

# The Cross and the 'So Great Salvation'

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The 'so great salvation' refers to the comprehensive and inclusive work of Christ on the Cross, covering every need and requirement of humanity.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, Mark 15:34, John 1:29, Romans 3:22, Romans 8:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:11, Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 2:3, Hebrews 9:27

**Topics:** "Great Salvation", "The Work of the Cross"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound nature of 'so great salvation' as described in Hebrews 2:3, exploring its comprehensive aspects such as substitution, representation, redemption, justification, reconciliation, regeneration, sonship, sanctification, and glorification. He explains that humanity's inability to meet divine requirements necessitates a substitute, Jesus Christ, who takes on our sins and offers us redemption and justification. The sermon highlights the transformative journey from being alienated from God to becoming reconciled and sanctified, ultimately leading to glorification. Sparks warns against neglecting this great salvation, underscoring the importance of recognizing and embracing the fullness of what Christ has accomplished for us. The message calls believers to grow in their understanding and experience of their salvation, moving towards maturity in Christ.

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## Transcript

The third section of our diagram deals with the "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3); a phrase which at once sets forth its comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. Under that term we gather the various words which represent its many-sidedness: Substitution; Representation; Redemption; Justification; Reconciliation; Regeneration; Sonship; Sanctification; Glorification. The best way in which to see the significance and the peculiar value of each word or work is to ask one simple question. In what state does the word indicate man to be to make such a work necessary?

### 1. Substitution

Man is clearly regarded as being totally unable to fulfil the Divine requirements as of himself. Those requirements would utterly destroy him and leave no residue of hope or prospect. He is judged and condemned and must die. But his death is more than physical, it is a state of conscious forsakenness of God, a consciousness to which man is to awake sooner or later unless he is saved - that is hell! For only a few that hell has really commenced in this life, for it is a part of the Divine order that men should live here under an aegis of mercy and grace. But "after death the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Grace and judgment

belong to two dispensations. That is why men presume upon God's grace. The grand feature of the day of grace is that God has - in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ - provided a Substitute, Who has taken man's place in being "made sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21), and has passed into that "hour" (which, in its awfulness, is an eternity) of being forsaken of God. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). That Substitute is offered to men, for their faith acceptance of Him - "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29). That means that when He died, He was accounted by God as their sin, their judgment, their doom, their death, their hell. It is as THOUGH they had borne it all but are saved. It required a Substitute Who, in Himself, was sinless, so that there was that behind all upon which judgment had no power and over which death and hell had no rights. "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin." Hence God could raise Him from the dead in virtue of His own inherent sinlessness. This could never have been so with us. All that I was, Christ was made on the Cross for me. All that I was not that God required, Christ is unto me in resurrection. This, very briefly, is substitution.

## 2. Representation

But the fact that this has been done for me by Another is only one side of the great work and could leave the door open to many weaknesses if it were left by itself. The complementary aspect is that of representation. "One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). In substitution, Christ died for us; in representation, He died as us. This means that, in the mind of God, we, as belonging to the old creation, have passed out of sight. When we take the Lord Jesus as our substitute and representative, we are regarded as in Christ and only so does God see us. When the Apostle Paul said "one died for all, therefore all died" in Him, he went on to say, "that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again." This means that we cannot take the substitutionary work of Christ and then just go on as though it had no relationship to what we are by nature. Moreover, it was not just our sin that He took, but ourselves; not what we call "the bad" about us, but our entirety. The same Apostle came to see that this applied to him as formerly a very religious man, consumed by a fire of religious devotion and activity. But the Cross represents the zero of the old creation in all its aspects, nature and abilities, and the beginning all anew as by resurrection from the dead. It is significant and impressive to remember that it was to Christian believers that Paul expounded this truth as in the letter to the Romans.

## 3. Redemption

The word "redemption" at once indicates its own meaning. Man has been sold, or has sold himself. Satan offered Adam a bargain (?), blinding his mind to the real issues involved. In unbelief and resultant disobedience in the matter of a precise Divine instruction, Adam bartered his soul for certain promised advantages, and sold himself to Satan and sin, and the race with him. In that position man has remained, and the strength of it is that Satan has rights because he has the ground of his own nature. Redemption means that those rights are undercut and disposed of. That is done again in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross. The great fact is that in Jesus Christ Satan has no ground of authority because he has no ground of nature. There he is "cast out" (John 12:31). Satan's power of authority is death. The Lord Jesus "tasted death in the behalf of every man" (Heb. 2:9), and met in Himself the final power of Satan, that "through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Thus man is redeemed unto God and upon the redeemed man Satan no longer has any claims.

A sidelight upon this is found in a legal process by which a Greek slave obtained his freedom and preserved it, and it is to this well-known procedure that doubtless the Apostle Paul refers in Galatians 6:17. The Greek slave, when he desired to secure his liberty, did not bring his master his earnings and obtain his freedom with his receipt for the money; he went to the temple of the god, and there paid in his money to the priests, who then with this money bought the slave from his master on the part of the god, and he became for the rest of his life a slave of the god - which meant practically freedom, subject to certain periodical religious duties. If at any time his master or his master's heirs claimed him, he had the record of the transaction in the temple. But on one point the records are silent. If he travelled, if he were far from home, and were seized as a runaway slave, what security could he have? It would seem that Paul gives us the solution. When liberated at the temple, the priest branded him with the "stigmata" of his new master. So Paul's words acquire a new meaning. He had been the slave of sin and of Satan; but he had been redeemed by Christ, and his new liberty consisted in his being the slave of Christ. "Henceforth," he says, "let no man attempt to reclaim me; I have been marked on my body with the brand of my new Master, Jesus Christ." The one flaw in this illustration is, of course, that no man can earn the means for his own redemption. Christ alone could provide this.

#### 4. Justification

Justification sets forth a standing or position to which the believer is brought. Each of the preceding steps relates and leads to justification. Substitution sees the sin question dealt with; representation sees the old creation removed and the new brought in; redemption sees the link with Satan and his kingdom destroyed. When these three things have been effected, then we have the answer to the question, "How can man be just with God?" (Job 9:2), or, in other words, How can a man stand in the presence of God as just, or righteous? The full answer is that we are justified in Christ Jesus. Through faith's acceptance of His substitutionary, representative, and redemptive work, we are now accepted in Him and are upon the wonderful footing of being regarded in the light of His perfections. He is made unto us righteousness from God. It is "the righteousness of (which is from) God through faith" (Rom. 3:22). This position is an utter one from God's standpoint and must be so from ours. It is a position to be taken in its fullness by faith and maintained as a way in which to walk by faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). Satan will never cease to try to bring us back on to the old ground, and this he will do by ever bringing up to us what we are in ourselves and getting our eyes off Christ. His methods are countless, but the answer to them all is "Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art," and a strong holding on and looking off unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith.

#### 5. Reconciliation

The justified are reconciled. In our natural condition, we were alienated from, and at enmity with, God, and indeed we WERE enmity against God. It only requires given conditions to bring out from every one of us some positive rebelliousness; but in Christ Jesus and His mighty reconciling work in His Cross, we who "were far off are made nigh" (Eph. 2:13); we who were enmity are at peace. We are brought into the blessed fellowship of a new life and a new spirit.

#### 6. Regeneration

Regeneration is not something extra to what has gone before, but is a feature or factor in all. It puts its finger upon that which has taken place in us. By regeneration something is present which was not there before, a life from God which only the born-again possess, an indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is not true

of any others. This Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has in it all the potentialities of a new creation in every part. There is a new consciousness, a new capacity, a new sense of relationships, a new direction, a new standard, a new vocation. Indeed, it is the birth of a new child. Everything is new and has to be learned from the beginning. We really know nothing of God's thoughts and ways and standards and purposes until we are regenerated. The freedom and fullness in which we move in our new life and all that it means will largely depend upon our recognition of what has gone before, and perhaps especially of our death and resurrection union with Christ, because here, in this new creation order, the old mentality has no place, and it is only to hamper the work of the Spirit in us if we persist in bringing over OUR ideas, OUR desires, OUR judgments, OUR choices, even if we think them to be in the interests of the Lord. We have to learn that the best of our old make-up may be all out of line with the simplest things of the Spirit of God. Regeneration is a new creation, and it is essentially NEW.

## 7. Sonship

Sonship is something more than being born again. It represents growth unto fullness. It is quite a good thing to be a babe while babyhood lasts, but it is a bad thing to be a babe when that period is past. This is the condition of many Christians. Without going into technicalities, the New Testament in its original language makes a very clear distinction between a child and a son. While sonship is inherent in birth, in the New Testament sense sonship is the realization of the possibilities of birth. It is growth to maturity. So the New Testament has a lot to say about growing up, leaving childhood and attaining unto full stature. With this growth comes the greater fullness of Christ and the abundant wealth into which we are saved. The so great salvation has its greater meaning for those who are going on unto full growth. In other words, it is a matter not so much of that from which we are saved, as of that UNTO which we are saved. The grand climax of the new creation is "the revealing of the SONS of God" (Romans 8:19).

## 8. Sanctification

Sanctification again is an aspect and not necessarily an addition. Briefly, this indicates an act and a process. Sanctification and consecration are alternative and synonymous terms. Firstly, they mean a setting apart or being set apart unto God. The New Testament is quite clear that, as we are justified in Christ by faith, so also we are sanctified in Christ by faith, and that this precedes the work of making us holy in ourselves. Thus to believers who had many imperfections the Apostle addressed his letter - unto "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). Thus, when we are in Christ, the Divine mind concerning us is that we are wholly set apart unto the Lord. We are as consecrated as anyone can be as to our position. But the same Apostle who refers to believers as already sanctified in Christ Jesus, also writes to believers telling them that his prayer for them is that they may be sanctified wholly, spirit, soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). This simply means that what we are by position has got to be made good in our state. Sanctification or consecration is fundamentally a matter of separation. With the Fall, an entangling with another nature and order took place. It became organic, therefore constitutional. The Cross of the Lord Jesus cut right in between that order and organism and a new and utterly different one as represented by Christ. Sanctification is, therefore, the working of the Cross in us to make good the nullification of that entangled nature and to bring in, in ever-increasing fullness, what Christ is as that "altogether other." In His simple language of illustration, it is taking up the Cross daily and denying ourselves (Matt. 16:24). But the fuller spiritual explanation of that, which is given us later in the New Testament, is the working of the Cross in us to bring an end to that self-life which is inextricably bound up with a system of evil. Thus, we being regarded as sanctified in Christ Jesus by faith, the process of sanctification is our experimental approximation to the position in which we are placed by the grace of

God.

It will be seen that sanctification thus follows closely in the sequence of things and is based upon substitution, redemption, justification, reconciliation, regeneration, sonship.

## 9. Glorification

In the case of the Lord Jesus, the suffering and glory are always kept together; suffering, the foundation; glory, the topstone. Glorification is the spontaneous issue of the working in us of that Divine life, the incorruptible life of God. That life has in it all the potentialities of glorification. What has been said above is of two activities:

(1) The setting aside of all that cannot be glorified.

(2) The bringing in of the new organism with the new life and its increase unto the fullness of Christ,

and this twofold work of the Cross leads on to glorification. Glorification begins in the spirit, that is, the renewed spirit of the child of God, by reason of the indwelling Spirit of glory, the Holy Spirit. Glorification proceeds as the soul - mind, heart, will; reason, desire, volition - is brought into subjection to the spirit and made its servant; in other words, brought under the Lordship of the Holy Spirit through our spirit. The consummation of glorification will be in the body, "to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23), and "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:54) then this mortal body shall have been made like unto His glorious body, or body of glory. Thus sonship will be completed as the outworking of regeneration; sanctification of spirit, soul and body will be the mark of perfect sonship, and glorification the issue.

Surely we are able, in the light of even this very brief and far from complete consideration of this great range of the work of the Cross, to endorse the term "so great salvation." We are also able to appreciate the seriousness of the warning, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). God has covered every need and requirement and has compassed the whole ground from A to Z in the Person of His Son and the Work of His Cross

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