

The Character of the Gospel

by T. Austin-Sparks

The gospel of the glory of the blessed God is the good news of the glory of God, the good news that everything is going to be like Him, everything in His universe is going to be a manifestation of Himself and His nature.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:11

Topics: "The Glory of God", "The Mystery of the Gospel"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound nature of the Gospel, referring to it as 'the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.' He explains that this Gospel encompasses not only salvation but also the mystery of God's eternal purpose, revealing the character of God as one of glory and righteousness. Sparks highlights that understanding glory is essential to grasping the fullness of the Gospel, which is linked to our calling and the hope of transformation into God's likeness. He encourages believers to see trials as opportunities for their faith to be tested and refined, ultimately leading to glory. The sermon concludes with the promise that through suffering with Christ, believers will be glorified together with Him.

Transcript

"...THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED GOD, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1:11).

"In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION, - in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13-14).

"With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL" (Eph. 6:18-19).

There are one or two things which we must note at the outset in connection with the above. Those passages are all words of fullness; that is, they are written very near the end of the life of the Apostle, when he is in possession of a very full revelation which has been growing through the whole of his life as a servant of the Lord. To the initial vision there has been added revelation, an enlargement of spiritual knowledge - added, sometimes in especial ways and also in the normal course of his continuous walk with the Lord; and here he is writing when that revelation, so far as his earthly course is concerned, is practically full, and out of that these words occur - "the gospel of the glory of... God"; "the gospel of your

salvation"; "the mystery of the gospel". You note that his letter to the Ephesians opens with the second of these phrases and closes with the third. The point is that these are not two different gospels - the gospel of your salvation, and the mystery of the gospel. They are not the gospel divided into two. They are one gospel, and they are both gathered into that other fragment - "the gospel of the glory of... God". What I desire to indicate is that the gospel is a much profounder thing than is generally recognised.

Oh, how full is that word "mystery" as used by the Apostle! It is a tremendous word in its significance. As you know from this letter to the Ephesians, the "mystery" relates to the deep and hidden counsels and purposes of God before the world was. It relates to something ever present to the mind of God through all previous ages, though undisclosed - waiting for the day in which He should bring it out as a revealed secret; and in it are all those Divine counsels and purposes which find their full revelation at the end of the ages, in this dispensation, in the fullness of the times; and all that is said to be gospel, the mystery of the gospel. Yes - the gospel of your salvation is all that; something immense, unfathomable. In this one short letter alone it is all summarised in superlatives which are heaped together one upon another. You feel the Apostle is so pent up as he dwells upon this as to be very near an explosion. He cannot find words in the very rich language at his command to express himself concerning all this which he calls the mystery, the stewardship of which has been committed to him. It is tremendous.

And when he writes his letter to Timothy, he goes beyond everything in packing all the immense meaning of that into a little phrase - "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". You want to sit down with that and think. What is the gospel? It is the gospel of the glory of God. Now, comprehend that if you can! The glory of God - fathom that if you can! If we want a key to unlock this whole marvellous disclosure, to unlock those secret counsels of the Godhead before times eternal, to unlock the mystery hidden from ages and generations, it is in one word - glory. That word alone is the key to everything from eternity to eternity.

What Glory Is

What is glory? Have you ever tried to write down what glory is? It cannot be done, and we shall look foolish whenever we try to define the glory of God. Nevertheless, with the Lord's help, let us at least approach the matter. What is glory? Before we come immediately to attempt an answer, let us say something which will indicate what a task we have, what a field we are in. To answer that question - What is glory? - from the standpoint of the Scriptures means that we shall come to the understanding of a number of other matters such as the following:-

To begin with, to understand glory will be to understand God, for He is the God of glory (Acts 7:2); and also to explain His creation intention, for right at the heart of His creation lies that word as its intention - glory, the glory of God.

Again, to answer our question will be to know the meaning of the fall. Firstly, the fall of Satan - the whole matter of glory is bound up with that; and then the fall of man, because right at the heart of man's existence in the purpose of God lies this matter of glory.

Further, it will be to know the nature and meaning of eternal life - that uncreated, Divine life which God intended man to have and which he never did have until he had it in Christ - for that life is the potentiality of glory.

Further, to know the meaning of glory will be to know the meaning of redemption, for again, redemption all circles round this one thing - glory; and I would remark, before we say any more, that whenever

redemption is represented as an accomplished fact, even in type, glory is linked with it. Get the altar and the laver and everything of redemptive means in line, and the end of that line is the glory of the Shekinah in the Most Holy Place. It all issues in the glory. To understand glory will be to understand redemption.

To answer our question, What is glory? will be to explain priesthood and government in spiritual and Divine meaning, for both are always related to the glory.

And here is a little thing for you on the way! - to understand glory will be to see right through all the Scriptures. When I saw this matter of glory I got a new Bible. I thought my old Bible was very wonderful and altogether beyond me, but this put a new Bible into my hands. It will do the same for you if you see the meaning and content of just one word - glory.

It will be to apprehend and to grasp all the meaning of Christ. He is the glory of God; all the glory of God is centred and seated in Him. His whole work is connected with the glory of God. He came into this world from which the glory had departed, as the custodian of the glory of God. To understand glory will be to understand Christ.

If we apprehend the meaning of glory we shall know our calling, for we are called "unto his eternal glory" (1 Pet. 5:10), "that we should be... to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:6). Further, we shall come to understand our vocation, our service; for what does the service of God resolve itself into, after all? All service to God and for God can be weighed as to its spiritual value by this one word - glory, the glory of God.

"The Blessed God"

Well then, all this that we have mentioned is in this little phrase - "the gospel of the glory". The whole phrase is, "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". That word "blessed" is not an easy one to translate into English. You know how very many times it occurs in the New Testament. It is the word with which every Beatitude begins. "Blessed are the poor in spirit". "Blessed are they that mourn"; etc. (Matt. 5:3-10). Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is translated "happy". Truly it is that in the Beatitudes. "Happy are the meek", and so on. But you hesitate to use that word in connection with God - "the gospel of the glory of the happy God." That hardly sounds right to our ears; but you might perhaps catch something even inside of that. God is in the place and state of great blessedness. Are you not always asking the Lord to bless you and yours? What do you mean? Oh, to be put into a position and condition of complete satisfaction: where everything is just as you would have it: where you have all fullness to live upon for yourself, and to dispense to others. That is a happy position to be in. "It is more happy to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35); there is the same word. It is very happy, very blessed, to be in a position to give; and God is in that position. All fullness is His, and He has limitless resources to give. What a happy position! "The happy, the blessed, God."

Now let us take another step. It is "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God". It is the good news of the glory of God Who is full to overflowing with all resources of wisdom, power, grace, truth - everything. Out from such a God the gospel, the good news, comes. I say this gospel of salvation is an immense thing. What do you mean by salvation and the gospel? Well, being delivered from the guilt and condemnation and consequences of sin (here, and mostly hereafter) and perhaps some other blessings, such as assurance, thrown in! But in that you have only touched the fringe of the gospel! I say again, it is not an extra gospel, a second gospel, it is one; and if that full gospel had been preached, there would be a very different situation in the world today from what there is. The trouble is the smallness of the gospel

preached. It is the gospel, the good news, of the glory of the God Who is all-sufficient in Himself and for everything else - the blessed God.

Glory Linked With the Character of God

Now we will get nearer to the word. Glory - what is glory? Well, the Greek root of this word means proving by testing. There is one little passage which will help us a good deal, and it is in 1 Pet. 1:7. If you were reading that in the Greek you would find in that verse three words which have the same beginning, indicating that they contain a common idea. Here they are, emphasized:

"That the PROOF (or TRIAL) of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is PROVED by fire, may be found unto praise and GLORY..." "Trial", "proved", "glory". Glory is something proved by testing.

What is the glory of God? You will find that the glory of God is almost invariably linked with His character; and His character is proved, established, unalloyed righteousness. He is right, He is righteous altogether, there is not the slightest shadow or suspicion of question about His perfection. And glory is linked with His character; therefore glory is the character of God shining forth in expression, the very nature of God manifested.

There are symbols, but they only help us on the way. We very often take the symbol to mean the reality. The symbol for glory is light, just as the symbol for evil and sin is darkness. The real thing is the essence of God's nature and being, and when you get that, you get what you mean by light, and that is glory. The glory of God is the essential nature of God as unquestioned righteousness shining forth.

The Good News of God Manifested Universally

Before we go further, let us come back. What is the gospel - the 'good news' - of the glory of God? It is this, that everything is going to be like Him, everything in His universe is going to be a manifestation of Himself and His nature. We are called unto that eternal glory. Let that stand over against what we are in ourselves and see what our calling is, see how great the gospel is! What do you feel about yourself? Any hope of glory? - that is, any hope of the manifestation of unquestioned righteousness and holiness? Ah, the gospel which has come to us is good news indeed. What a possibility, what a hope! "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2). It is the issue of the gospel of the glory. Get hold of that. What is glory? It is God in His essential nature, unalloyed righteousness and holiness, in expression. That is the good news - you and I and all this creation to be brought into that, so that the earth shall be filled with the glory of God, not just a radiance, a phosphorescent glory, but the glory of a nature in which there is nothing that is questionable, evil, sinful - "no darkness at all". It is the hope of the gospel. That is the gospel of your salvation. That is the hope referred to by the Apostle as he has seen it in its growing fullness. He speaks of it right at the end, from his prison - "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Well, we are launched out into such an immensity we really do not know what to do with it! I confess that at that point I do not know how to proceed. You see, everything tumbles on top of you. We begin with Genesis, go all the way through the whole Bible, fragment by fragment, and we find it is all centred in and circling around this matter. The Cherubim - what are they there at the gate for? (Gen 3:24). They are custodians of the glory. All the way through it is this matter. And then the Son of God is manifested, Who is "the true light" that "shineth in the darkness" (John 1:9,5) and the message which He brings is gathered up

by the Apostle John in this way: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The Son came both to manifest and to declare what God is - unquestioned, unsullied holiness and righteousness in His very nature and being. That is God, and we are called unto His eternal glory. It is something almost too big to believe, is it not?

And now the word 'hope' comes in, associated with the gospel. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23). We are begotten again "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). So we could just pile it up like that. Do not such words as these hint at a tremendous prospect set before us in the gospel? It is the prospect of glory, and glory is character proved through testing.

The Trial of Faith Unto Glory

Now then, "That the proof of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory..." You are going through a test, an awful, fiery trial. What is happening? Well, the scum is coming to the surface and being removed, and the purity, the reality, the genuineness of your faith is being brought out through testing. The reality is being established through fiery trial, and when, through testing and trial, you have got the reality of the Divine nature established, you have glory. "Be found unto... glory." It is what is of God in us put to the test, tried, through fiery processes, and issuing in glory. It is God manifested in and through us.

In practical spiritual life it means this. God by His grace has planted in us a little germ of faith. How small and how weak it seems! But then, under Divine discipline and trial we are tested as to that faith. And as the fiery trial goes on, a good deal of ourselves comes to the surface. Is that not true? When we are in trial, a lot that is of ourselves comes to the surface. Yes, all that inherent unbelief of our nature comes up - resentment, rebellion, bitterness. Oh yes, it all comes up in the fiery trial. We do not know ourselves until we get into the fires of trial and testing. We would not believe what there is in us until we are put to the test. I heard Dr. Campbell Morgan once say that any man is capable of any sin you like to mention if only he is put into circumstances calculated to find him out. That is a terrific thing to say. You may not accept it, but that is because you have not been put into the situation. Put that in another way. You are not just going to pass through the temptations of life, be they what we think of as 'common' temptations or related to the most awful sins, without knowing that you are being tempted and therefore you could give way. The bias towards evil is all there. The Lord Jesus was only saying that sort of thing when He said, in substance, 'Moses said, Thou shalt not...; but I say, if you think about it - if you only look - it is just as bad as though you had done it' (Matt. 5:27,28). What was He meaning? - that it is in you, it is a part of you. Oh, you may think that is terrible, but I think it is glorious! Do you say, 'We cannot stand up to this; it is worse than ever; it is going to push us further down than ever. Moses is bad enough, but if we take this on, who will survive?' But I say that that is not bad but good. The Lord was not heaping condemnation upon condemnation. He was only saying, 'It is not just a matter of what you do or do not do; it is a matter of what you are, and I have come to take away what you are, not merely what you do'. That is glorious! That is the gospel of the glory, the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus deals not simply with things that we do or refrain from doing, but gets us entirely out of the way, bringing in a new creation. That is glory; that is the hope of the gospel. Thank God, there will come a moment in the history of this universe when the last vestige of the fall will be rooted out of every one of us who trust in Christ. One moment and we shall be changed, and even this body of our humiliation will be made like unto His body of glory, a holy body, a sinless body.

Yes; we were saying it is in trial that all this self-nature comes to the surface, but it is as well that it does come to the surface. Grace deals with it, grace working through the growing knowledge of our need of Christ makes us very humble, and humility is a trait of God. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit, it is the counter to the poison of fallen Lucifer - pride. Trial brings these things out in the grace of God, and it is found unto glory - Christ-likeness, God-likeness. Or again, in simple experience, our deep and terrible trials make us more like the Lord under His grace. They do not make people outside of Christ more like the Lord. It is only those who are under the grace of God who become more like the Lord through fiery trials. It is found unto glory, God-likeness.

I think I must stop there. I trust it is a glimpse of the greatness of our salvation, "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." What a prospect it opens up before us! We are lost in it. But if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-character-of-the-gospel/>

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