

The Controversy of Zion

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the deep spiritual significance of Zion and its ongoing controversy as a reflection of the spiritual state of God's people.

Duration: 1:19:06

Scripture: Psalm 2:6, Isaiah 30:8, Isaiah 32:10, Acts 4:25-26, Romans 8:19, Romans 8:29, Hebrews 12:22

Topics: "Zion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the battle between the forces of evil and the church, represented by Zion. The church is called and chosen by God for a specific vocation and testimony in the world. The speaker emphasizes the importance of unity within the church, as the spirits of division are at work. The sermon references the second Psalm, highlighting the opposition faced by the church and the intervention of God in their battles.

Transcript

Lord, in no formal way, no mere custom, but in a very deep and strong consciousness of need, we pray. We must pray. We are, this morning, allowing ourselves to be put under new responsibility.

If thou shouldest speak, as we have asked thee to do, then the words that thou dost speak will judge us in that day. We realize that it is no small thing even to allow ourselves to hear the Lord speak. But Lord, it's a matter of capacity also.

We cannot understand unless the spirit of wisdom and understanding gives us the ability. Things are going to be said which may be the truth and we will not understand unless something is done by thee in us. And we certainly cannot follow through in obedience unless thou, Lord, dost do this thing.

As thou didst say to a very beloved disciple, you cannot follow me now. Whither I go, you cannot follow me now. You shall afterward.

That cannot is over us and on us. We cannot follow through unless, Lord, there is something done by thee. Now all this we bring.

And what is true of hearing and obeying is just as much true of speaking. We are not authorities. We are not teachers.

We cannot speak unless thou, Lord, dost the speaking. The anointing must do it. We submit ourselves that this time shall be an anointed time, a Holy Spirit time, in both ways and all ways shall be the Lord this morning, granted that the glory may come to thee and any fruit may accrue to thy glory.

In the name of the Lord Jesus we ask this. Amen. We return to continue with that first fragment of Hebrews chapter 12, verse 22.

But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Ye are come to Mount Zion. For this morning I want to link with that one or two other passages of scripture.

First of all, back in the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 30. Pardon me, it's chapter 32.

Isaiah chapter 32, at verse 10. I think I'm still wrong. Chapter 30.

Now go write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, forever and ever. And then will you turn to the second psalm? Psalm the second. I want you to read this psalm.

Perhaps we'll begin at verse 6, having glanced at the earlier part. Yet have I set my king upon the holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree.

The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee. Now you keep that psalm in mind, please, as we go on.

All the rest of it from that verse and before, take a glance. But I want you now to turn to the letter to the Romans, and your great favorite, chapter 8. No, I'm not going to read what you want me to. Chapter 8, and verse 19.

For the earnest expectation of the creation waited 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 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.

Now of course you want the next bit, but I'm leaving that and going on to verse 29. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he foreordained, them he also called.

And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified. Now between those two portions that we have read, we have this, verse 22.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of the body. We are occupied with what we have come to.

Ye are come, ye are come. And we have been thinking about Zion, the Zion to which we are come. And we have said seven things about Zion, seven things to which we have come, constituting this position.

And I come to this eighth this morning, which is our very serious and solemn moment. I feel that if the Lord gets his word through this morning, very largely, so far as this ministry is concerned, the conference may hang upon it. It is the most practical issue in this whole consideration, position, what we have come to, in

coming to Zion.

Here, as you note, in this passage, Zion and Jerusalem look to be synonymous. Come to Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem. No and between, making them different things.

And you eliminate the ands from this whole section, because you are not dealing with different things. In these various matters that are mentioned, this is all of one. It is all one thing.

However, that by the way, here Zion and Jerusalem come together, are spoken of as being one. And that gives us our starting point for this present consideration. Zion, as the heart of Jerusalem, as the very essence of all that Jerusalem was intended to be, as the real spiritual meaning of Jerusalem, concentrated point of all that Jerusalem represented.

Zion, Jerusalem, in history and in the nations, have always been the storm center. The storm center of history. The storm center of the nations.

Of course, it would take a long time for us to even look generally at the history of Jerusalem. You can do that at any time. But how many sieges? How many investments? How much was Jerusalem the object and center of world attention and concern? Again and again and again, eyes were turned toward Jerusalem.

For Jerusalem's destruction. For Jerusalem's wiping out. For Jerusalem's possession.

A long, troubled history is the history of Jerusalem, even to our own time. A world center of conflict and controversy that everybody recognizes. Zion, what the Prophet calls the controversy of Zion.

The controversy of Zion. Zion, Jerusalem, has been a controversial object in history and in the nations all the way along. It's extraordinary, isn't it? You wonder why it's such a wonderful city, is it? It's not so great.

How long would it take you to walk across it or even to walk around it? What is it and what was it? Perhaps it's a better specimen of world cities today, so far as structure is concerned, modernization. But what was it? And even now, what is it? How can it compare with London, New York, Paris, any of these others you might mention? Well, they might be centers of attraction, truly. A tremendous battle in our own lifetime to get hold of London.

Oh, if you'd been in the Battle of London, you would have known. Fourteen months, day and night, without cessation. City bombed, fired.

Tanks, sails. You've been in that. You've seen it happening.

Great areas are going up in dust and smoke. Well, London is an object. It comes with something, because most of you people know nothing about it.

In that way, hope you never will. There it is. But Jerusalem, what's that? Why? Not once or twice in a lifetime, but right through a long history of centuries of controversy over Zion.

And if you look closer and look into it more carefully, you will come to see this. That Zion, or Jerusalem, was always a sign. It was a sign.

There was a significance attached to it. And the significance was not its temporal aspect, of buildings and structures and economies and so on. Why Babylon can go far beyond all that.

It was a spiritual thing. For, you notice this, whenever the spiritual life of Jerusalem as representing the people, the nation. Whenever the spiritual life was right, was right.

Whenever it was a matter of right standing with God, Jerusalem was in the ascendant. Attack if you like. Let the hordes of Babylon, Syria, come against Jerusalem.

And in camp. There's a Hezekiah inside. There's a people inside who are right with the Lord, waiting on the Lord, crying to the Lord, making the Lord their trust.

And so much the worse for Assyria, for Babylon. In a night, their hosts are wiped out by the angel of the Lord. When things spiritually right, doesn't matter how fierce, forceful and great.

The assault, the antagonism, they stand. Come through. But from time to time, it was not like that inside.

The spiritual state was low. There was depression. There was wrong.

The standing before God was not right. And then Jerusalem was always in weakness. Always in fear, in dread.

Weakened from the inside, spiritually, could not stand. And at last, at last, after more than one successful assault, of breaking down, overcoming, at last, because, simply because of this poor, low, spiritual condition, Jerusalem is destroyed. Finally destroyed.

That is, robbed of its place in the divine economy and purpose. It's a sign of a spiritual condition. Zion has always been such a sign, a barometer of spiritual life.

It is absolutely useless, dear friends, to refer to tradition. You say, well, God did this in the beginning, and this is the place where the oracles of God are found, and the temple of God is, and the great tradition of Israel and the chosen people, it's here. We rest on that.

No. Tradition won't support now. History will not support now.

Institutions will not support now. It seems as though God has no regard, at length, for temple, or ark, or altar, or priesthood. He cries through the prophets, away, away with you.

I want none of your sacrifice. Isaiah 58, what a chapter, cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice. Then what follows? Yet they seek me daily, they love to know my ways.

I will have none of it, sister. I will have none of it. These are not the sacrifices I want.

This ritual is not what I'm after. This traditional system is not what I desire. It's a spiritual state.

And only on that can the Lord associate himself, ally himself, to Zion. So I'm saying that Zion has always been a sign of spiritual condition. And that has been made evident by whether there was ascendancy, ascendancy, the support of God, making them superior to every adverse force.

Or whether they were ashamed among the nations, or reproached among the nations, with a prophetic element. A prophetic element pointing on, of course, to something else, as is always so in the prophets.

You have Jerusalem crying.

Crying, a great hard cry. Woe is me. Woe is me.

All ye that pass by, all ye that pass by, have pity, have pity all ye that pass by. What a tragic situation. For Zion, shame amongst the nations.

And which of the two things, ascendancy or shame, glory or dishonor, right at the center of history of the nations, bound up with a spiritual condition, dependent upon a spiritual condition. You know, there's a lot to be gathered into that statement, dear friends, which I could never stop even to explore. But if you look at this letter to the Hebrews again, and see that we are come to Zion, we are not come to some thing, some religious thing, some tradition.

We are not come to historic Christianity. We are come to a spiritual situation, which is calculated to startle us. All we say, we are in the day of grace.

This is the dispensation of grace. True. Is the letter to the Hebrews on any other ground than the ground of grace? Surely not.

But do you know, in this letter, the most awful things in the Bible are written. How shall we escape? We, we Christians, we believers of this dispensation, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Our God is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But this is said to these people, these Christians, and other things like it. I'm always having people come to me on this question of whether one's saved or not saved. Finally, last, raising the question out of Hebrews 6 and other parts, these statements, you see.

For it is impossible to renew them to again, again to repentance and so on. Don't raise that with me, please. But I'm pointing this out, that this letter, in the day of grace, day which brings into view not some new Christian system, not the formation of a new Christian tradition, but a spiritual condition without which everything else is as nothing.

Come to Zion. Yes. But you have come to the controversy of Zion.

You have come, we have come, to the great battle of Zion. And it's a spiritual battle. Here it is then.

What a battle. Well now, having said that, and that is the background of it all, I don't want to make you glum. I see your faces are getting a bit heavy and your chins are dropping a bit.

You think I'm getting back to Sinai, I think. And Zion. No, no, no, I said this is a very solemn time.

I'm going to have a lot of teaching this week. I'm going to avail one little bit if there is not a corresponding spiritual position. Well now, having said that, and laid that as the background of it all, it's the battle, the controversy of Zion.

And what is the nature of this controversy? Let's look at one or two things about it. And I'm working toward a very, very vital thing, which I trust we shall reach before we finish. The nature of the battle.

What was the nature of the battle with Israel? Israel centered and represented by Zion, Jerusalem. It was the battle in relation to a calling and a vocation. They were called by God.

They were chosen by God. They were an elect race. See why we came to Romans 8. An elect race.

A chosen people. In history on the earth they were the elect of God. Chosen and called and separated.

What for? To be saved? Just to be different? Just to be that? No, for a vocation. A calling. A testimony in the world.

A testimony among the nations. A mighty heavenly vocation on the earth. Called for that.

To redeem God. What God is like. The reality of God.

The glory of God. The holiness of God. The power of God.

A vessel of testimony among the nations, to the nations, to the world. Zion, as we have been saying, is that which represents God's full thought for mankind. The fullness of God's thought is vested in, centered in, Zion.

And because of that, the battle starts. That is, as it says here, the city of the living God. In history it was the city of David.

God's anointed king. And do you notice the history of David? Up, from birth, it looks like down and out, but no, steadily, steadily, up. That all the forces of Saul and his malice is devil-driven.

So, he concentrated against this young man. What that young man suffered, you know the story. He seems to be a marked man.

As we say, I don't know whether you have the phrase in this country, a speckled bird. He seems just right from the beginning to be a marked man. The devil ain't put a mark on that man.

Watching him, pursuing him. Poor David cries, I'm like a pelican in the wilderness, a sparrow upon the housetop. Oh yes.

The object of a fierce and furious, relentless malice for his undoing that he holds on his way. Steadily. Not because he is so strong, for there were times when David broke down, I shall now be, I shall now be killed.

He resorted to some subterfugeous man of like passions with us, very human. Nevertheless, through it all, whether it is in the land of the Philistines by compromise, a mistake from which God sovereignly delivered him, or wherever it is, in the cave of Adullam, in the wilderness, driven hither and thither for his very life, his spiritual course is on and up. Spiritually, it doesn't look like it, I believe, on and up, until eventually, anointed, he comes to the place of the anointing, the throne.

And Zion is the place of the consummation of that history, of divine election, divine choice, divine, dare I use the word in these days, poor ordination. He is there, on the throne. He is in the place of the full thought of God, and that is centered in him.

It is the place of the absolute sovereignty and lordship of God's anointing, it is Zion. We are come from Zion. We have been saying this, there is another greater than David, that is here, and there is another Zion greater than that, that is here.

But it is on that point, dear friends, just focused upon that one inclusive and consummate point of the absolute sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ, that all the conflict rages and is centered. Turn to your New

Testament, you know that is true. You know that their message, as they went out into the world that then was everywhere, their message was, Jesus Christ is Lord.

We preach Jesus Christ as Lord. That brought them up against Caesar and all the Caesars, because Caesar said, I am Lord. The Roman Empire said, Caesar is Lord.

They worshipped Caesar, and the argument, contention, accusation was, these men are preaching another king but Caesar. That is where the controversy was on this one thing, the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. The controversy of Zion is on that point.

Ultimately, ultimately, God's anointing. Now you come, why did we read Psalm 2? Why do the nations rage? Raging nations, we are coming to that in another connection shortly. Raging nations, kings of the earth, gathering themselves together against the Lord and against His anointing.

Let us cast their bonds from us. Let us get rid of them. They are a menace, a menace.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I have set my king. The raging, the storming, the controversy, focused about the anointed one, in the anointed one, God's anointing.

But do you notice, it was not very long in the New Testament, you only reach what is marked off mechanically by chapter 4. Oh, there is a, there is a use of course in having this thing that that man in Paris did just a few centuries ago when he divided up the Bible into chapters and verses. That is quite a modern thing. Quite useful for our purposes of reference.

But, I have said this often, it is a very very good thing to wipe those things out. Sometimes, and read straight on, blind to the chapter. Do you notice when you read chapter 4 as it is marked, you reach a point in the controversy.

The controversy of Zion, oh the battle is on. The battle is on. The forces of evil in this world have set their mark upon this anointed one and the proclamation of him.

And when they are at work, killing James and imprisoning Peter, the church meets, meets, Zion gathers. Zion gathers. What do they do? Quote the second Psalm.

Quote the second Psalm to the Lord. Lord, Lord, Lord. And then they quote.

Why did the heathen or the nations rage? The people imagined a vain thing. Against the Lord, against his anointing, they quote it. What happens? What happens? The king is in his holy mount of Zion.

He intervenes. He intervenes. Oh yes, Herod seems to have scored a great success in killing James.

And he is so pleased with himself and the people are so pleased with him. He thinks he is going to do the whole business. He takes Peter, puts him in prison.

That's all right. So much the worse for you, Herod. What's the end of that story? He was eaten worms and died.

And the next sentence, but the word of the Lord went on. The holy hill of Zion and the one enthroned, you see. Because there was right standing with God then.

So they quoted Psalm 2, meaning that time has no place in this. Geography has no place in this, but wheresoever there is a true representation of Zion, there may be a sort of seeming successes of the evil one and his powers. The issue is with him who is in Zion.

The issue is victory. God has set his holy one upon his holy hill of Zion. The anointed is there.

Now dear friends, you're listening to all this as Bible exposition perhaps. I don't know what you're thinking, what your reactions are, but I know what I'm after. I'm after something.

I hope you will move with me to the object that we are seeking to reach. If we had come to Zion, and you have to have been very pleased with the seven things about Zion. Oh beautiful, oh wonderful, oh glorious, yes.

Zion. Let's sing more about Zion. Let's have it as the city of our solemnity.

Let's have some festivities. All right, all right, all true. But you've got to meet number eight.

If we have come to Zion, we have come to the controversy of a spiritual position on the part of a people. The controversy of history over this people in union with the ascended, exalted Lord. It's a controversial matter in this universe.

Principalities, powers, world rulers of this darkness, hosts of wicked spirits, all focused upon one thing. The denial of the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. And the church is the custodian of that testament.

That's our calling. That is the vocation of the people of God, to be that. Against them the battle is against.

All that is against the testimony of Jesus. And look at the context of that phrase. Context of that phrase in the book of the Revelation.

So glad the Lord has led Brother Kahn along the line of these evenings. It's just what we're saying this morning. Terrific battle it is on for the testimony of Jesus.

Well that is the focal points of it. But then the battle, Mark you, not only is in the atmosphere, so to speak, it's there. That's its realm.

The heavenly places. The atmosphere. In a sense an abstract thing.

But notice again, as in the type in the Old Testament, so in the spiritual reality in the New, this antagonism has its media, its vehicles, its channels, its means. And what is it? It's the world spirit. The world spirit.

This evil world in its spirit. I don't think yet we have really grasped what the New Testament has to say about this world. This world, it is an enemy.

It's an enemy of all that is of God. Love not the world. Neither the things that are in the world.

A great cry from the heart of the Lord Jesus. A prayer just before the cross. They are not of the world.

Even as I am not of the world, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of me. You've grabbed the spear that holds the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one who rules in it. No, this has not registered yet upon the church.

The world spirit. I think you must know something of what I mean. During this very year, the past months of this very year, I've had to have a lot to do with governmental departments or government departments.

And they, my contacts with them have been in relation to interests of the Lord. Means for the work of the Lord. Interests of the Lord.

And do you know, well I've known something about it in the past, but every, I was going to use an extreme, every blessed touch with this world, is government departments and the men at the head of them, the people in them, have met me with frustration. Unreasonable frustration. No reason indeed, every other reason why they should have helped.

And they couldn't tell me, I'm quite sure they couldn't tell me why they didn't. I've reasoned, I've argued, I've pointed out, that nothing, nothing at all that would be not to their interest. And yet, frustration, frustration at every point.

And no good ground at all. Strange thing is, is that after four months of that, from one department to another, this department said, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, but you must go to so-and-so. All right, over to so-and-so.

Oh yes, oh yes, but you must go to so-and-so. And like that, all the time, and never getting anywhere. Strange thing is, in the end, when it was all finished, they, on their own account, put in the thing they said would never be allowed.

But what a history of touching this world. Time-servers. Men who were governed by something they knew not what.

Frustrating, frustrating. This is what I mean by this world. It's not going to help us.

Indeed it's going to obstruct all the way along. And you see, in the Old Testament, it was these world interests, world forces, the world that was all the time against Zion. If you'd ask them why, they'd have to sit down and think hard.

Why is it that we don't like that silly little simp city? Those people, who are they? What are they? Why don't we like them? Had difficulty in answering their own question. But there's something sinister behind it all. Those sinister intelligences know something.

What do they know? They know what the elect is called for. And that in the long run, in the long run, Mr. Scrooge Dick knows that that elect is going to be his undoing. He's going to lose his world power.

His world title as prince of this world. He's going to lose it all at the hands of this one in Zion. And through that corporate expression of his sovereignty, his lordship, that Zion we have come to.

He knows. And if you are related to that, I'm going to comfort you by telling you, you're a marked man. You're a marked woman.

And don't succumb to second causes. And say, it's my landlord. It's this and that and something else.

Oh, it may, that may be the vehicle, the medium. But there's something much more sinister than that behind it all. Our wrestling is not with flesh and blood landlords or anybody else.

In the ultimate issue, committees, organizations, no. Coming behind all this, the world spirit. The world spirit.

Remember the Dr. Campbell Morgan, to whom I owe very much, in his lecture on the letter to the Corinthians, simply said this, the whole reason for those conditions in Corinth, so shameful, so terrible, from which you turn in some matters in disgust and shame, is because of the world spirit in Corinth that got into the church. Well, there you are. The battle is with the world spirit.

As in the old, literally, so now in the new, spiritually. I need not dwell upon one Corinthians, need I? World spirit, the wisdom of this world. The conception of power in this world.

He's up against that. The wisdom, the power of God, our Jesus Christ, he says, is Lord. All right, that's another line.

Let's go on. And this is the final phase to which I want to get, so definitely this morning. What Romans 8, the parts we read, bring us to, as the very sum of all this that we are saying about the controversy of Zion, the tumult of the nations, the tumult of the nations, Psalm 2, it goes, The nations rage, kings of the earth gather together.

Tumult in the nations, and the reason for it. Why the tumult in the nations? Is there anybody here this morning who would not agree with me when I said the nations are in tumult just now? Was there ever a time when the world, almost in its entirety, if not in its entirety as in tumult, was in tumult as it is now? Tumult, not only in the peoples and the nations, but convulsions in nature, convulsions in nature. We never had it like this, have we? All these convulsions, I don't know how much you're in touch with it, but somehow or other we know about it.

The earthquake, famine, the disruption of seasons, what not. There is, and it's the best word for it, convulsion in the nations. Romans 8, the whole creation groaneth.

Why the groaning and the moaning I've heard in these meetings is nothing to what's going on in the creation. It's bad enough. I'm not sure, Mark you, please forgive me, I'm not sure whether the moanings and the groanings in these meetings that I hear are we within ourselves do groan, whether it's the same thing.

It may be. However, that's a little humor by the way. The whole creation groaned and traveled in pain together.

Shundes, Mars, together. It's an integration in a groan. It's integrated by this travel in the whole creation.

And not only so, but we who have received the first fruits of the Spirit do groan within ourselves, waiting, waiting. The creation is groaning inwardly like this and traveling. We had a spiritual ear to hear groaning with us for something.

It was subjected to vanity out of its own will, by the will of him who subjected it. What is it groaning for? What is this travel to bring forth something? And what is it that is to be brought forth? Note the rest. The elect.

You've come on that section. That great controversial section of Romans about predestination, foreordination, election. Now don't come to me about that.

I'm not having anything to do with these systems of predestination, the rest of it. What I am saying is there is such a thing as God's elect, hidden, hidden in the nations. God knows.

You don't know, I don't know. And I cannot tell you who is elect and not elect. God knows.

They're there, hidden. And within such, there is this spirit of traveling, longing, groaning. Oh, that this vanity, void, not attaining, would be removed and we should emerge.

Emerge, come out, be born. Travel should precipitate. There we touch the heart.

What is, what are all these convulsions in the nature, in the nations about, and in nature? As we are moving toward the end of the dispensation, why this, why this? Tumult, convulsions. Why? Because God has something here that is not wanted here by this world and its prince. It's something, you know, like Jonah in the big fish.

The moment or the hour came when the big fish said, Oh, look here, what have I got inside? What is this that I've got? It's got the most awful attack of despair. Oh, to get rid of this. I'll never be comfortable until I've precipitated this that I've got inside.

Let me, let me get rid of this. Let me get this out. Goes under the sovereignty of God, but he makes for the shore and precipitates.

And I can think when that fish turns back into the sea, Oh, now, now I feel all right. He's gone. He's gone.

Now, am I exaggerating, imagining? Come back with me with Israel in Egypt. What is happening? Convulsion after convulsion in Egypt. Convulsion.

Under the sovereignty of God, yes. So that steadily, gradually, persistently, Egypt is coming to the place, Oh, would it be a good day and a good thing when we get rid of these people? Do you notice what happens at the end? And they thrust them out. They precipitated them.

They vomited them out. And I suppose although Pharaoh's army pursued and brought them back, many if not all in Egypt said, Thank God they hadn't succeeded and brought those people back again. We are rid of them and it's a very good for them.

Now, that's not interpretation. No. There's a people in there, God's elect, and sooner or later, the place where they are will want to get rid of them.

They're a menace. A menace. But come over to Babylon.

They're there. They're there. We haven't very much to indicate.

We have Daniel and his three friends and we must conclude that they were not the only two ones in Babylon. There's Ezekiel. There's a remnant in Babylon.

God has a people. He's doing something through seventy years and then the seventy years are completed and what happens? The prophet Isaiah cries, chapter 43, For your sake have I sent to Babylon and brought down all their nobles. And how did it happen? Belshazzar has his peace, doesn't he? And writes on the wall, Thy kingdom is divided.

That night was Belshazzar slain. How? Cyrus and his army had stealthily through the night moved along the wadi, the valley, the dry valley through into Jerusalem underground and to use the phrases of the prophet had broken in pieces the gates of brass and cut in thunder the bars of iron and come up in the middle of Jerusalem slain Belshazzar. For your sake, for your sake, because of you, the elect I have sent to Babylon and brought down their high ones.

The people inside are a menace and God's object of all his activities, world convulsions if you like and I believe, dear friends, as we get near to the end when the church is to be raptured, when the church is to be extricated these convulsions are significant, very significant that the day of our emergence is near. You remember the phrase? I wish we had it in the literal Greek. Words of the Lord, prophetic words of the Lord about the end, the end.

He says, the tumult of nations men's hearts failing them for fear of the terrible things which are coming upon the earth. But the literal there is not distress of nations the literal Greek is no way out for the nations. No way out for the nations.

Oh my word, isn't that true? We're going to find a way out, aren't we? No way out for the nations, but then note when that time comes, lift up your eyes for your way out draws near. Your way out. There is a way out for the elect when there is this investment.

Well, you've got the teaching, haven't you now? You've come to Zion. I wonder, I don't know of course in the smaller world of the New Testament it may have been true under those persecutions and martyrdom I think it was, but the world is such a much bigger world now than then, this great world compared with the little world the Roman Empire then. And I wonder if there was ever a time in the history of this world when the saints were going through spiritual pressure more than they are now.

Spiritual pressure. I'm not talking now only of outward persecutions some are in there. Even here at this time this week dear children of God said to me I've never in my life knew so much spiritual conflict spiritual pressure, it sometimes gets unbearable intolerable.

I wonder how I'm going to get through. Well, many of you may not know anything about that if you don't, well, don't worry at the moment but if you do know that, dear friends and some of us do we never in our lives, and some of us had a long life with the Lord knew such intense and almost naked spiritual pressure that at times it does seem to get to the point where we'll break. We'll break.

Many dear children of God all over this world write to me on these terms about this What does it mean? You've come to Zion, that's what it means. Leave your theology of election and predestination leave that, that won't get you anywhere only into trouble and confusion but take the fact that God has a people in this world, in the nations hidden in the nations, whom he knows the Lord knoweth them that are his he knows them and they are of the greatest interest to the devil they are marked and they're involved in the controversy of Zion you'd like to leave the word Zion if that creates mental pictures leave it, forget it see the meaning, the spiritual meaning of something that is standing for the testimony of Jesus that is standing for the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ that is standing for the true vocation of the church a people like that not going to have an easy time I'm sorry to say that to you but we've been told that haven't we this week very, very pointedly but here it is and you'll go back and perhaps there'll be troubles difficulties this kind and that family, business, what not and then you'll say well what's happened to me what's gone wrong it's all gone right oh I wish we could believe that if what I'm saying is true it's the controversy of Zion that the conflict over something very precious to the Lord because Zion was very precious to the Lord in

history, wasn't it, read the Psalms something very precious to the Lord is being challenged combated by all the forces of evil nakedly and by every kind of means and this is the explanation of the present convulsions this prince of this world this prince of this world and this world's spirit and system knowingly or unknowingly is sick of us the nations are closing their doors driving out those who represent the Lord the world is narrowing down its scope for what is of Jesus Christ pressing in the explanation the time the time of the way out for the church and of course it's a false hope on the part of the world it may have been true that the Egyptians were very glad when those people had gone felt at rest for a time didn't last very long it was a transient thing Babylon may have felt a bit more comfortable when that remnant had gone back to Jerusalem it didn't last very long the Lord destroyed Babylon has he destroyed Egypt? maybe and it may be that when the church is gone the prince of this world and his kingdom may say well there they've gone they're out we can have it all to ourselves but if you notice the context of that is they don't have it for themselves very long then there comes the judgment of this world is just waiting until the church is out that time is drawing very near I think I've said enough, have I?

I could say much more as to the the aspects of this conflict the means used by the enemy to try and undo this testimony to try and destroy Zion means used, well one is confusion these evil powers and spirits are spirits of confusion they always were there never was a time, I venture to say in the history of this world when there was more confusion and confusion in Christendom in Christianity and it's brought down to the least local expression of Zion is it true? you don't know what to do where you are how to answer what it means spirits of confusion invading everything that is on this earth confusion spirits of corruption to defile to defile spirits of deception was there ever a time when there was more deception? everywhere? deception? oh I dare not stay with that, dare I? here it is the things that are misleading assuming a divine complexion that are false are a lie they won't last they'll have their day and cease to be the roots of their disintegration the seeds of their disintegration are in them there's a falsehood there in the semblance of good and right deception divisions no end to this no end to the last two the Lord's people there will be this attack to divide get us apart somehow yes, in the church universal split up in the local churches yes, division and division following division and in the family and in the two we're in a battle it's a terrible thing to say but you know however much there may be of love and certainty that the Lord brought you and your wife together or you and your husband together very often there's a battle over your fellowship is that saying too much? but it's true battle misunderstandings can come in there and divide and isolate anywhere, anywhere the spirits of division are at work today the slogan of those forces is divide and conquer depends on the ground on which you're standing if you're standing on natural ground on doctrinal ground on theological ground on interpretation ground standing on any of those grounds you won't hold together you won't hold together if you're standing on the ground of Christ only and His Lordship that is the answer I close this then with Zion is very precious to God for the reason that His Son is His appointed King on His Mount Zion Father's great love of this testimony of Zion is for His Son's sake you and I must have His Son's sake as the motivating power of all our ways ye are come to Zion but you've come to an involvement in a great conflict so help us God we just ask thee Lord that all the authority which has been given to thee in heaven and on earth may cover, encompass and embrace what has been said here this morning thou knowest it's not easy it's a battle even to get it out but Lord we need to be protected the word needs to be protected in our heart all the significance needs to be protected we trust thee Lord trust thee and all the mighty virtue of thy blood to protect the glory of thy name

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-controversy-of-zion-2/>

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