

The Church According to God's Thought (Continued) II

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Cross removes the curse of Babel by emptying humans of themselves and making them rely on faith in the Lord Jesus, resulting in unity and fellowship among humans.

Scripture: Genesis 11:4, Daniel 4:30, Philippians 2:7

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "The Cross"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the Cross of Christ removes the curse of Babel, which represents humanity's attempt at self-salvation and glory. He explains that Babel symbolizes the divisive nature of man, where individuals seek fulfillment and peace through their own efforts rather than through faith in Christ. The true essence of the Church is found in recognizing its hopelessness without Christ, yet being filled with hope and glory through Him. Sparks challenges believers to understand that the Cross not only addresses personal struggles but also fosters unity within the Church, transcending human divisions. He calls for a deeper understanding of the Cross's implications in daily life and relationships within the Church community.

Transcript

The Cross Removes the Curse of Babel

May I just say a word or two more before we close? The Cross removes the curse of Babel. What is Babel, or Babylon, which is the full-grown Babel? Well, first of all, it is that principle of man's saving power as resident within himself. "Let us build us a tower... and make us a name" (Gen. 11:4): which was the re-action, as you well know, to the deluge; that if God decided to drown the world again, they would have found their own way of salvation by their tower unto heaven, and they would get above anything that God could do and be their own saviour. Now, blatantly of course, few people would talk like that, but in principle that is human: which comes right down to this, that there is something in man's nature of virtue, which, if it were only developed, nurtured, cultured, would result in his own emergence, his own salvation, his own deliverance by his own power, his own virtue. That is Babel or Babylon. See this great Babylon that I have made! (Daniel 4:30). Now, Babel and Babylon is the "I" element which can do something, resulting in man's glory. The end of all things for man, according to his Divinely appointed destiny, is glory, but how you reach that destiny is quite another matter. God says that destiny is only possible of attainment through

the Cross of the Lord Jesus, in which man is utterly emptied of himself. It is the way even of the Son of man, Who emptied Himself, and eventually was crowned with glory. But man does not naturally take that way.

You see, Babylon, after all, is the principle which we see exemplified in the beast and the false prophet. It is something in man himself which can be rested upon, worked upon, and will result in his own salvation. None of us here would contemplate that objectively as a proposition: nevertheless, we are all caught in it. I doubt whether there is anyone here who has not fallen in that respect. Have you never for a moment in your life been found searching your own heart to make you happy, contented, at rest, satisfied, at peace with God, to bring you on to good terms with the Lord? You are doing it all the time. Every time you are miserable about yourself, that is it! You see, there are but two alterations, to be miserable about yourself or joyful in the Lord, and those who have the greatest reason to be miserable about themselves are the very people to be most joyful in the Lord, if only they knew God's basis of salvation; for God's basis of salvation is a very practical one. God's basis of salvation is this: "You are the most wretched and hopeless creature, and in yourself you will never be anything else; and I have looked upon you through your faith in My Son as though you had never sinned at all". That is God's basis of salvation. A real apprehension of that should deliver us [from] those fits of misery about our own condition into a great restful joy in the Lord, and anything that is not that, beloved, is the curse of Babel.

God has put a curse upon that whole principle and essence of self-salvation, self-glory. Get into that realm and you may well be miserable, for you are in the realm of an active curse.

So the Church takes that up, and when we sing, "Tis the Church triumphant singing, Worthy the Lamb", do not let us project ourselves into some future date. Let us get right to that now. The Church according to God's mind is the embodiment of this thing; that in itself it is the most hopeless thing and yet in Christ a most glorious thing, full of hope, every prospect open to it through faith in the Lord Jesus and yet at the same time in itself worthless. The Church is to be that. It is the issue of the Cross.

But then, you see, not only does the Cross remove the curse of Babel as a principle, but it also deals with that other phase of the curse of Babel, the divisive elements in man's nature. When God came down and cursed those builders of the tower, He did so by confounding their language, and at that moment they became so many fragments, not able for a moment to understand one another, to walk together in agreement. They had no common basis of fellowship. They were scattered, confused, disintegrated. Calvary deals with that. It deals with all the divisive elements in man, overcomes them and transcends them. Of course, we know that in measure; but the Church is to be the embodiment of that. Oh well, that is another thing! The Church the embodiment of that, and yet the Church being what it is on the earth now! Oh yes! Let us say it again: not just the mystical, the abstract, the theoretical, but the practical reality right now here on the earth. It may be, as it was in the case of Israel after the captivity, that the real representation of God's thought will be bound up with a remnant. But it is to be there, God would have it.

Let us bring it home to our own hearts. The Cross really does mean for you and me that those things which naturally and in the flesh in us as His people would divide, would lead to misunderstanding, bringing about conflict between us, the Cross is to mean in our case the removal of those traces of the curse. They are marks of the curse, and the Cross has to deal with them, and has to lift you and me on to a plane where something greater than that operates, which transcends that and keeps us together in spite of all that old background. The marvel of the Cross is this, that there can be a going on in fellowship in spite, on the one hand, of much in the human makeup, constitution, temperament, disposition, which makes for

great difficulty in going on together, and, on the other hand, despite all the direct assaults of Satan by all his means to break up that fellowship, there can be a going on triumphantly and a holding together and a coming out at the end, the thing not having been disintegrated. It can be; but it will only be if the Cross is a reality there. But if it is, you may know that the Cross is a reality, it has been working. If there is disruption and disintegration, you may take it that the people have failed in relation to the Cross.

I have often thought that the gift of tongues in the beginning was just one aspect of the triumphant work of the Cross over the work of Satan and the curse. I am not asking for it now particularly, but it has sometimes been in my mind that when they all came into a place where Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and so on, all together heard and understood everything in the tongue wherein each had been born, as though there might have been but one language, God through the Cross of His Son, had set aside Babel. Something had triumphed. Well, we are content to leave it at that. In the end we shall all speak one language, although we shall be out of every nation and tribe and kindred and tongue - a heavenly language.

Well now, if that is but a sign - and it is a sign - what does it signify? It signifies this, that the Cross is the secret, the basis, of the Church's witness, and the Church is to be the embodiment of that tremendous triumph of the Cross over these disruptive and divisive elements in the race, in you and in me. It has to come down to our relationships every day. The more we know the Cross, the better we get on together, and the quicker we will get over things which offend and divide. The Church, therefore, becomes the outcome of the Cross in this respect.

That is surely enough at the moment. It constitutes a challenge, a very solemn challenge, to our hearts. The Lord enable us to face this challenge of the Cross in all its meaning, and to face the implications. The Church is something real. Oh yes, it is very real. Do ask the Lord to make the meaning of the Church something more than this mystical thing, this objective, abstract thing. It has to come down here in our every-day life. You have said that you have seen the Church, the Body. You have testified to it and so on. What are you doing about it? Are you still living an independent life, still taking your own way, making your own plans, unrelated and out of fellowship, still violating those laws of fellowship and Body life, still a law to yourself? Well, if that is true, and inasmuch as that is true, you do not know the Cross, let alone the Church. You cannot know the Church until you know the Cross. You do not know the Cross; the Cross has not dealt with yourself in some way. Oh, if the Cross really does its work in us, we shall spontaneously come on to Church-ground, the ground of fellowship, relatedness, cooperation. So may the Lord produce practical issues.

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