

The Cross and the Battle for Sonship

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual progress and the transformation of the natural man to the spiritual man, and warns against the danger of isms that can bring spiritual progress to a standstill.

Duration: 1:03:02

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1

Topics: "Sonship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a different mindset and spirit when it comes to serving God. He contrasts the attitude of a servant, who works only during appointed hours and with personal interest in mind, with the attitude of a son, who works out of love and goes beyond the call of duty. The speaker relates this concept to the letter to the Galatians and the tragedy of Israel in the wilderness, highlighting the consequences of unbelief and the need for a must life of devotion to God. The sermon encourages listeners to adopt the spirit of a son and to serve God wholeheartedly without considering personal gain or limitations.

Transcript

And being so vowed, may I just remind you of two things. The possibility, at least the possibility, that the Lord may be speaking in this place tonight. If our prayers are answered, it will be so.

And if it should be so, we have accepted a solemn responsibility in allowing ourselves to hear the Lord speak. It may be a very blessed thing to have the Lord speak, but it is a very responsible thing, for we can never be the same before the Lord, should he speak. We together, Lord, have said, speak Lord in the stillness, while I wait on thee.

Give us then hearts that are truly touched with the precious blood of Jesus, minds that are guarded, and grace we may receive and obey, we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus. As there are quite a few who have joined us since last evening, it might be helpful if I were just to hurriedly review the course that we have been following in these evening hours, under the general title, The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And our object has been to see how the cross is presented to us in the letters of the Apostle Paul.

And how each letter sets forth as a particular application and meaning of the cross. With the letter to the Romans, we began noting how comprehensive and all-inclusive the cross is. And then out of the all-inclusiveness, we began in the second place, the breakup, so to speak, and the application to particular

and peculiar situations and needs.

The first of which was in the first letter to the Corinthians. And we noticed that in that letter there is a great divide made. The divide between the situation and the condition of the Corinthians as they were when Paul wrote, and the situation and condition to which he sought to bring them by way of the cross.

Repeatedly emphasizing that the cross was the way of transition from the one to the other. And we headed that consideration with the two humanities. Even where Christians are concerned, that type of Christian which Paul describes as the natural man.

Which literally, in his own language, was and is the man of soul. The holyful man, the type living wholly upon the basis of the soul. And then on the other side, the other kind of humanity, the spiritual man.

The man of spirit and governed by the spirit. The letter pulls apart into those two categories. The two humanities within the compass, mark you, of the Christian community.

And we saw what a difference there is between the two, even as Christians. And how the cross cuts deep in there to make the division between soul and spirit. I'm going to stay for just a few extra words in that particular connection.

You must remember that with the apostle Paul, being the man that he was, with his very thorough Jewish training and knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, what we call the Old Testament. There would always be that background to his mentality. The Holy Spirit would be speaking of that background.

And although perhaps not quoting always the Old Testament, or referring to any particular book in the Old Testament, it is there all the time. If you look beneath the surface, you will find it. And in this particular connection, which we are thinking now, it is so evident that there is a background of that kind to what the apostle wrote in the first letter to the Corinthians.

Here in this letter, he brings into view that phase of Israel's history, which was in the wilderness and its tragic issues. In chapter 10 of the first letter, he brings that forward as a warning to the Corinthians. Remember it, he speaks about their failure and falling in the wilderness after having come out of Egypt.

After having been redeemed with precious blood. This is not my interpretation, this is exactly what Paul says. They fell in the wilderness.

They died in the wilderness. They did not go through that for which God brought them out. And I say again, he uses it as a very solemn warning to the Corinthians and says in effect, Be careful, you are now in exactly the same position as Israel was in at that time.

And I am warning you that your destiny can be the same as theirs. You may fail to go through to what God has told you unto. You may, using his own word, perish in the wilderness.

I know that will raise some questions in your mind. And I expect you would want to ask me those questions if you had the opportunity, if I gave you the chance about final perseverance and being once saved and lost and all that. But don't forget we are not talking about salvation that is settled with the Corinthians.

We are talking about inheritance, the purpose of salvation. Paul will make it very clear that you may be on the foundation, he is saying it here, in chapter 3, you may be on the foundation which is Christ. But when you are on the foundation you may put up a superstructure which will be entirely lost.

And all your life work will go up in smoke. And that is only another way of interpreting Israel in the wilderness. Now then, what was it that lay at the root of that tragedy of Israel? And you have the answer in the fourth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews.

Now you know men have struggled all through the centuries to get Paul out of the letter to the Hebrews. We are not going to argue about the authorship. But there is something here that is very similar if not identical in this tenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians and the fourth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews.

Notice in that fourth chapter the writer, whoever he was, the writer is speaking about this very same thing. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. And he enlarges upon the tragedy of Israel perishing in the wilderness and not going in to possess.

And then he uses that conjunction to which I drew your attention the other evening without enlarging upon it as I am now. For, for, they entered not in because of unbelief. They perished in the wilderness for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing through the dividing of thunder of both tempests.

There are two categories of this. Through humanity the soul people perished in the wilderness. The spiritual people which were raised up went over and went through.

Very impressive isn't it? That little paw, that mighty little paw, the word of God divides between soul and spirit. The implication, not the actual statement is. Poe, that's the cause of all the trouble in the wilderness.

If you remember the history of those years, those decades in the wilderness, oh how much Poe. Poe was always this, what am I getting out of this? How do I benefit by this? I, in Corinth, every one of you said I. What am I getting out of this? The spiritual, if you remember the changeover, the transition with Joshua, if the Lord's delight in us, then he will bring it in. Oh, it's the Lord's delight, not mine.

The difference between soul and spirit. I, died. Are we going to come on that? Very definitely as we come into the letter to the Galatians presently.

I want you to notice that that is the big issue amongst the people of God. Redeemed by precious blood, brought out of the world and bondage to Satan. And yet, and yet, failing to go right through to the purpose of that redemption.

And all that God wants, the cross comes in to save us from falling in the wilderness, by the way, Unmissing the inheritance, by acting like a two-edged sword, dividing asunder between soul and spirit. That's the cross in 1 Corinthians. And then we saw afterwards, last night, that when that issue is fundamentally settled, because these issues are not settled all at once, you know.

They're only fundamentally settled. They're not yet to be done. We'll find a lot more in 2 Corinthians to be done in that connection.

But, the root has been touched. The act has been applied to the root. Something has been done.

You look at the 7th chapter of the 2nd letter to the Corinthians, you hear the apostle speaking about what happened after they got his first letter. Oh, what humiliation. Oh, what tears.

Oh, what sorrow. They're a broken people. They were not broken before.

Now they're a broken people. They are weeping and they are sobbing over what had happened. I say, the act has been planted at the root.

Something fundamental has been done. And therefore, they can come over Jordan, so to speak. Come over, or get through.

And start on new ground. Altogether, the ground of the open heaven. The ground of the unveiled faith.

Remember? The unveiled faith. When he shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now, the Lord is the Spirit.

Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty. You're over on the other side. One different atmosphere isn't there in the 2nd letter to the Corinthians from the 1st? Quite a different atmosphere, and it seems now that there are possibilities now.

And so they come into the good of the unveiled faith. Which, in other words, used by the apostles. God, who said, let light shine in darkness, has shined into our hearts.

Give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Can't say that in letter number 1, but you can say it in number 2. Therefore, having this ministry. The ministry of the unveiled faith.

I'm not going over all that we covered in a full hour last night. But, the point is, they are now represented in their spiritual position. And you're noticing the spiritual sequence of these letters, aren't you? In spiritual sequence, there's a move forward.

The new prospect and possibility. New potentiality. The new testament, a new atmosphere.

So, when the people got over Jordan, that's how it was. You breathe more freely. While you're reading the 1st letter to the Corinthians.

Especially those early chapters. You're not breathing freely at all. Not at all.

Now, the atmosphere is clearer and freer. And there's a move forward. It is a great move forward.

They're over. And, as I have said, something fundamental, though not final, has been done. Been done.

Jericho. The inclusive thing. Because, you know, Jericho did represent in its sevenfoldness the seven nations that were to be conquered.

Seven is the dominant number there of Jericho. That is spiritual fullness or spiritual inclusiveness. When you've got Jericho, you have in figure and in spirit, and in spiritual position, you've got the land, you've got everything.

That is, in the sovereign will of God. So, being over into the 2nd letter to the Corinthians, you are over and you have compassed Jericho, that is the foundation, is dealt with. Now what? And now.

Yes. Yes. Not now, soul or soul equal people, but spiritual people.

You do not need me to go back to you to the beginning of the book of Joshua, the man standing with the drawn sword, captain of the host of the Lord, into which Joshua capitulated the campaign. Well, you don't

need me to tell you that that is the representation of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit taking charge of the campaign. I won't leave all these details.

This is where we are in the 2nd letter. Everything looks wonderfully promising, doesn't it? New atmosphere, new prospects, new potentialities. What next? What next? AI, Galatians, a hold up, arrested progress, brought to a standstill, a reverse, a stepping back onto the old ground.

The whole thing is in jeopardy. That's Galatians, isn't it? All these cries of the apostles, all foolishness. Who has cast the spell over you, the witch's spell over you? You were running well.

You had conquered Jericho. What has happened to you? An arrest. That's Galatians.

AI. Old ground. What our brother Wattsman needs.

When he was with us he used to call the earth touch, fatal earth touch. Getting back onto the old ground of death. The apostle in this letter to Galatians puts it in, strangely enough, in two words or a phrase.

The word. The word. You know how he finishes the letter to Galatians.

God forbid that I should draw a stain in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. And he links that very phrase, or that very phrase is linked, in the spiritual sequence of things with this AI, isn't it? Of course we know what ATAN did. The AI.

The Babylonish God in garments and the wedge of gold. Touch of the earth. Touch of the world.

We see the world system. We touch that. Even God cannot deliver you from the prince of this world.

We take full advantage of every contact that you make with this world to arrest your spiritual progress. Does that? Paul calls it the world we shall see. What that meant as we go on.

What is a very comprehensive and inclusive thing again. It was the arresting hand of something. Leave the book of Joshua for the moment and come to this letter to Galatians.

What was this arresting hand? This hell that brought this beautiful movement to a standstill caused rather a revamp than a going on. What was it? Oh, of course, you say, you've told us. Getting back on to sole ground again.

Yes. All right. But what is that? What is that? Dear friend, if you look again at this letter to Galatians, which you know so well, you'll find it is in a little suffix.

An ism. An ism. In this case, Judaism.

Judaism. That was it. That was it.

And tonight, in this connection of Galatians, I'm speaking about the battle for sonship. The battle for sonship. Remember the three major words in this letter? Liberty.

Spirit, with a capital S. Son. We'll come back to that. Battle for sonship.

And the battle for sonship raged around or on the ground of an ism. And it was that ism that brought the Galatian Christians to this standstill, to this arrestive progress, and called out this terrible hard cry from the

apostles. Terrible hard crying.

My little children, for whom I am again entrapping, till Christ be fully formed in you. It's a pity they, the translators, haven't given us the whole word. Just put, till Christ be formed in you.

No. Till Christ be fully formed in you. That's the issue.

It was the beginning of the formation of Christ. Arrestive. Full formation of Christ.

Sonship has come under attack. And all because of an ism, a mighty ism, was Judaism. I need not, I think, spend any time in explaining and defining Judaism.

Vernon, you've read the letter. I trust that you've read it before this meeting, what Judaism is. What we're going to say will perhaps define it best that we enlarge this thing.

But what I'm saying, it was an ism. An ism that did it. You're noting that? You really got a hold of that? An ism did it all.

Spoiled it all. And isms always have the same effect. They always do.

Ism. Recently I came across something written by a very well-known Christian leader and teacher. A man who, over half a century ago, wrote Standard Lives of Christ and the Apostles, and the Apostle Paul, who were the great vogue of that time.

You don't hear so much about them today. He wrote this. Allow me to read it to you.

Because it's so closely related to what we say. In the craft and subtlety of the devil and man, Christianity has ever tended to wither away into Judaism, into Rabbinism, into Scholasticism, into Ecclesiasticism, into Romanism, into Sectarianism, into dead schemes of dogmatic belief, into dead routines of elaborate ceremonial, into dead exclusiveness of parties and party narrowness, into dead formulae of church parties, into dead performances of dead work, or dead ascent to dead praises. That's pretty good, isn't it? They're all your isms.

But if he lived today, I wonder how many more isms he would have had. I'm not going to be so unkind as to give you the extended list. But think, think the ism.

This thing which has become defined as an ism. And that, and that, and that. Sometimes it is a distinct error.

We could mention the errors. Sometimes it is a mixture of truth and error. Sometimes it is truth itself which has become an ism.

Yes, the truth. Quite right, it's New Testament, but it's become an ism. And what is the effect of an ism? What do we mean by an ism? Well, that thing has had a fence drawn round it.

And has in itself become the beginning and the end of everything. And that fence says, unless you toe this line, accept this ground, come on to this ground, there's no fellowship with you. Fellowship is not possible.

Only if you accept this interpretation, or this experience, or whatever it is, that you can put in the place of circumcision, except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved. Remember that? A thing might be right in itself, but it has been crystallized into a finality. And a whole door of exclusivism has been set up, that

unless you come on to this ground, you are excluded.

And that, as Dr. Parra, of whom I've just referred, of whom I've given the quotation, that, that is what he meant by the subtlety of the devil. You realize, dear friends, that God has never done a new thing in Christian history, brought forth something that was intended to lead his people further on to that ultimate fullness. But what? Sooner or later, and usually sooner, men have fastened upon that, and made an ism of it, crystallized it into a teaching, a manner of practice in Christianity, with its own laws and ways and rites, and that thing has brought our wrath to the fullness God intended.

And things have almost stopped there. A.I., after Jericho, one of the most pernicious things that the devil has ever done in Christian history has been to make men crystallize living truth into dead form. And you know, he's clever, he's clever.

Paul took the two-edged sword of that Goliath of Judaism and cut off its head, and robbed the devil of his most potent instrument in the days of Paul, which was Judaism. Every prayer, every prayer that the apostle went, that was either waiting for him or on his trail, to discredit, to bring in the unrest of spiritual life and progress, continuous battle. At last it headed up to this Galatian situation.

And with this Galatian letter of what Paul did, as here recorded, that Goliath of Judaism was slain for the time being. It didn't lift its head again. At that time, the devil lost his great instrument, a very serviceable means, when he lost Judaism.

But do you think he takes that line down? Well, I have, I have quoted from para-twelve-isms, twelve-isms, and I have said we can add many more. The Lord Jesus said, When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, it wanders, it wanders in empty places. If something better and other does not take its place in that man, in that house, and it comes and looks in through the window, comes back from his wanderings and looks as a specter through the window and sees the house is empty, he goes off and brings seven others worse than himself.

And the last state of that man is worse than that. When the devil lost Judaism, he looked to see what was going to take its place. And because of this vacancy in Christianity, this not going on through sonship is brought back as cause of others worse than himself.

The-isms, the-isms, the-isms. Now, I am not trying to be either humorous or just making up something out onto you. Dear friends, make no mistake about it, there are very fascinating and attractive-isms, New Testament-isms, and non-New Testament-isms, and in somewhat extended life and ministry, again and again I have seen dear people of God who were out in the open, going on with the law, in the liberty of the spirit, with great promise, and then they have been caught in some-ish-ism.

You simply are helpless. They have stooped themselves in the tenets of that-ism. Again and again I have seen it.

Frankly, the British-Israel-ism, whether it is right or wrong, it is a sidetrack. It is something with a fence around it. But you can't get anywhere with those people beyond that thing.

That is the obsession. And I take it as an illustration of what I mean by many others. There is a great-ism sweeping right over America and over Europe in these last years.

I can dare to mention this one. Well, I am going to anyway. Universalism.

It is an-ism which has captured multitudes, and you just can't get anywhere with these people once they have got it. But I have known them all so promising, so promising, and then this thing has come, subtly along their way, attractive and fascinating, so appealing, everybody, ultimately, including the devil himself, will be saved. What are you going to do there? Willy-nilly they will be saved, undercutting some of the very vitals of the gospel.

I am illustrating. I am not just making a tag. I am trying to show what I mean.

But you may call these things vast errors, but there are things that are not such errors. Not such errors indeed. In themselves they are quite true, but they have become the beginning of all and the end of all with the people who have taken them on.

You can get no further. No further. They have lost the great ground, the vast ground of God's full purpose for this dispensation, and become stuck on functions that is only partial at best.

Arrested, like Judaism, unto a standstill, or going round and round in a circle, the circle of this particular thing. It should be a warning to us, because you see, this is the thing that has been the enemy of the fullness of Christ all through the centuries. It's thoughtless.

The Lord does something, it's righteous. The Lord does it. And before long it is crystallized into a system governed by men, and unless you come that way, you're out.

You're not accepted. No further. You must stand on this ground, this ground.

You're not included at all in the whole compass of things. You understand what I mean? Isn't this true? Oh, how subtle this is. Now to come now to this letter again.

You notice that there's a transition in this letter, a transition which is gathered under several words or names. They all mean the same thing, whether it is bondage on the one side, liberty on the other, servant and son, the law and the spirit. This is the issue, the issue in this letter.

What does it amount to? What I have been saying, on the one side the servant, speaking of bondage, limitation, and what word really explains the servant? In the Greek it's the bond slave, the bond slave. What is it? You must. Servant, you see, has no rights of his own, no liberty.

He has to do what he is told. You must. And you must not.

You cannot follow your own judgment. You've got to obey this, whatever it is. We call it legalism, but there are so many forms.

It's the must life, the must life of the slave, the bond servant. That's the word. On the other side, over again, the slave is the son.

You know as well as I do what a difference there is between those two. I don't know how it is here in America, but I know how it is over our way. The servant goes out in the morning, be he the builder or the road worker, or whatever he is, the employee, and he doesn't hurry to work at all.

He goes as slowly as he possibly can without actually making a breach of the law. And when he gets there, he takes so long to get his coat off, and then so long to get his shoes on, and then he looks around, and now it's time to have a cup of coffee. And you can go along almost any hour of the day and find him

having a cup of tea with us, you know, having something.

And there are five men working on that road job, and one is doing a little tinkering of the job, the other's all looking on. And then you come along and say, Governor, what's the time? Oh, it's five minutes to twelve. On with the coat, take up, go off, meals, and so they go through the day.

They're the servants, the must people, and as little of that as possible. But when you get the span, the span of the owner of the property, the span of the must of the builder, none of that. No, this thing is a matter of both interest and responsibility and more of love for the father.

And he'll work beyond the appointed hours. And he'll work. He'll work all the hours.

No must with him. Nothing like that. What is it? It's the spirit.

It's the spirit. Carried on by another spirit than the spirit of the servant. That's the letter for the regulations, isn't it? Punishment.

Liberty from all this demand, essential obligation, that never comes in. Never comes in thought. The liberty of friendship goes on without considering personal interest, without asking any questions as to how much must I, how much can I not.

You see the difference? And we are all in peril of some kind of must and thrive. Even in the things that the Lord has done with us, blessed things that the Lord has done, if we are not very careful, we will bring them into a systematized form and they will become our prison. And it will be the bond slave.

Sonship is God's goal for the Christian. God's goal. You know the word is the manifestation of the sons of God.

That's the confirmation of everything. Bringing many sons to God. God dealeth with us as with sons.

Sonship, there's no higher thought in all the regulations than the thought of sonship. Love is now our witness. Sons of God is not yet revealed what we shall be.

But we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him. We shall see Him as He is. That sonship finally consummated and we are being dealt with on that principle of sonship.

Sonship. Wonderful conception. The apostle John, you see, the old man John, in his pathless exile, contemplating his long life.

Yes, suffering and plenty of it, his long life. Our union with his master, who just does right. There's nothing to compare with this.

There's the sonship. Sonship. The highest thing ever thought of by God for us.

For redemption. And we're in progress of this. And if there is, will the devil stop at anything to prevent us getting to that? Why? You see, it's going to be this corporate sonship glorified in union with the Son who is going to dispose the whole kingdom of Satan.

Displace it. And take its place for the government in the ages to come. And the prince of this world is not taking that easily.

And so not only will he bring these persecutions and sufferings from the outside, but he'll bring these utter snares of uneasiness. He'll arrest our spiritual progress and cut us up to something smaller than God in the end. He's frustrated at the end when he's done that.

So the point is, keep out in the open with the Lord. Keep out in the light of the Spirit. The Spirit will not let you go wrong.

The Spirit will make known to you all that is intended for you. But don't begin to say to other people when you've got that experience or that life now and then, you accept it and take this ground. You see, you're outside the veil.

We are the people. We are the people. Truth begins and ends with us.

Oh God save us from the spirit of it. Spirit of it. For you to go and think about the isms.

Whether denominations are right or wrong, I'm not going to argue, but I will say emphatically, denominationalism is wrong. And it becomes an ism. Something that binds you, controls you, sets the bounds for you.

Then it's wrong. And whatever other things may be, whether it is right or wrong, as soon as the innocent succeed in making that the limit, however good, he's defeated the end, there will be an arrest. And a reversal.

And I can only now take you back in close by reminding you of how Joshua handled it. Yes, he sifted this thing down at Ai, sifted it down, down, down, his tribe, his family, the unit in the family. They can, they can.

One man, with an ism, brought an arrest, not only to himself, but to the Lord's people. They can. And they stoned Achan.

And it was a very drastic thing that was done, because of the principle involved, you see. The principle. But whatever Joshua did with Achan, I don't think it compares to what Paul did with Judaism, in Galatians.

Listen. If anyone be he an angel from heaven, which is any other gospel than that which we preach, let him be accursed. The curse was pronounced upon Achan, and he died under the curse.

Let him be accursed. And I say again, I say again, I repeat it, that Paul, let him be an angel. It was the curse upon except Achan.

Of any kind of legalism, except he be circumcised, he cannot be saved. Except, except. Oh, be careful of these excepts.

There are other kinds of accepts, which are quite all right. Except a man be born from a vial, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That's all right.

But not a Judaistic one. You see how, how strong the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is upon this matter, of keeping out in the open with the Lord, as your governor. The Holy Spirit as your control, your teacher.

And it is faint. When the Holy Spirit really is Lord, there's liberty, but it's faint. It's faint.

Remember again what God said about you. You have an anointing. And the anointing which you have received abided in you.

And you need not that anyone teach you anything. The anointing teacheth you all things. Oh, be careful.

Be careful. I'm quite independent. I don't need anybody to tell me anything.

That is not what John is saying at all. At all. What is John saying? There are many antichrists.

There are many antichrists in the world. And an antichrist is not a furious, fearful creature, you know, with a tail and a pitchfork. An antichrist is something that assumes the place of Christ.

The devil himself is transformed into an angel of light. There are many. And with the natural judgment, natural powers, you're not able to distinguish between the true and the false, the Christ and the antichrist.

You seem to be so much alike. You can't discern. But the anointing will tell you.

The anointing which you have received when you come into touch with something false will, if the anointing is really governing, say, be careful. Not in words, but inside. You have a feeling there's something not quite clear here, not transparent here, not safe here.

I don't feel happy about this. I can't tell you why. But I just don't feel quite happy about this.

There's something in me that says, beware. The anointing will teach you it's perfectly safe when the anointing is in charge. And here you are.

Here is your other humanity, isn't it? The spiritual man, says Paul, discern it all. And I would close with just saying this, dear friends, that in my judgment, the greatest need in Christianity and among Christians today is spiritual discernment. I could not say anything beyond that.

I am convinced that in a day like this, of deceptions and misleadings and all that, the great need is the power of spiritual discernment, of knowing the Holy Spirit in this way, that He is able to warn you. Just to warn you, not in words, might be by words of scripture, but in your own spirit where He dwells. He says, that's all right, go on.

The arbitrator is life and peace. But He will say, no, be careful. There is danger there.

And then it is for us in our spiritual sensitiveness. Take note of that. And let me tell you that it's not my experience that the Holy Spirit speaks with a shout.

I very rarely know the Holy Spirit to speak out in a way that there's no mistaking it. In such a gentle thing, such a gentle thing, just something that I could miss if I didn't pause and learn that the voice of gentle stillness is so often the voice of the Spirit. That is sunshine, you see, growing to discern, to sense, to understand.

Spirit of sunshine. And I've said enough. May the Lord help us to understand that if you are praying, in all your praying, whatever you are praying, ask the Lord, that by the Holy Spirit He will develop in you spirit of discernment, give you spiritual discernment, so that you, Paul put it in another place, can discriminate the things which are excellent.

Remember that? There's a difference in things, good, bad, indifferent, best, excellent. You may be able to discern the things which differ. The original is things which are the Lord makes people.

Our Lord may not have been very much entertainment or fascination or attractiveness about all this. But we know that Thou wouldst be very faithful with us. We want Thee to do it.

And if warning and enlightenment as to peril is Thy mercy, Thy grace and Thy goodness, then we'll be very grateful if so tonight a warning light is being shown something to save us. O Lord, how we want to go on and go through and come out into the ultimate consummation stunned in glory never arrested never having our path shortened never brought short. O Lord, O Lord, we want to go on to full growth to all that Thou hast called us unto now give us understanding interpret to us Thy meaning and what we trust have been Thy words guard our hearts and our minds through Christ Jesus and may grace and mercy and peace from Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us evermore.

Amen.

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