

Recovery of the Lords Name - Part 4 of 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the significance of God's name and glory, emphasizing the need for humility and self-emptying in service to Him.

Duration: 47:52

Scripture: Genesis 12:2, Exodus 2:11-12, Judges 6:12, Job 28:23-24, Proverbs 3:19, Matthew 20:28, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Recovery"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Gideon from the book of Judges and relates it to the letter to the Philippians. The preacher emphasizes that God calls specific instruments according to His purpose and for the glory of His name. The preacher also highlights the importance of having the mind of Christ and emptying oneself to be used by God. The sermon concludes with a reference to the book of Job and the concept of finding wisdom in the emptiness.

Transcript

By way of linking up with what has already been before us, may I just bring very hurriedly and briefly into view what it is that we judge to be the Lord's object for our understanding and apprehension at this time in these gatherings. It is that the Lord is concerned about all things for the glory and honor of His name. We have been seeing how God's sovereignty and power are always brought into operation in the interest of His name for no other reason.

The honor of His name is in a people. He has bound up His name and its glory with a people. And that glory is found in a people, in life, and strength, and wealth, and food, and oneness.

These things spiritually interpreted are the things which display His glory in His people. Then in the third place, we went on to see that there are certain factors for which God looks as a basis for His work in securing that state in His people. Last evening, we gave our whole time to seeing the characteristics in Gideon, a typical instrument sovereignly chosen of God for that very purpose of the glory of His name in His people.

And those of you who were here will remember the things which came to light as characteristics of Gideon in relation to God's purpose. This morning, we were occupied with the fact that God calls instruments specifically according to His purpose, that is, with His glory as the end in view. Now this afternoon, we shall look at that matter again from a different angle.

I just remind you of the words addressed to Gideon as in the sixth chapter of the book of the Judges, verses 12 and 14. You know them so well by now, you hardly need to look them up. The angel of the Lord appeared unto him, that is Gideon, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

Verse 14, And the Lord looked upon or turned toward him and said, Go in this thy might and see Israel. Now I want to read some words that are very familiar to you in the letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verse 5. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on any quality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-slave, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in passion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And our occupation this afternoon will be with the grounds of the presence and power of God. If one thing is evident about Gideon, it is that he does set forth very strongly and forcefully the power of weakness. The power of weakness.

I have on the line leaf of my Bible something that I wrote there many years ago. Time of perplexity and difficulty in the work of the Lord and seeking very much to know the way of strength, of power, of wisdom, I came upon this. It is in the life of Lilius Trotter, whose work in North Africa will be known to many of you, and it just met my need.

I read it to you. So many questions lie ahead concerning the work. A great comforting came to me this morning in reading the 28th chapter of the book of Job about the way of wisdom and the place thereof.

It tells how God finds the way for the wind and the water and the lightning, and it came with a blessed power what those ways are. The way for the wind is the region of the greatest emptiness. The place for the water is the place of the lowest depth.

The way for the lightning, as science proves, is along the line of the greatest weakness. If any man met, there is God's condition for the inflow of spiritual understanding. Praise be to his name, the ground of the presence and the power.

Of course, inclusively and preeminently, the ground is his name and his jealousy for his name in the heart of any servant of his. But the way of the power is the way of the cross. Words which we have read, which we are perhaps too familiar, in that letter to the Philippians, analyze for us the meaning of the cross.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. In other words, let your mentality be the mentality of Christ. Your mindedness.

The mindedness. Now here we have a wonderful thing. Paul, in these words, reads the motive of the incarnation and the cross.

He reads right back into the glory, into the presence of God where the sun is. And reads the mind of the sun as the decision is arrived at to leave that estate and to come here and take the way of the cross. He reads a motive in the mind of Christ.

The motive has evidently sprung from the fact that another name had taken the place of the Lord's name. His Father's name. Another name had intruded itself into the place of the name of the Lord.

And that being the case, and we know quite well the whole of that story, the story of the one who said, I will, I will be equal with the Most High, who sought to make for himself the name above every name. We know about that. That being the situation, it was not enough for the sun to sit in equality with God in heaven when his Father's name was dishonored on earth.

He could not be at rest and be comfortable, be satisfied. Indeed he could not endure it. But he should be there in his glory, in possession of that position and that estate while in the creation another name was being honored.

Another name had usurped his Father's name. And the motive was jealousy for the name of God. Jealousy for God's honor.

That lay behind everything. He emptied himself. And all the other things mentioned here which we are going to look at one by one.

But first of all notice the incarnation, the cross and the ultimate exaltation above all names rested upon one thing. Jealousy for the name of God. The great wherefore.

God perhaps highly exalted him. Suns are all the steps of the great cycle from the glory back to the glory. Perhaps relates pre-eminently to this.

Wherefore? Why for? Because all that was in jealousy for his Father's name. This mind, this mindedness. It's a kind of mindedness you see.

Unless you've got a mind and a motive adequate you'll not do all these things. It's of little use to apply this scripture to Christians. Say now you ought to have the mind of Christ.

And the mind of Christ works out like this. In this way and this way. And you've got to be Christ-like.

You've got to be Christ-minded. See that can bring a tremendous amount of pressure and weight like a legal obligation to bear upon Christians. I'm not a bit like that.

That is not at all my mind, my way. You've got to have a motive. A motive that will make you, cause you to take this path of the cross.

A motive strong enough to make it something that you must do. You can't help doing it. That is Christ-mindedness.

He could not help it. The constraint of this jealousy for his Father's name was so strongly upon him that there's nothing else to do. He must, he must take this way.

Dear friends, I'm beginning upon this very strong note. That there is a very great need in you and in me and in the people of God and in the servants of God today for more of this terribly fierce jealousy for the name, the honor and glory of the Lord's name. Well now, this whole thing commenced, we see, with a motive.

But that motive led to a reckoning. A reckoning. In the motive was an accounting.

It says he counted it not a thing to be grasped, to be held on to, to be equal with God. He counted. A reckoning took place with him.

That's the suggestion or implication. On the one side, here am I, in a place of equality with God. I have the glory, as he spoke in his prayer, glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have that. Here I am, up here, in possession of all this. Down there, my Father's name is this honor robbed of its glory.

And another name is put in its place. Is this my having this position and all this possession and all this glory of greater importance than my Father's name being glorified down there? And he came to the conclusion, no, it's just putting these two things in the balance is my own glory, my own personal position is of far less importance than my Father's name being glorified down there. He weighed it up.

One thing against the other. Put them both into the balance. And the honor of the Father's name in the creation of with him altogether outweighed his own glory and his own personal fullness.

It was a reckoning. He counted. He counted.

He reckoned. Now, dear friends, when the apostle says, let this mind be in you and he sees the issue, a wonderful issue of this, God committing himself, committing himself, I think we may say, rightly, in a way, in a way, fuller than ever before to his love. And he says he gave him the name which is above every name.

But now, now in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, the incarnate Lord, every knee shall bow in the universe. And call him the incarnate Lord, Lord of all. With that in view, the apostle says, let this mind be in you.

In other words, he says, if God is going to commit himself to you, if God is going to present himself with you, as with his Son, for it is written, and God was with him. And if the power of God is going to rest upon and work through you, you have got to have a fundamental reckoning. This is something which every servant of God has to face at the outset.

For this, after all, is the thing which constitutes a servant of God. This is the very essence of service. What is service? What is the essence of service? What is it that makes a servant of God? We talk so much about the Lord's service.

Sometimes we substitute the Lord's work. We are concerned and anxious to be in the service of the Lord. And then we think about missionary work, and ministry, and one thing and another.

And this really is what we mean by the service of the Lord. And by being the Lord's service. But what is the heart and essence of service? What is a servant of the Lord? It is nothing more, because there can be nothing more, and it is nothing less, in truth, than bringing glory and honour to the name of the Lord.

That covers and encompasses all service, and that makes the servant of the Lord. We may do a thousand things, but unless it results in the Lord's name being glorified, it is not service to God. Jesus is the great servant of Jehovah.

There never was such a servant of the Lord. He has served the Father as none other has ever served or could ever serve the Father. But how has he done it? He has brought back the Father's name to its place

of honour and glory.

He has come down and entered into the dispute with the other name. And now he is far above every name that is named. He has dealt with the challenge to the Father's place.

And in that way, he is the greatest of all servants. Let this man be in this. We have got to weigh all our Christian activities and efforts in this way.

How much real glory is coming to the Lord in this? How much is the Lord coming into his own, his place in this? Not how much am I doing, but how much positive glory to the name of the Lord is bound up with what I do. That is hollowed out in the fuller analysis of this great statement in the letter to the Philistines. I was saying this is something that every servant of God, every aspirant to service for God has got to settle at the outset.

A reckoning, a reckoning. Comparative values. Moses made that reckoning.

It is said of Moses, accounting, accounting that the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Accounting. Made a reckoning.

It was a tremendous reckoning, wasn't it? My word, look what that involves. All the treasures of Egypt. His place.

His learning. Everything that he had in the palace of Egypt. On the other hand, God he did count it and into it with the Israelites.

And yet, he weighed it all up at the beginning and accounted before he took his step. That is greater riches down there from this. I weigh these things up and believe the greater importance is that because it's there that the name of the Lord is involved.

The Lord has chosen that people through Abraham to be the vessel of the glory of his name. That's my place, whatever it costs. It was a reckoning.

Many others made that reckoning. Not least Paul. He weighed it all up.

The things which were gain to me. The things which were gain to me. And he tabulates them and you know what they were.

Everything that the natural heart would be set upon. Things which were gain to me. These have I counted lots for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

Here's a basic reckoning. But what the accounting led to. All the suffering, all the affliction, all the trials, everything.

And yet Paul never abandoned that position. To me it's one of the most wonderful things. The most wonderful things of all that he had to suffer.

Of all the consequences of his great decision of reckoning. Paul to the end held on to this. It's better, it's better, it's far better to be here with Christ.

Than and have all this. Than to be back there without Christ having all that. Weighed it all up.

Now that's a very, very serious challenge isn't it? This reckoning. You won't come to that conclusion to that mind and take that step of letting everything else go. All other possibilities and prospects unless you have got a tremendously strong and high estimate of the glory of God.

The glory of God. But if you've got an adequate and right conception of the glory of God. What that is going to mean in this universe you see everything else however great as very small in comparison.

I reckon here we are I reckon that the sufferings of this present hour are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be. I reckon. Weighed it up.

We are involved in a very great deal of suffering and affliction and trial and difficulty when we take a stand for the name of the Lord. For the glory of that name it's a very costly stand. We shall only be able to maintain that stand if we have made the reckoning.

Lord Jesus always required such a basic reckoning didn't he? He never deceived anybody. When he called to discipleship and fellowship with himself he made it perfectly clear you're in for a bad time. I tell you frankly.

This way is going to be a very costly way. Don't you have any mistake about it. He points there on this.

Man is going to war. He sits down and counts up his resources. Can I, can I not only make a beginning but go right through with it? Can I? Have I got resources to carry me through? Man is going to build a tower.

He sits down. Now have I the means not to lay a foundation or make a beginning but to complete this thing. Can I go through with it? In those days the Lord Jesus was only saying what we are saying now.

Now look here. You've got to have a fundamental reckoning over this. This mind that was in Christ Jesus must be in you and you've got to settle something.

This is a thing that has got to be settled. It's a battle that seems to spring up again and again doesn't it? And yet, and yet something has got to be done about this. I do want to urge upon you my younger friends that you're going to have a very difficult time.

All hell is going to rain itself against you if you take a stand for the honour of the name of the Lord. You're going to have a bad time but you've got to reckon that. Is it worth it? Is that name worth it? Is that glory worth it? You've got to put the things in the balance and get that settled.

Well, after the reckoning came the emptying. He counted it not. A prize.

To be grasped. To be on equality with God. Emptied himself.

And although, of course, there is such a difference both in kind and degree measure between Christ and his servants. That is, we can never empty ourselves of that of which he emptied himself. We never had it.

We haven't got it. That is true. We have no glory that corresponds to his glory.

Yet, although there is so great a difference between him and ourselves yet the principle is the same. The principle is the same. There is, even with us with us strangely there is with us that which is our personal glory.

Poor wretched things as we are and know ourselves to be somehow or other it almost takes a lifetime to get us emptied of things which are in the Lord's way to which we cling which we do counterpise which we do grasp hold on to he emptied himself. And if the principle were not the same with us as with him Paul would never say let the same mind be in you. The kind may be different but the principle is the same.

The emptying. Gideon the whole story of Gideon is a declaration that the vessel must never have any glory of its own. The vessel the God so mightily used must have no personal glory.

The glory has got to be the Lord's and the Lord's alone. The whole story I say declares that, doesn't it? Take the man himself take the means that the Lord used for the work. It was a case as we shall see later of just reducing, reducing, reducing bringing down lower, lower, lower never allowing anything whatever to come into this business which would contribute to the glory of the instrument.

When that thing was done never allowing anything whatever to come into this business which would contribute to the glory of the instrument. When that thing was done everybody had to say well that's perfectly marvelous to think that that could be done with such instruments in such a way. The Lord was taking precautions, wasn't he? Let Israel call themselves let Israel.

No glory to the vessel. No. It's the glory of the name and that glory of the name is exclusive of all other glory.

Dear friends, what am I talking about? I am talking about the ground of the presence and the power of God. The Lord is with me going this by night the presence and the power. What is the ground? It's this.

It's this. The utter emptying of all personal glory and ground of glory. Shall we put it the other way? The providing the Lord with an utter ground for his own glory.

The Lord takes infinite pains to secure that ground. Oh, what a story of weakness and defeat and limitation and all those things of which we've spoken simply because men will get their names in. Their reputation.

Draw some attention to themselves. Put their honors in view. Call themselves by titles in the work of the Lord.

Advertise themselves or be advertised as the great instrument that is going to do this. And the appalling state of things after two thousand years. The same thing is self-evident.

It's self-evident. No, the ground of the presence and the power is this. If it was true in the case of the Lord Jesus and undoubtedly it was.

It was because he in the other translation made himself of no reputation. And men are always trying to make reputations for themselves in the sphere of God's interest. And God is not in it.

You have nothing to do with it. Get on with it and do what you can and what you like but you cannot count upon the presence and power of God. The form and the function.

In man likeness in slave, on slave function. I'm not going to start with the technical points of the different words here in the original fashion and form. That won't be very edifying, helpful to you.

It doesn't matter just at the moment. But what it amounts to is this. The form.

In the form of a man. The form in which Christ appeared here on this great mission. The form of a man.

The function which he accepted, adopted and fulfilled was the function of a bond slave. That's what it says. As a man.

In man likeness. All I'm going to say about that here in keeping with this whole matter of the presence and power of God is this. That he did not appear here as some superior being of another order.

So far as the world looking on could tell there was no difference between him and other men. Whatever difference there was was altogether hidden from the world's eyes. They could look at him, judge him, speak to him and of him, handle him, deal with him just as they would deal with any other man.

No, not as some superior being of another order. And you see, you see, there's a principle there dear friend of tremendous significance and importance where the Lord is concerned. We have said that the great tendency is to put men up and make them of a superior kind.

They're great, they're wonderful, they're superior, they're above the ordinary kind of men in the work of God. And oh, oh, what is said about the columns, about the wonderful things that this man has done and achieved and is, all the rest of it. God looks on this poor thing with pity.

Pity. If not with contempt. In man form.

In man form. Not angel form. Not some superior order of creation.

Just man form. We seek our embellishments to make an impression. We add things to convey to people that we are something different than others.

To gain access and acceptance and so on. There's none of that in the mentality, the mindedness of the Lord Jesus. If we have not got spiritual influence, God saves us from artificially trying to make it.

Do I have it by artificial means? Oh no, none of that. It's men that God wants, not officials, not dignitaries. Men.

But men of his own making. That's enough for that. In slave function, form of a bond slave, a bond slave.

I am among you, said he. Is he that serveth? Is he that serveth? I came not to be ministered unto. What a challenge, what a challenge there's so much in you and in me.

What a challenge there's so much there is in Christianity. I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. But to minister.

Bond slave, not a dictator, not an autocrat, not a master, a servant. So it says here. And surely he was there.

But this is the ground of the present and the power, that's the point. It's always like that. And then the obedience.

Came obedience. Obedience, I suppose, before the incarnation he could command. Angels would run swiftly at his behest.

The slightest gesture or indication and they would move to serve him. Here. Obedience.

The one who is having to be told orders, coming under direction. Obedience. Unto death.

That little word unto has a double meaning. It means right up to death. Right away to death.

That is, right to the final, the final step, the final phase, the final packing of obedience. No more to be done. Right unto death.

But, oh, it implies the death. The death to which he went. Unto death.

Day, the death of the cross. How utter was this bond slave function. How utter was this self-empty.

The cross here is set as the utterness of God's will. The fullness and finality of the will of God. Right through to the last degree and down to the deepest depth.

Let this mind be in you. Ah, it's from that point that the tongue is taken. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name.

The wherefore. Oh, what a lot hangs upon that word. Well, these things constitute, as we set out to say, the ground of the presence and the power.

The Lord is with me, thou mighty man, knowing this thy might. The strength of weakness. The strength of emptiness.

What is the strength of this weakness? Of this emptiness? What is the strength of all this that is no honor to man at all? The strength is the Lord is with thee. That's all. What more do you want? What more could we have if the Lord is with us? Well, if God before us who can be against us? I mean, that's strength, isn't it? That's power.

That's assurance. That's certainty. It's all right, it's all right if the Lord is with us, no matter how weak and empty we are.

How little there is that we have to draw upon does not matter that we have no name or reputation or title or merits or anything else to display and proclaim if the Lord is with us. That's enough. Strangely enough, it's not enough.

For many, many today they must have the flask of publicity, advertisement and all that sort of thing. They don't consider that they are not to have the Lord with them. The Lord seems to them in their mentality to depend upon their newspaper advertisements and proclamations about their own wonderful persons and works.

Not at all. It's enough. It's enough if the Lord is with us.

That would be all the power that is necessary. Want to know the Lord's presence? Want to know the power of God resting upon you? Well, it's the strength of weakness. The strength of weakness.

The wind, the water and the lightning all finding their way where there is weakness. Where there is weakness. The Lord give us this grace, this mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

For we need him and we need his power.

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