

The Foundation of Recovered Testimony

by T. Austin-Sparks

The foundation of recovered testimony is the Cross of Christ, which is the all-uniting ground and the all-corrective dynamic, and it is the ultimate presentation of Christ in all His divine fullness and significance.

Scripture: John 17:21, 1 Corinthians 1:23, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 6:14, Philipians 3:8, Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 1:5-22

Topics: "The Cross", "Revival"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks preaches on the importance of returning to the foundational truth of the Cross of Christ for revival and recovery of the lost testimony. He emphasizes that throughout history, whenever God moved for recovery, it was always by calling back to the Cross as the starting point. The Passover in the Old Testament served as a unifying ground and corrective dynamic, restoring unity and removing idolatry. The ultimate focus is on Christ in His fullness and significance, where God must be all, and any division or idolatry must be replaced by a captivating vision of Christ.

Transcript

In our first chapter our main point was that this book of the Revelation is, in its first section, a call back to a position which had been lost by most of that representative body of first Christians. The first chapter must be read in that light, and it is that fact which will most truly interpret its symbolical content. The following messages to the churches must also be related to the full presentation of Christ in chapter one. This will become clear as we proceed. We reached the point where we saw that the "garment down to the foot" introduces all that follows as signifying the fullness and completeness of Christ as the standard for the Church and churches. More will be said about this later. For the present we are going to take a step backward, and a step forward because this full-stature description of Christ stands between two important fragments. Verse 5: "Unto Him That loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood", and verse 18: "I was (became) dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." These words, as we have said, form the boundary within which Christ in heavenly fullness is presented. This boundary, or basis, is something to be very carefully noted, for its significance is immensely important. Whenever God has moved for the recovery of the lost testimony (chapter 1, verse 2) He has always called back to the Cross. That was always His starting point, and any deviation will necessitate a return there. There are three very clear and strong instances in the Old Testament. These were in the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah respectively, and, later, in the time of Ezra. In the revivals under Josiah and Hezekiah recovery was definitely related to the Passover.

Three features in that connection are noticeable:

(a) It is impressive and instructive that the two godly kings concerned were characterized by a clear perception as to the key to the prevailing spiritual weakness and complications. Not a 'conference' or 'convention' or 'convocation'. Not a 'round-table discussion'. Not an entertainment or 'holiday camp'. But a celebration of the Passover. A solemn yet joyful reaffirmation and celebration of the one fundamental and inclusive basis of their life as the people of God. The Passover had constituted them God's distinctive people, and it had, year by year, been the central power in their testimony. That both Josiah and Hezekiah discerned that this was the ground of resolving the so deplorable situation, and not any of the other methods resorted to since, is a very clear evidence of the sovereign guidance and instruction of the Spirit of God. The Passover had ALL the aspects and content of the Cross of Christ, just as the Lord's Table - or Supper - is the INCLUSIVE embodiment of everything foundational to New Testament Christianity.

In the case of Ezra, it has only to be pointed out that after the seventy years of Israel's exile, when the 'Remnant' returned, it was the altar which was the centre and focal-point of the recovery of testimony.

With the Church in the New Testament the testimony becomes definitely the Testimony of Jesus, and, as we are seeing, after decline at the end of the apostolic period, the Lord works again for recovery by introducing and presenting Himself in terms of the Cross.

(b) The second thing noted in this method and means of revival and recovery is that the Passover was

The All-uniting Ground

We know that in the times of Josiah and Hezekiah the nation was divided and in strong conflict; ten tribes against two. It would have been impossible to restore or get an expression of unity by any organizational recourse, or any friendly gesture. Jehoshaphat resorted to a compromise with Ahab, but with disastrous consequences. Hezekiah ignored the division and disunity and sent his appeal to ALL Israel. It is true that his call was met with laughter, scorn, and ridicule by some, but a great number responded favourably. "They made proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even unto Dan that they should come to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel, at Jerusalem." What a tremendous lesson and principle this is with regard to all efforts to secure unity in broken Christendom, evangelical Christianity, and all realms of broken fellowship! It would truly work if all concerned really and truly understood and embraced the true meaning of the Cross - "Christ our Passover"!

No other ground or means will ever secure the kind of oneness mentioned by the High Priest as He was about to offer the one great sacrifice on the Cross (John 17).

(c) There is the third feature which comes into view in those Old Testament instances of revival and recovery. It is that the Passover was

The All-corrective Dynamic

Idolatry was rife and widespread in the land. Altars and monuments to other gods were numerous. But nothing was said in the appeal as to these things. 'Come to Jerusalem and restore the Passover to its central place' was all that was mentioned. They came; the Passover was the one object and interest. It was a time of such blessing from God that nothing like it had been known for very many years. So blessed was it that the people wanted to extend the period beyond the appointed time, and they did. But that was not the end. As they returned to their own homes they passed those objects of false worship which had

before been their life of devotion, and they smashed the lot! Nothing before would have displaced those altars and idols. But a taste of the real thing did what nothing else could do. How we ought to stand still and consider this! There are so many THINGS which both divide us and account for our spiritual weakness, and all our efforts and plans to change that situation are so abortive and unsatisfactory. If only we could meet on the sole ground of the Cross - the infinite love and grace of God, so costly, and so eternally efficacious - and of an inward sight of our Redeemer - Saviour, the work would be done!

"I have seen the face of Jesus,

Tell me not of aught beside."

The Cross, Christ crucified, is the great corrective.

How often we have said that if only our gatherings and gathering-place were full of the life and light of the Lord, and the power of the Cross was manifested in His gathered people, there would be a spontaneous forsaking of all that divides and weakens the testimony! It is difficult to set down all that we see in this ultimate presentation of Him as alive, Who became dead, and is risen forevermore.

What it amounts to, in the Passover and its counterpart or full unveiling, is that God must be ALL. That which takes His place, or divides place with Him - the idols of men - may just be ANYTHING which is of any consideration before or beside this one thing: is it wholly and undividedly the Lord and His glory? Our institutions, organizations, traditions, enterprises, even denominations, associations, etc., etc., may obscure or limit the Lord. The answer is a new, captivating, all-mastering and over-circling vision of Christ in all His Divine fullness and significance. The last movement before "Behold, I come quickly" MUST be a Christ-movement.

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