary.

He first met all the overflowing of Jordan, God's judgment, God's wrath, God's separation. A lonely way, why hast thou forsaken me, he cried to heaven. The ark went that way for us that we might not be overwhelmed of Jordan and have a dry passage to lead the way through for us.

I don't think, dear friends, yet we really make enough of what he has borne for us and of how little we have to bear because of it. If we know something of the cross, if we know something of the fellowship of his suffering, we know nothing of the judgment of God. None of it has to do with judgment, not one bit.

The ark went its lonely way to lead them through, so he by the cross has opened a way, a way into the inheritance. At that point, Joshua comes into view in full stature as representing or indicating the instrument of God for spiritual fullness. Few minutes on Joshua would be instructive in that light.

See, Joshua does stand for the mighty life and energy of the Holy Spirit. When the captain of Jehovah's hosts, the Holy Spirit in figure there, joined himself with Joshua and joined Joshua with himself, all that issued and proceeded was by the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is all the Holy Spirit in charge and in action.

Joshua then speaks of the Holy Spirit uniting himself with a vessel for the purposes of the inheritance. You remember when Joshua first came into view in Exodus chapter 17 in relation to Amalek? Amalek, the type of the flesh, coming out to thwart, to prevent, to straddle the path of Israel that they should not come into the inheritance. The flesh always does that.

Satan has a ready ally in the flesh. And he by the energy of the flesh would always keep the Lord's people out of the inheritance. Joshua comes in then against Amalek.

You see, well in advance, even when he first comes into view, he signifies that which is of the spirit against the flesh. The warring of the spirit against the flesh. The flesh warreth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, the apostles.

Joshua is there as the energy of the spirit to deal with this obstructing and hindering and thwarting flesh with the inheritance always in view. That is important to remember that and keep it in its place. Why must we walk in the spirit? Why must the flesh be dealt with? Not just for its own sake, but because the great, great inheritance in Christ is in view.

In Exodus chapter 34, he is referred to on the next occasion. He is spoken of here as a young man departing not from the tent of meeting. I think that's a very beautiful touch in this whole story and whole spiritual background and in the case of Joshua himself.

A young man who departed not from the tent of meeting. And of course you know that that was not the tabernacle because the tabernacle was not in existence at that time. What was this tent? Well, you have to go back to the beginning when Moses went up into the mount to receive the law and the pattern.

He came down and Israel had broken the loose and made them a calf and were worshipping it and saying, These be thy God who brought thee out of Egypt. Joshua was there. But when Moses came down and heard and saw, came into the camp, what he did was to take a tent, tent of meeting, right outside of the camp.

And there from the door of the tent outside the camp he cried, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come over unto me. That was the tent in which Joshua, the young man, abode and from which he did not depart. It's all full of significance, isn't it? First of all, that tent out there did suggest or imply absolute separation from every tent of Satan's touch.

Satan had captured the gold of the sanctuary and had it made into a calf for his own worship. Satan had turned the heart of the people from the Lord to himself and corrupted everything. If the inheritance is going to be entered upon and appropriated, all that has got to be put aside.

That touch and that taint and that corrupting influence of evil runs amongst the people of God. It has got to be destroyed, removed. And everything of God has got to be taken out of its species.

Joshua, therefore, abiding and not departing from the tent, says so clearly, this man, this man of the Spirit, this man who is to bring into the inheritance by the energy of the Spirit a man who abides beyond the taint and the touch of the powers of evil. He's not in that world. He is out of that realm altogether.

He abides in the tent of me. I like to think that there was one man who was not a priest and he was not Moses, just a man of the people who was allowed to dwell in the house of the Lord. But then it says Joshua was a young man, Exodus 33, 11.

A young man who departed not from the tent of me. Speaking of freshness, freshness with everything before, vision, purpose, a future. Freshness of youth, a life of energy in the Spirit.

No touch of time, age or old age here. It's a very blessed thing, dear friends. Oh, that we were all characterized by this youth.

No, here's where a part of our watchfulness and prayerfulness must be observed. It's always such a great joy to meet with young Christians who are just reaching out for everything of the Lord. Not satisfied with being just saved, not just taken up with the activities of the newly saved, but who are really after all what the Lord means for them.

It's good to meet them like that because, you know, some of the Lord's people who know it all and heard it all for years, and you can hardly say a thing even about the book of Joshua if they haven't heard and do not know all about it. Oh, well, you've gone over that ground again and again. And they're so stale, and everything is so stale.

It's like the bread that has been locked up for years. Absolutely dry, and so you can't say anything to them. There's no freshness.

But then you come to this group of young Christians, and there's life, there's freshness, and you can give and give like that. Now that is not a matter of years. It's not a matter of years.

That's a matter of spirit. Matter of spirit. And it ought to be like that.

If we're going to come into the inheritance, you know, we've always got to have an appetite for it. We're going to come into the inheritance, there must always be this vigor of spirit, this energy, this recount, this consciousness, that as yet however much we know, we know nothing. We see so much before.

The land of far distances that our eyes have seen. And with all that we know, we really are only touching the fringes. It ought to be like that to the end.

Spirit of youth, and youth energy. Automata. Oh, do lay that to heart.

Sometimes it's very difficult, you know, to give a message amongst people who know it all, have heard it all before. There's a sense of heaviness and hard going, simply because there is not this drawing out of a spiritual energy to know, to know. To apprehend is a young man who departed not from the tent of meeting.

Now when you come to this fifth chapter of the book of Joshua, to those two verses that we read just now, those three verses, you come to what is the very heart and essence of the book of the Acts. With the end of John, the land comes into view. Or with John, the land comes into view.

With Acts, the spirit takes over. He takes over this whole matter of the inheritance, and of leading the people of God into possession. But he takes over to bring them into possession along the line of conflict.

Yes, he takes over in relation to the inheritance, but note how immediately it becomes a matter of conflict. If that man standing with the sword drawn in his hand, declaring himself to be the captain of the host of the Lord, is in figure, if not in reality, the Holy Spirit, as we believe he is. He has a sword drawn in his hand.

He has not come with an olive leaf. He's come with a sword, and it's drawn. There's going to be not one width of this inheritance possessed without conflict.

Better make up your mind today. It's going to be like that. There is going to be a width tending from all quarters.

As soon as the matter of any spiritual increase comes into view, then strangely, sometimes mysteriously, a state of conflict arises. It gets into the atmosphere, and it comes even from Christian people. Be satisfied with what is called the simple evangel, and simple evangelism, and so on, and you meet no conflict.

Everybody applauds and accepts and is on your side. But, set your heart upon the whole purpose of God, and you find yourself at once in a realm of terrible conflict. Satan is not going to allow this church to reach

its determined destiny if he can prevent it.

Every step is going to challenge. Notice, every place that the sole of your feet shall rest upon. Ah, what if I have given thee that? There'll be a battle over.

There'll be a battle over your possessing what I have given you. Where even though God has predestined, predetermined, it's settled in the foreknowledge and forecounsels of God, it does not mean that we're going to come into it willy-nilly. With all the divine sovereignty, with all the divine power, and with all the divine wisdom associated with the purpose, strangely enough, there's a battle over every inch of it.

Like that? In John, then, Jesus said, When the Spirit of truth was come, he will guide you into all the truth. That's Joshua 5, 13-15. The Spirit has come to guide them into the all-truth.

That is in Jesus. That is Joshua. When he came on the day of Pentecost, fulfilling the promise and words and explanation of the Lord Jesus, he came to guide the Church right into its inheritance.

Oh, I cannot be too emphatic about this, because of these inadequate, if not wrong, ideas about the Holy Spirit and Pentecost and so on. Let us understand, dear friends, that the Holy Spirit came for no less and no other purpose than to take the Church right on into all its inheritance in Christ. And if our ideas of the Holy Spirit are not so poised and directed, we are in some way arresting, if not subverting, the very work of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of his coming, came in type, in gesture, in reality, in act.

For that one purpose, the Church has got to be brought into that inheritance for which it has been eternally predestined by God. And this is going to be a conflict which will not end until the Lamb has overcome in finality. Well, in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit does take over in the matter of the inheritance, and he takes over for the conflict of the inheritance.

And it is not very far into that book just before you find the conflict is on. From Jerusalem, from Jewish leaders, there they are, they killed Stephen. From the world, the pagan rulers, there it is, the conflict is on.

But the mighty Spirit is with the Church in the conflict. He has linked himself up with that instrument for the great purpose of God. And there is a sense, a very real sense, if you look through the incident, and how it looked like, the tragedy, look through, there is a sense in which it can be said concerning this union of the Holy Spirit with a vessel here on this earth that no man has been able to stand before it all the days of his life.

The same thing is true. There has been a withstanding from men and from David, awful withstanding, but the Church has gone on. Testimony has never ceased in the earth.

And even when sometimes it seems to be driven underground, it comes up again. Well, Acts sees then the Holy Spirit coming, uniting himself with the instrument, the vessel, and the conflict arising. You pass over to the letters of the Hebrews, you find yourself in this battle, this battle, for here in this letter to the Hebrews it's all about the inheritance, as you know, spiritually.

The Spirit is here urging the Church, urging the believers to go on, to go on, not to go back, not to stand still, but to go on. And there it is said, Joshua did not bring them into the rest. It was typed, it was figured, that that final fullness of Christ never was entered into under Joshua but Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit, they are going to bring the Church into the final fullness. When you come to the book of the Revelation, this whole issue of the inheritance seems to change a bit, resolve itself into a matter of overcomers now. Here, whatever date you put the book of the Revelation, make it the whole dispensation or the end of the dispensation.

The situation that you find is that the Church as a whole has not gone on. It has not gone on. A very large proportion of the Church has either declined, fallen back or away, or have stood still in this matter.

Perhaps conflict has been too fierce, the cost too great, the world too attractive, seem too subtle. But there it is. As you find at the end of the book of Joshua, the enemy was not finally cast out.

You have the tragedy of the book of Judges. So in the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, the enemy has not been fully and finally worsted and cast out. He still has territory amidst the people of God.

So there arises the whole question of the overcomer. The overcomer, company or body, is that which will go on, will satisfy the Lord, the whole matter of His food. We see where we are.

All this surely indicates our position. For we are in the dispensation of the counterpart of the book of Joshua, in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, whose one inclusive object and purpose is to bring God's people into fullness. All who will be led into that fullness, all who will go on, not a select company, not a select company, but all who will, Paul's great word, as to his own praying and thriving was, that we might present every man complete in Christ.

Every man. God thought for us all. Do not say that may apply to some good, large people who have capacity of a different makeup from what I know.

Every man complete in Christ. That's God's purpose. The Holy Spirit can do it with every man.

If he gets his way, if he gets his ground, we have to see perhaps later today what that is. But here, this morning, dear friends, though you may have heard it many times and be familiar with this truth, it's something the Lord has said must be mentioned here again, must be spoken of here again. We must once more come back to what is here.

Now, you see, because of such a tremendous withstanding, such a tremendous withstanding, all round, of any kind of real coming to God's end, progress toward that, withstanding of every kind. Because of that, you have this threefold reiteration to Joshua. Be strong and of a good courage.

Be strong. Be strong. That's our side.

That's our side. It is just, that's our side. It is just that very connection that Paul uses those words.

He is bringing into view fully the forces, the cosmic forces which are set against the Church and its inheritance, the principalities and powers. He says, be strong in the Lord. Be strong.

Be strong. There must be no weakening. There must be no letting go.

The disparagements will be many. The heartbreaks will be many. Perhaps the disappointments will be many.

Situations will sometimes seem to be impossible. The prospects are hopeless ones. But you and I have got to heed this word because so much hangs upon us.

So much hangs upon us. For ourselves. For ourselves.

The inheritance in fullness hangs upon this. Be strong. No weakening, no letting go, no letting down.

But it may be, you see, that those who will be strong may be a strength to others. And therefore others are a responsibility upon us to be strong. It's not only for ourselves but it is vocational to be strong.

And then I am with thee. I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest. Don't take that out of its context.

You can't be sure of that if you cut it from its context. The context is the whithersoever thou goest must be in relation to God's full purpose. He cannot be with you on any other ground.

You cannot count on that promise. Otherwise it will not prove true unless you're right on the line of his full purpose. Then he is with us whithersoever he goes.

Commit himself. I will be with thee. I am with thee.

But do you notice that that is said twice over in this first chapter in a two-fold connection. Firstly, it is in connection with leading this people over. The responsibility of spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership. I emphasize and underline that word spiritual. Don't think of leadership as official.

Leadership is not official. You are not made a leader. You are not appointed a leader.

You are not given a badge with leader on it. Or a uniform. Or a dress.

You are a leader or you are not. It's a matter of your spiritual quality. And spiritual leadership means that you are exercising an influence on others to bring them on, to lead them on into God's full intention for his people.

That is the effect of your life. Others are because of you being drawn on, helped on, led on. If you have accepted that responsibility and are seeking to fulfill it for others' lives, then this word I am with thee is yours.

But then you notice in the second case this word of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth. Give heed unto it. Give heed unto it.

Then I am with thee. Your whole life must be based upon and governed by the word of God. You must not be above the word of God, superior to it.

You must not be apart from it. You must be able to substantiate your position by the word of God. Now, does the word of God say this or that? Dear friends, the whole question of your inheritance and of your influence depends upon whether you adhere to that word.

Sometimes it will not be understanding the word, but the word is there. It's safe. It's safe.

Don't argue. Don't be superior in judgment. It is safe.

All that there is a good deal more, or a little more, of this government of the word of God. That is why we have got to read it. We have got to consider it.

We have got to give heed to it. Observe this word, is what it says here, to observe it, to observe it, to do it. Are you reading your Bible in order to find out exactly what it does say? If the word of God says, children, obey your parents, it says that.

Don't argue. If the word of God says, husbands, love your wives, it just says that. Don't say, oh, but, oh, but, oh, but.

No, it says that. If the word of God says, wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, it says that. And no one can take superior ground to that.

You see what I mean? I'm picking things out in order to emphasize this point. To observe, to do. You'll be blessed if you do that.

If you don't, you won't come into the inheritance, and you will have no fear of real spiritual ministry. Oh, big question. Found out of this, but the main thing, and I am with you.

I'm with you. When it's like this, we cannot take that promise with any assurance. I am with thee, unless it is true that we are seeing that this word of the Lord does not depart from us, that we observe it to do it.

Presence of the Lord and our entering into our possessions in Christ is governed, are both governed by this thing. Oh, read your Bible to see what it really does say. Not what your interpretation is, but what it says.

I know that there's a great deal fuller meaning in all the Scripture than ever we have seen, and we shall get more and more light on it. But first of all, first of all, what does it say? What does it say? And I am in line with that. Big things hang.

Big things. Be strong, with good courage. I am with thee.

I will not leave thee. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. This word shall not depart from thee.

Observe it. And I think that's quite enough for us to face for the moment. We are thinking in these days about the advent of the Holy Spirit.

That is what is occupying us just now. This is why the Holy Spirit came. And this is the ground on which the Spirit is with us.

And this is the purpose which the Holy Spirit has taken up in his coming. He has taken over. And in all the conflict, and in all the suffering, he is sufficient to see us through.

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