

# The Throne, the Holy Spirit, and Prayer Warfare

by T. Austin-Sparks

---

*The Church must contend with hostile powers and function as the instrument of God's purpose in relation to the throne, requiring enlightenment, empowerment, and boldness in access.*

**Topics:** "The Lordship of Christ", "Prayer Warfare"

---

## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the critical role of prayer in spiritual warfare, highlighting that the Lordship of Jesus Christ is central to this conflict. He explains that believers are called to engage in prayer that is empowered by the Holy Spirit, as they contend against spiritual forces that threaten the life of the Church. The sermon stresses the necessity of enlightenment and boldness in approaching God, as well as the importance of being fully committed to the cause of Christ. Sparks urges the Church to recognize its authority and responsibility in prayer, asserting that true intercession requires a deep connection to the sufferings of Christ. Ultimately, he calls for a radical commitment to prayer that aligns with the ultimate purpose of establishing Christ's Lordship over all powers.

---

## Transcript

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name... and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matt 6:9,13).

"For this cause I... cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:15).

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father..." (Eph. 3:14).

"...with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

We have been occupied with the significance of the words "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory", and have been seeing that this is all now gathered up into the Lord Jesus as exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We want now to continue with one more aspect of this same great inclusive truth. The Lordship of Jesus Christ is the occasion of warfare in prayer. In the passage in the sixth chapter of the letter to the

Ephesians, we have this simple but very important clause - "praying at all seasons in the Spirit". Praying in the Spirit; and you notice that, in keeping with every other phase of this matter which we have already considered, the connection of the Spirit and prayer here is with ascendancy. It is in the realm of conflict for ascendancy. We are very familiar with this paragraph of the letter.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore..."

And this heads right up to this praying in the Spirit.

This is warfare in prayer, this is prayer in the realm of conflict, which has the tremendous issue of the throne in view, ascendancy; and I want you to notice that, between the beginning and the end of this letter, there has taken place a change. The first declaration is -

"...made him to sit at his right hand... far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion and every name that is named... and he put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph. 1:20-22).

Now, at the end of the letter we have this -

"Our wrestling is... against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies."

In the first place, they are seen as under His feet, fulfilling the passage which has been much before us, Acts 2:34-35 -

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet."

Above all rule and authority, principalities and powers, and yet, when you get to the end, the warfare is going on and it is in relation to the subjecting of those self-same principalities and powers. The meaning is perfectly clear that, although it is true in the case of the Lord Jesus, it has to be made true in the case of the Church. There is something yet that has to be done to make that thing good in another realm, to make that truth an applied truth. The Church has to stand right into all the values of what is true concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and that has to be made good in the Church and applied by the Church as a testimony and an effectual working thing in the Church's life and the Church's ministry.

The Church Related to the Throne

So here, the Holy Spirit is seen to be the sphere, so to speak, in which prayer of a warring kind is to be waged with the throne in view, with ascendancy in view, and this implies certain things. In the first place, it implies that the saints are as much related to the throne as the Lord Jesus is Himself. It makes it perfectly clear that ascendancy is the ascendancy, not only of Christ, but of the Church. Dominion is not only the dominion of Christ, but of the Church with Him. The enemies also of Christ are seen to be exactly the same enemies with which the Church has to contend. In a word, the great issue which is gathered up in the Lord Jesus is the same issue for the Church. Of course, that is well known and recognized, and there is nothing new in the way of revelation about that. But that is where we begin, namely, by recognizing that this implies quite clearly that the saints are related to the throne, that that is God's thought concerning the

Church, and it is in connection with that Divine thought that the tremendous spiritual conflict into which the Church is hurled rages. It is the throne matter that is in view. It is absolute spiritual ascendancy in union with Christ over all hostile powers.

#### The Life of the Church Threatened Because of the Throne

If that is true, and this war in relation to the throne concerns the Church, then it implies this second thing, that the life of the saints, because of that relationship, is threatened. The adversary, the hostile forces, are set against the very life of God's people because of what is in view. These are simple implications, but you and I have to be mightily gripped by these implications. It is not enough for us to know. It may be that some of you are even now saying, We know that, we have heard that many times! I would urge you to ask yourself whether you are really actively in the good of this light; not whether you know, but whether you are actively in the good of it, whether you have come to an active position in the realization that the very life of the Lord's people is threatened because of the great issue which is in view; that is, their coming to the place where the Lord Jesus is of absolute ascendancy over all principalities and powers, to be governing with Him in the heavenlies. What does that mean to you in a practical way? How is that working out in your life? Oh, may I appeal to you? It is a terrible thing for you, dear friends, to be brought up - may I put it in that way? - to be brought up with truth and light of this kind if it is not going to mean anything more than that you have learned these truths as truths. It is a terrible thing. One of the most deplorable conditions today in this world is that there are many who have a great deal of light but it amounts to nothing as a power, as an effective working, as a registration in the realm of spiritual antagonism. That is a terrible thing, and we must, in our heart of hearts, beseech the Lord that our hearing of things like this shall not be a mere listening to truth, and a knowing of things merely as they are set out in the Word of God. We must really challenge our hearts with these things and ask ourselves as we go along, 'Well now, I know that or I have heard that. At least now I am enlightened about that, but what does it mean? How is it working out? How much do I count now that I know that?' That is the thing, and, unless really we come to count for something, all this truth might just as well be unknown to us. It can only be a terrible responsibility to know without really counting by our knowledge.

So I urge this upon you, that here is this tremendous implication. The fact that this is a tremendous warfare means there is a threat to the life of God's people because of the Divine destiny of those people in the thought of God.

#### The Throne Reached by Prayer

Now, we have to recognize that there are certain other things which become necessary. This whole thing is headed up in prayer. Let us square ourselves to that at once. Any other form of activity may be more interesting. It might appeal to us much more to talk about these things, to preach them, to disseminate the truth or truths; but the thing is headed up in prayer. That is where the thing finds its expression. It is by that means the throne is reached and the testimony of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus is established, by prayer. When the Apostle has said everything, he crowns it all and gathers it all into this -

"...praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints";

and, as you know, it is all a part of what he has been saying about the armour. As he has been taking note of his Roman guard and marking down every bit of his equipment, he has come at last to see that all that armour, all that the man possesses for offensive and defensive, counts for nothing if the man is not

vigilant, on the alert, watching. The best equipment counts for nothing unless you are in a spirit of activity, alert and watchful and given to this business by perseverance. Paul sees his guard who is not going to be caught, not going to be taken off his guard, who is vigilant, diligent, watchful, who is applying himself, and Paul says that for us its counterpart is prayer. Our devotion, our watchfulness, our perseverance is in relation to prayer, and it is all to be in the Spirit. This soldier is in the spirit of things. For us it is the Holy Spirit; we have to be in the Spirit about this business. So it is all gathered up into the matter of prayer.

### The Need for Enlightenment

Now then, if that is true, if this tremendous issue is to be secured by prayer, surely it is necessary that the Lord's people should be enlightened about this matter. You see, we shall never give ourselves to this kind of prayer, to praying with this issue in view, unless we have been enlightened as to what the situation is: and when I say enlightened, I mean something more than informed. You can inform yourself by reading the letter to the Ephesians, but that is not being enlightened. Beloved, immediately you and I are enlightened about a situation something happens, and you can prove and test whether it is enlightenment or information by the result.

Think of the world situation today. May I illustrate? I hate to touch the realm of things, but let me illustrate. Supposing what is being carried out now on the Continent had all been written in a book beforehand, as representing the plan, the device or tactics of the enemy, and then people had got hold of the book and read it. They would probably have said, 'Well, that is a wonderful scheme: that is very clever, and that is very terrible'. But it has not come home, you see. It is in a book. They have acquainted themselves with this thing, but it is still in a book. But then supposing the day comes when that thing, as being actually in operation, comes down their street, dropped out from the clouds, the whole thing with all its tremendous significance, that it is either victory or an end of everything; destruction, death, total ruin and loss, the loss of everything unless it is victory. It has come home and they are awake now, they are alive to it. It is no longer merely in a book, it has become an actual living reality. It has become inward, not outward. It has touched them in an inward way by the reality of it. It is tremendous and terrible when the thing becomes real. For ourselves, even while we are feeling very much and very deeply things going on over there, and already there may be a sense of fear creeping over us, we still have a kind of objective relationship to it, and it is still a little difficult to put ourselves into that or put that on to ourselves and feel that we are in it. It is still out there. But supposing tonight it all happens; supposing the clouds shed their hordes and the thing came right down into your garden, and the whole thing is set up like that, and destruction and havoc are going on all around. Oh, we are alive to it then, it is a reality as it never was before. Although in a way we knew objectively that the thing was true, now it has touched us, moved us.

That is what enlightenment means, and we can test it. We can determine the nature of our knowledge by the effect it has upon us, and if all our knowledge about this great conflict, this age-long warfare and all these matters of the Church's Divine destiny, and all that is bound up with that, is not really moving us to prayer, it is inadequate knowledge, it is a knowledge which lacks the essential. To be really acquainted by the Holy Spirit with this thing has an effect upon us.

You have that great and beautiful illustration of this very thing in the book of Esther. Here is the throne, and there are the Lord's people: there is Esther; and there is Mordecai; and there is the enemy. The enemy plots against the life of the Lord's people. Esther is away there out of touch with things, in seclusion. Mordecai is here and he knows all about this plot, but he cannot do anything directly: he cannot assail the enemy, he cannot go to the throne. But there is one who has touch with the throne by reason of

relationship, and that is Esther. Now, what is necessary? The necessary thing is for Mordecai to get the information through to Esther, to acquaint her with the situation, and to bring home to her the seriousness of this situation, and, when once Esther is really acquainted with the situation and it is brought home to her with all its terror by Mordecai, then she moves in relation to the throne.

Here we have the story written in a picture again. The Church has to be made aware of a situation, and has to be touched deeply and terribly by that situation, and, as the result, the Church must spontaneously at all costs move to the throne in intercession about this; because it is the very life and destiny of the Lord's people that is at stake. But there it is, and we cannot have a detached relationship with this terrible situation. We cannot. So it is necessary for us to have a true enlightenment, and that is why we read those earlier passages or clauses introductory to the prayers of the Apostle in this letter; for when you look to see what it is he is praying for, it is for two things. The first is enlightenment, and the other is empowerment, and in both cases this praying is in relation to the calling, the destiny. That you may know what is the hope of his calling and then, "that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man", in relation to the calling. Prayer, you see, is in that direction, in relation to this tremendous issue in the Church's life, the very throne itself, ascendancy over all the powers of evil.

That is the first necessity, enlightenment of the true kind; not information, but a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I do entreat you, not caring how much is said so long as what is said is really grasped, I do entreat you to test the nature of your knowledge by its practical result in your life. It counts for nothing if there is no result, no moving. Oh, that we might have the true kind of knowledge, that our knowledge might be of this kind, that something results from it, and that something a "praying at all seasons in the Spirit".

#### The Testimony of the Christ's Lordship Bound up with the Church

Then another necessity is that the Church must apprehend that the Head does move through the members by means of the Anointing in relation to this issue. It is by the Spirit that Christ moves through the Church in connection with this tremendous matter of His own Lordship as a testimony to be established and applied. The Lord Jesus is not doing this independently or alone. All through the Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, this is borne out in every way, that God moves through His chosen agents and agencies in relation to His intentions. He has bound up His intentions, His purposes, with an instrument, and He does not move apart from that instrument, and if that instrument fails Him, God's purpose is suspended. I know what problems that raises in the merely intellectual realm, but the fact has to be recognized and we will not argue the problem. The Lord Jesus has bound up the testimony of His Lordship with His Church, and that Lordship waits upon the Church for its being made effectual. It is a fact, and to make the fact effectual amongst principalities and powers is the business of the Church. This thing is going to be done through the Church, but the Church today must be made to grasp the fact, must apprehend it, that the Head moves through His members, through His Body, in relation to the great issue which is at stake. We cannot sit back and fold our arms in passive inaction with the thought, 'Well, the Lord has purposed and He will fulfil His purpose. The Lord has designed, and His design will come to pass, whatever I do or do not do'. All Scripture forbids any such attitude, and show us that, strangely enough, God takes up an instrument.

So, coming back to Esther again, you see she must come in and act in relation to the nation. The thing is bound up with her and the great word is, "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther there undoubtedly represents the Church. The issue is bound up with the Church.

Supposing she had said, 'Oh well, they are the Lord's people: He is sovereign, He will look after His people; He cannot be dethroned from His sovereignty, He will have His way. I need not disturb myself, I will just trust the Lord'. Well then, the whole object of that Divinely preserved book goes. It has no place in the Scriptures at all, if you say that. It is there to emphasize this one thing, amongst others, that God is Lord and that this threatened seed are His people and He is deeply concerned for them and their life, but that He must have an instrument upon which there comes to rest His own concern about this matter, and through that instrument He saves the situation and overthrows the enemy and brings his counsels to naught. That is the place the Church holds, and we have to grasp that. Have you grasped that?

There is a sense in which God is impotent, the Lord Jesus is impotent, while His Church does not function, and the fact that He is Lord, far above all, remains a fact remote from things until the Church comes in and applies it and makes it effective. It remains there as a fact in Himself. It has to be brought out from Himself into expression and the Church has to know that. You and I have to know that.

Paul is a great example of this himself, He knows all about the Divine eternal purpose, the thing purposed from before times eternal. Paul might well have said, 'Well, what can I do in that matter? That is settled from eternity. It will make no difference either way what I do'. But no! here is the man who knows it all, getting on his knees and saying, 'I cease not to pray for you in relation to this thing. I pray unceasingly'. Here is the intercessor in relation to the thing which exists in God as a settled matter, but which needs intercession for its being made effectual. 'I pray': and then he says to the Church, 'Look here, you must pray, you must step into that position between the eternal purpose and its realization, you must stand in that gap for God and with God, to pray this thing through against all the forces of evil'.

#### Boldness in Access

Then, beloved, as a necessity to this ministry, this intercession, you and I, the Lord's people, must have perfect assurance of our access. It is that which the Apostle mentions, as you notice, in the third chapter of this Ephesian letter, verse 12 -

"...in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him."

There must be nothing whatever in us of that uncertainty which stands outside and wonders if peradventure we dare draw near. No, the Apostle says that in this ministry we have to have perfect assurance that we have access. We must have confidence, we must have boldness in access. It is a very important thing that. You know quite well that one of those - shall I use the phrase? - "Fifth Column" tactics of the enemy is in some way to sap your assurance in your approach to God. Is that not true? Well, if by accusation, by bringing up something in your life, something that has happened, some mistake, some "slip up", he can interfere with your sense of acceptance, he has paralysed you in the warfare of prayer. By any means, he will seek to put a dead hand upon that confident access, that boldness in coming to the Lord. Blessed be God, the provision is here. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins" (Eph. 1:7); and then we have boldness in access. The Blood deals with all that, it is the ground of our confidence. But oh, watch against that movement of the enemy, secretly and subtly, not in the open at all, where he is trying to affect your boldness, your confidence, in the matter of access.

Esther was afraid to go in to the king. That will not do and Esther had to come to the place where she gathered up everything and said, 'I am going in and if I perish I perish'. We can go beyond that surely and have no fear. If we know the virtue of the Blood, we can have boldness and confidence in access. "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). But mark that, watch it, watch it carefully - the necessity

for this sense of assurance in our coming to the Lord, and let us brush aside every interference with that confidence. Let us apply the Blood to everything that the enemy would bring up to interfere with that confidence, and let us come with boldness to the Throne of Grace. There are tremendous issues at stake and any kind of uncertainty here jeopardizes those issues.

### The Fellowship Of His Sufferings

Then one other thing. This kind of ministry, this kind of warfare in prayer, has to have a lot of discipline behind it. Really it is not a thing for novices. Anybody cannot enter into this. It is not a thing that you can take up because you see it as something to be taken up. It can only really be entered into when you know something of the fellowship of His sufferings Paul says, "I... fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24), and that is a necessary background to this kind of work. Now you say, 'We are ruled out, we have not got it. We are too young'. I want to say this to you, that it is unto this very end that the Lord will deal with you, that He is dealing with you. If He is making you to know something, even in a small way, of suffering together with Him, of the fellowship of His sufferings; if He is working in you the work of His Cross, emptying you, breaking you, undoing you; if He is working at all in you that which in your experience is not pleasant to the flesh, and you are feeling the pressure of His dealings with you, remember, it is all to bring you to the place where you can intercede with Him; for no one really intercedes effectually in whose heart the thing has not become a real agony, a real concern, a travail. We have to come to the place where the Lord's interests in His people, the life of the Lord's people, is a real concern to us in order that we should be intercessors, and it is unto that the Lord is working in us. If we have tasted a little of this thing, if we have known the fury of the oppressor, if we have known spiritual suffering, if we have really in any measure come into the antagonism of the enemy, we are able to feel for the Lord's people and we are able to pray intelligently. So the Lord would seek, by His dealings with us, to bring us into the place where we can prevail in prayer. Remember that. That is what He is doing in us to make us one with Himself, with regard to the sufferings, the need, the peril of His people, to intercede effectually on their behalf.

I think of Esther again. She is much in my mind as I am speaking. She had to have a year's preparation for that intercession, and six months of that was with bitter aloes, and that speaks very loudly. Yes, we have to know something of the death of the Lord Jesus in our own experience, something of the bitterness of the emptying of the self life, an undoing of our own strength in order to come to the place of prevailing, of real effectual warfare. It is those who have most deeply known fellowship with the Lord in suffering, who have felt His hand upon them most heavily, who are able most effectually to cry to the Lord and to intercede for others. It is the price of a great ministry, beloved, and we must recognize that it is unto that ministry that the Lord has really to fit us.

### A Call for Utterness

Now, I am going to close with just one other word. This ministry, this work, this warfare in prayer, is going to cost us everything. We had better face it. It is an utter position, a matter, in effect, of really taking our very lives in our hands. That is to say, we cannot effectually wage this warfare if we have any of our own interests to preserve. Oh, you see, there is all the difference between going into our room and praying, and our meeting the enemy's mighty kick back to our prayer. They may be two different things because you may take it if you are coming into this, the enemy is going to mark you, and all that you have is going to be involved in this. If you have personal interests, well, you are going to be put out of it at once. It is the case of Gideon again and the sifting down of that mighty host. 'Those of you who are afraid, well, you had

better go home. You are out of the fight.' 'Those of you who are concerned for your wives, children and homes, you had better go'. And then the last issue: 'Those of you who have your own personal interests to serve, likes to gratify, you had better go home'. It is only those who have gathered everything into this, and who say, 'I am in it and all that I am, all that I have', in it in an utter position, it is only those who can wage this warfare; and they are the overcomers, they are the ones who come to the throne.

You see, while the Lord would be gracious, and the Lord could give His protections and preservations, He requires on our part such a position and attitude as will give the enemy no ground to play with. If you and I have got some personal interest, we are thinking all the time, 'Oh, I had better not go for the enemy too strongly, he might touch that'. Be sure he will and he will put you out because of that, for he knows that is your weak point. You must have nothing like that for the enemy to play on and by which to put you out. You have to be in with everything, as I said, in a sense taking your very life in your hand and saying, Well, I am in this thing and I am in it for all and with all.

Oh yes, that may be the dark side, but there is another side. It is the throne side. "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4). These are they who are the utter ones, these are the glorious ones, these are the ones set on high. Beloved, we are called into the universal testimony of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, to the making effectual of that Lordship now in a spiritual way, and in a literal and manifest way throughout the ages to come. For the time being, it is a matter which is contested, disputed, resisted by all the hosts of evil, and into that the Church is called, to bring that issue through to finality, and when that day comes the heavens will be freed and emptied of all the principalities and powers, and the Church itself will come into that place to govern: the Church will be the new "principalities and powers and world rulers" - not of this darkness, but of this light. What a change it will be! It is in that momentous issue that we really are now, and no less a matter than that. All our spiritual conflict has to do with that. Let us then put it into its right place, see it in its right relationship. There is the biggest possible issue bound up with our spiritual conflict. But what I want to keep particularly in view now is that this is all primarily a matter of the Holy Spirit operating through prayer, a Church praying in the Spirit.

Oh, let the Lord cause it to light upon our prayer life, our times of prayer, and lift them up from the petty earthly things right up in this realm where the ultimate things of God are touched and effected. The Lord teach us something of the meaning of praying in the Spirit at all seasons for all saints, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-throne-the-holy-spirit-and-prayer-warfare/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**