

# The Cross and Eternal Glory - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, contrasting the old covenant with the new covenant of glory and liberty.*

**Duration:** 34:49

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1

**Topics:** "Eternal Glory"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the theme of glory and the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about a dispensation of glory. The argument of the apostle is that the old dispensation lacked glory, but with the coming of the Spirit, a new and fuller glory was introduced. The medium of this glory is the Holy Spirit, who is described as the Spirit of glory. The instrument of this glory is the Word of God, which becomes alive through the Spirit and produces glory. Ultimately, the sum of this glory is found in Christ. The speaker emphasizes that the place of this glory is in the heart of the believer, and that it is through the Holy Spirit that the nature and disposition of God are mediated to us.

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## Transcript

I want to read the third chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians. Second letter to the Corinthians, chapter three. Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as do some epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.

And such confidence have we through Christ to God was. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his faith, which glory was passing away, how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation is glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect by reason of the glory that surpasseth. For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory.

Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away. But their minds were hardened, for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth unlifted, which veil is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their hearts.

For whensoever it shall come to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror of the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

We do not make a great deal of the ecclesiastical calendar as such, the special time, season, the year, because it's a part of our religion. But sometimes it is good and well to dwell upon the great epochs which lie at the very foundation of our faith, such as the birth of our Lord, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and the coming of the Spirit. Today that latter is, in many minds, the day of Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit.

And I think, dear friends, nay, I am sure, that we, the Lord's people, are always in need of both reminders and of fuller instruction as to what that really means. For it was indeed a great, a great thing that happened. The whole of the dispensations turned upon us up to the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The conditions of one dispensation obtained. From that day the whole dispensation changed and entirely new conditions came in. I say again, we need to know the greatness of the change and the changes which have come with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The chapter which we have just read as a portion of a much larger argument or steady form of truth, which ought not to be confined, restricted to the verses marked by chapter three. This chapter embodies something momentous and tremendous of that very change of dispensation from Moses to Christ. And from Moses to Christ ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the difference is marked by the prevailing word throughout the chapter, glory, glory. Underline it, verse seven, verse eight, twice in verse nine, twice in verse ten, verse eleven, three times in verse eighteen. In eighteen verses, the one word occurring ten times really indicating what this is about.

And then lay aside it, the word or the name Spirit. You find that this is a governing and ruling matter, the Spirit and glory. And the argument of the apostle is just this, that there was a glory which paid it, which went out in the old dispensation, and that dispensation resolved itself into a dispensation which was anything but glory.

But by the coming of the Spirit, a dispensation of glory came in, and a glory that never was before, a new glory, a fuller glory, and a glory with a new meaning. To just analyze and sum up this chapter, we may put over it the statement of the theme here is glory. Let that be said.

The medium of glory is the Spirit. He is clearly set forth here as the Spirit of glory. The medium of the glory, the instrument of the glory, the Word of God.

The Word of God becoming alive by the Spirit and producing glory, as we shall see. The sum of the glory is Christ when it shall turn to the Lord. Mail is done away, glory breaks out.

Or, if we pursue this a little further than the mark of chapter 3, we should come on to this. God, who commanded light to shine in darkness, to shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The sum of glory is Christ.

The place of the glory is the heart of the believer. Has shined into our hearts, has written on hearts tables of flesh. The place of the glory is the heart of the believer.

The effect of the glory in the heart is transformation. We are being transformed as we behold the glory into the same image from glory to glory. And the power of the glory is liberty.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, or where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty. That's the chapter in brief, in outline. I don't think I'm going to take up all this and comment upon it.

It's simply a statement that with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the way of glory has been opened up and the glory has come in. But you notice, through this chapter and what Paul is writing, there are these fundamental contrasts. These fundamental contrasts which are of such tremendous importance.

And dear friends, I do not feel that I can put suspicion, emphasis and stress upon this matter. It goes far deeper and more into the present situation than most of us realize. My difficulty is to make it clear, make it clear, that here we are in the present of something of tremendous importance to Christians.

Because after all, and this I'm sure you will agree with, the real need where we Christians are concerned is that our Christianity shall be glorious. And that we should be glorious Christians in the right sense. Well, you agree with that.

But how? And it is by not only recognizing, but coming into the good of these fundamental contrasts which are presented to us in this chapter. There is this contrast at the heart of the other. The contrast between the law given by Moses and the revelation given in Jesus Christ.

There is the contrast between tables of stone, stone and heart of flesh, and so on. But right at the center of these contrasts there is this one. The letter, kill it.

The spirit, give it life. Now, let us be very clear as to what that means. That is not a contrast between the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

It cannot be that. The letter, the letter. There is the word of God, but it is not taking contrast to the Holy Spirit as necessarily bringing death while the Spirit brings life.

I want you to be very clear in your mind about that. You see, when you use that phrase, the letter, kill it. Don't think for a moment that that means that the word of God brings death.

You've got to get it in its setting and understand what it is the apostle is saying here. It is between legalism in relation to the letter or the word of God and life which comes by a Holy Spirit action upon the word of God. This is what the apostle is saying here as he has said much more fully in other parts of his writings.

He's saying it here. Because of a state in person their heart was softened. Because of a state in person the word only comes to them as a legal statement of thou shalt and thou shalt not.

It is something imposed upon them. It becomes a heavy and dead weight upon them. It just is a matter of oppression.

Now you must do this and you must do that and you must do the other things and you may not do these things and so it may be the word of God but because of a state in those concerns it becomes simply legalistic and therefore it becomes bondage. It's the same word. It's the same word.

It's all the word of God but it's the effect that it has upon us and that depends entirely upon our state. In his first letter to the Corinthians the apostle had a lot to say at the beginning which bears I think very much upon this matter. You remember how in that part which is marked by chapter 2 he's speaking about the wisdom of this world.

The wisdom of this world. Now he's talking to Christians. Talking to Christians.

The wisdom of this world and the utter inability to understand the things of the Spirit of God by reason of natural wisdom. Yes, you may have all the wisdom of the philosophers, all the wisdom of the great Greek world and empire and yet you're utterly incapacitated where the things of the Spirit of God are concerned. It's no use.

It's no use. It's no use approaching the things of God, the word of God with the most complete intellectual outfit naturally. Whether you're born with it or whether you're trained to it you may bring the fullest, ripest scholarship.

The best education, the finest brain to the word of God and there's no life. It doesn't produce life. It's all dead.

You handle the word of God in that way it communicates no life to anybody. It's very wonderful of course. Maybe very interesting, almost fascinating but after war has it ministered life? And has it resulted in this transformation into the same image? No.

No. And I'm going further. We may have the most thorough going knowledge of the Bible so that we are able to analyze every book of the Bible and have it there in our head clearly and tell anybody at any moment what is in this book or in this chapter and that we may have the whole thing and yet it may still be in the natural mind and neither change us nor the people to whom we give it.

And worse than that, worse than that it may entirely incapacitate us for understanding spiritual things. We may be altogether in another realm from what is real spiritual understanding. It is necessary dear friends for you to recognize this that it is not a matter of Bible knowledge though that is so important.

It is not a matter of brain and intellect and scholarship. It is not at all a matter of our attainments in that realm. However valuable such things may be given the other.

But it is a matter of God having shined into our hearts to give the knowledge. Another kind of knowledge by the in-shining. Altogether different knowledge comes by the in-shining.

Now I take it that this natural knowledge, this natural wisdom of which the Apostle spoke in his first letter corresponds to the tables of stone. After all tables of stone are cold dead things. Hearts of flesh are warm living things.

And that is the difference between a natural apprehending, grasping and handling of the Word of God. However great may be the natural ability in that realm, the difference between that and the Spirit revealing God's Christ in His Word in our hearts. They are two different words.

I am not talking now about the unsaved on the one hand and the saved on the other. I am discriminating as this word does between the people of God. Israel were the people of God.

But you see there was just this objective attitude to things. They were not spiritual people. Spiritual men and women.

And when we say not spiritual we mean they hadn't got the Holy Spirit indwelling and working. After all everything was outward. And so they came to the law as something written on tables of stone and said now it says thou shalt and thou shalt and thou shalt not and thou shalt not.

And it was all there like that cold commandment and there was no corresponding life in their heart. No spirit indwelling. And so it was dead and it killed and it killed.

I know how hopeless it is to try and explain this. But you see take even the commandments written on the tables of stone. How do they affect you dear friends? How do they affect you? Now you can take any one of those commandments.

Thou shalt not speak. Feel bad about that? As a Christian do you feel bad about that? That's a terrible terrible rebuke to you, terrible warning, terrible commandment that if you do that in any way whatsoever and there are ten thousand ways in which you can do it. How do you look at that? What does that say to you? Does it just say thou shalt not feel cold commandment imposing something upon you? Or has the spirit of God in you taken up that with all the rest? Christ Christ rather than draw to himself even what belonged to him to say nothing of what belonged to other people and didn't belong to him rather than draw to himself simply but always thinking rather how he could give rather than get as a principle.

See? Stealing embodies a principle. It means you are drawing to yourself. You're going to have to yourself willy-nilly anyhow you're going to get that because you want it.

It's a spirit. It's a principle. And lawfully or unlawfully stealing is unlawful but when you lift it into the realm of the spiritual you see something infinitely more than just you shan't go out and take something from somebody that doesn't belong to you.

Stealing in that ordinary sense. You see behind, behind there's the nature of God. Behind there is the disposition of God behind every commandment.

You need to have every commandment dealt with in this way to see behind there's a disposition of God, a nature of God that is that is mediated to us in Christ by the Holy Spirit that really a Holy Spirit governed life doesn't want to be getting all the time even to the point of taking what they have no right to have but right round the other way right round the other way the really Holy Spirit governed child of God doesn't need to come under an awful weight of condemnation when it says thou shalt not steal or thou shalt not do any of the other things.

Spirit inside has dealt with that quite alright quite well, quite thoroughly and changed the disposition changed the desire but you see something has got to be done inwardly otherwise the letter killing brings death but the same letter taken up by the Holy Spirit illuminating brings life it brings life the word comes to life and makes us live written says the apostle in our heart, written not on tables of stone but in our heart in hearts of men along one line there's no glory at all no glory along this other line there is glory I am compelled to close this point but I want you to grasp one thing just to carry away with you this one thing there is a tremendous difference indeed there's all the difference of two words even amongst Christians

are those on the one side who have the word of God believe it to be the word of God would lay down their lives for it as the inspired word of God and yet it's just a book of commandments and laws and regulations and what not that on the other hand those to whom this book hath come alive by the Holy Spirit and they are seen by the Holy Spirit far more than just a written letter if you get into the one realm you see you get a dozen more score a hundred different interpretations of the same passage of scripture and you're all a variant one says it means this and another says it means that and that's because it's all approached by the natural mind it's still the word of God still the word of God the only way to get over that the only way to come to oneness of mind oneness of heart oneness of understanding and to move livingly with the Lord is for the spirit himself who knows what the meaning is dwelling in our heart to tell us that not to go beyond the scripture not what we're talking about extra to the scripture but daring witness in our heart this is God's mind about that and so I say to you the Holy Spirit has come he has come to take up the word of God and pass it from becoming just a book of commandments into the realm where it becomes the book of life where we really live by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord where this word is made alive to us by the Holy Spirit in that true sense of life.

We may be fascinated with its studies and its subjects and think that's life that's not what I'm talking about it may be tremendously interesting but that's not what I mean life is something which changes us transforms us now the test of whether we have even the word of God in a legal realm or an intellectual realm or whether we have it in the spirit is the effect that it has in our lives the transforming effect or to gather it all up again into this word glory glory glory and if you know what I'm trying to talk about you know how great a thing that is have you really dear friends come to know so truly so really the Holy Spirit indwelling as teacher as illuminator that you have passed out of the merely intellectual realm where the word of God is conserved into the realm where the heavens

are open the word of God lives for you that's a dispensational matter and it makes a very great deal of difference in which world in which realm we live I'm trying to say to you that the greatest treasure that a Christian can have is a Holy Spirit illuminated word of God it makes a tremendous amount of difference it doesn't mean that we know everything that's here all at once we go on in this realm of vast vast fullnesses and we shall never exhaust it but it's alive it's alive we're not just studying it as dead matter it's alive to us is it like that with you well you see it's a question of whether you have really grasped the significance of the day of Pentecost the dispensation changed on that day from the one to the other, are you living in the old tables of stone objective

presentations of divine commandments or are you living in this dispensation that God has shrunk into your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus mark you always through the scriptures by the word of God not something extra to you but there, and yet and yet something more than the letter there's the blessed powerful witness of the Spirit to the meaning the meaning there you may have that as our birthright in this dispensation oh for more Holy Spirit in wealth and taught children of God taught children of God who really know what is theirs by right in this dispensation to have the Holy Spirit within, not just believing in the truth the doctrine, the statement that it is so but being in the good of it, knowing it to be true the Holy Spirit is in me

and the Holy Spirit is teaching me and the Holy Spirit is showing me what God means by his word I am coming the Holy Spirit teaches and instructs and illuminates the sea God meant more than ever I realised he meant when he said that, and that and that see it's a living relationship by the Holy Spirit and when it's like that it is glory the burden goes the strain goes the onus goes off of us it's life it's really life indeed it is glory now it is a fact you can pass from one realm into the other even as a Christian pass from that realm

where though you believe in the Lord and you have the Lord and you know you're safe yet there's a dome over you like a brass dome a dome over your head where the word of God is concerned and you fumble and try to find your way about and what does it all mean

and then you can have that dome removed or split and the Spirit shine right into your spirit and the whole thing becomes illuminated, it's the same word but it's two different dispensations well I've stated the facts I know them to be facts you if you don't know what I'm talking about well you go and have some dealings with the Lord on this matter it must be like that for the ministration of the Spirit is glory in relation to the word of God you if you don't know what I'm talking about well you go and have some dealings with the Lord on this matter, it must be like that for the ministration of the Spirit is glory in relation to the word of God

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