

# The Twofold Main Objective

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the dual objectives of God and the enemy, emphasizing the Church's critical role in spiritual warfare and the importance of recognizing underlying spiritual realities in conflicts.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 10:3

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "The Church as God's Instrument"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the twofold main objective in spiritual warfare: God's ultimate aim, represented by the Throne, and the enemy's goal to undermine it. The Church serves as the instrument of God's Throne, and the enemy seeks to disrupt its influence and the well-being of its people. Sparks highlights that the Church is often the focal point of conflict, as it embodies the representation of Christ and faces opposition from Satan. He urges believers to recognize the spiritual implications of their everyday relationships and actions, understanding that they are part of a larger battle for the honor of God's Throne. Ultimately, the sermon calls for vigilance and unity within the Church to effectively combat the enemy's schemes.

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## Transcript

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

We pass now to the next of the vital things in the warfare --The Twofold Main Objective: the twofold main objective of God, the twofold main objective of the enemy. This great campaign has two aspects: one is primary; the other is secondary. One is the final supreme issue; the other is the means or instrument for its attainment. We shall consider both of these things, but mainly the second.

First of all, the supreme objective of God--and therefore of Satan--in its primary aspect, may be summed up in what is meant by 'the Throne'. The rights, the claims, and the aims of the Throne; the sphere and range of its influence; the honour that is bound up with it; the government that it implies; the prosperity and well-being of the people over whom it is set: all these things go to make up what is meant by the Throne. That, supremely and finally, is God's objective. All those things are but aspects of God's interests and activities and concern in this great campaign. The Throne, with all that meaning, is involved in this tremendous conflict.

It is, therefore, easy to see what is the enemy's objective: it is the reverse or contrary of what we have just stated. He aims at the repudiation of the rights and claims and interests of that Throne; the curtailment, and, if possible, the complete removal, of the influence of that Throne; the depriving of the people under it of their prosperity and well being. All this is what the enemy is set upon; and his consummate object, along all those lines, is himself to take over everything--even the very Throne itself.

In making these statements, I am, of course, keeping close to the Scriptures and close to history. We ought to realize what it is that we are involved in and what we are up against.

### The Church The Instrument Of The Throne

With that brief word on the primary aspect of the supreme objective, we pass to what I have called the secondary aspect: but it is only secondary in that it is dependent upon the primary. This--the means for the attainment of the supreme objective--is the instrument in which all those features and factors of the Throne are vested, to which they are committed and entrusted. In order to repudiate the rights, the claims, and the interests of the Throne; to bring dishonour and reproach upon it; to curtail or wipe out the sphere of its influence; to rob its subjects of their prosperity and well-being: in order to do all this, the enemy must destroy or put out of action the whole force in the field--the vehicle and means of operation of that Throne, the instrumentality of its effectiveness. That vehicle is the Church. It is to the Church that all those interests of the Throne are committed; it is in the Church that they are vested.

But let us not consider that word 'Church' objectively: let us bring it right to ourselves, and apply every word personally. In this matter we need not fear that we shall be too subjective, too self occupied or introspective. Our conception of 'the Church' must not be of something vague or mystical. Wherever even two or three are gathered into the Name, there is the Church in real, though minute, representation, and everything begins there. And so it is that these tremendous things in relation to the Throne, as the supreme and ultimate objective of God and the enemy, are focused upon us as a part of the Church.

### The Groaning Of The Creation Related To The Church

There is a sense in which it can be said that all the trouble centres in the Church. Like the prophets, one of whom was addressed as the "troubler of Israel" (1 Kings 18:17), the Church is the 'troubler', not only of Israel, but of all the nations and of the kingdom of Satan. Even in our own day, there is a great deal that corresponds to those tremendous convulsions in Egypt that led up to the ejection of Israel. That is the explanation of much that is taking place in the nations today. Convulsions in the nations--what for? Well, Paul says that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth"--why? It is waiting for "the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:22, 19). It is toward the birth, the manifestation, the precipitation, of that which God has ultimately in view, that there are these convulsions in the nations. That may seem a big thing to say, and indeed, if we had not Bible ground for saying it, we should be saying something too big. But all those convulsions in Egypt were because of a people in their midst who had to be got out--and the power behind that kingdom was not prepared to let them out! The hierarchy of wicked spirits that were the real rulers of the land of Egypt did not want that people out, because they knew that the emancipation of Israel would constitute the greatest possible menace to their hold upon Egypt and other nations of the earth.

Centuries later, when Israel was again in captivity, there were upheavals in Babylon. Through the prophet the Lord said: "I have sent to Babylon, and will bring down all their nobles" (Isa. 43:14, marg.)--what for? To get the People out. Convulsions in Babylon! And there are plenty of convulsions in the nations of the world just now. I believe that the trouble is largely because of the Church. Once the Church is extricated

and out, while there will be disintegration, judgment and so on, Satan will breathe more freely here. But, whether this be a right interpretation or not concerning national and international upheavals and tumults--and I think it is--there is no question whatever as to whether or not it is true about the kingdom of Satan. The cause of the trouble, disturbance and upheaval there is this other force that is in the field. It is the troubler.

#### The Conflict Focused Upon A True Expression Of Christ

Now, immediately there is a movement towards the practical expression of anything approximating to the Church as it is revealed in the New Testament--especially as revealed in such fullness through the Letters of the Apostle Paul --disturbances take place which are more than human, for which there seems to be no rational explanation. This should give food for thought. It is profoundly significant that no comparable spiritual disturbance arises when Christianity is anything short of this. There may be a presentation of doctrine without organic expression: that does not worry Satan very much. We may be orthodox and as sound as it is possible to be, and still not meet the full force of Satan's objection. But let an organic expression of the Church for practical purposes be brought into view, and you will find trouble coming from everywhere and nowhere!

Again, when Christianity is a formal, ecclesiastical system, without spiritual power, Satan does not trouble either himself or it one little bit. When Christianity is a mystical, aesthetic, artistic, soulish imitation of spirituality, Satan is not at all troubled--rather very pleased. He is delighted when mysticism is interpreted as spirituality, and multitudes are held in the illusion. When there is profession without organic reality, there is no trouble. When there is but a name, a title, a designation, without correspondence to the Divine pattern, it is left to go on its way unchallenged. When there is an organization, an institution, without a heavenly nature and spiritual character, its course is more or less unchecked. But let the Lord bring into view something that really sets forth Christ corporately, and then there is trouble--trouble, such as we have said, that cannot be explained along any natural, human lines at all.

The enemy is, in fact, bitterly opposed to any real, living, organic expression of Christ in his territory. For such an expression really represents the Throne of God, in effect and in impact, and therefore there will be trouble. The forces of Satan in any and every way are set against the realization of that. From apostolic times until now, there never was an expression, however small, of the Church in its heavenly, spiritual and eternal character, that was not the object of the most determined and many sided effort of Satan to destroy it. There is a great deal of history bound up in that statement. This is, after all, just the meaning of Ephesians 6:12 and onward, is it not? "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities... powers... world- rulers of this darkness... spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." But long before Paul wrote those words, Paul's Master, the Lord Jesus Himself, had spoken about this great Satanic opposition. He spoke of "the gates of Hades"--which I understand to mean 'the councils of death' --as being active with the determination to prevail against the Church.

Now it would be far too big a matter for us to try to range the strategies and tactics of the enemy in this connection. But let us note two things.

The first is that the Throne--with all that that implies--is most closely affected by the representation of Christ--whether good, or bad--that is found in the Church; that is, according to whether Christ is, in fact, represented or misrepresented. The Throne is affected more directly and immediately by the Church than by anything else. That is the fact.

Secondly, we need always to remember that secondary causes are not primary causes. Would that we might be more alive and alert to that! We are caught almost every time on that matter. Things happen: people behave in such and such a way; circumstances arise; there is strain, tumult, tension and what not; and we attribute everything to the secondary cause--to the person or the persons concerned, to the circumstances, the conditions, or whatever it might be. We do not go straight to the first cause. We fail to recognize that behind everything is this sinister force; behind that person's behaviour there is something more; behind all this there is something at work with no less an objective than the undermining of that Throne--its honour, its glory, its range and sphere of influence, its rights and its claims and the well being of its people. In many a little, seemingly casual, 'happening', it is nothing less than that which is involved: but we take it on as something in itself, and wrongly make the secondary cause the first.

In the previous chapter I said that there are many things that we should attribute to our own foolishness, rather than to the Devil. But there is this other realm, and lest you think I am exaggerating, let me bring you to the Word. Some of these so called secondary causes--failure to recognize which leads to the defeat of the Church, or the set back of the Army--are actually found in this letter to the Ephesians, the great warfare letter of the Church.

'Ephesians'--The Warfare Letter

"The Exceeding Greatness Of The Revelation"

In the three great chapters at the beginning of this letter, we have presented the Church of God; that marvelous vessel, that Divine masterpiece, born in the counsels of God in eternity past. I fear that the chapter divisions sometimes prevent us from recognizing the continuity, the unity of the whole document, and from passing naturally from one stage to another. But here we have the presentation of this great thing--it is as it were brought out from eternity and shown to us. And this presentation, comprehended in a few hundred words of human language, is something which for well-nigh twenty centuries has defeated and defied every attempt to fathom it, and today it is drawing out and extending men more than ever before. That is not exaggeration. Can you fathom it? Look again at some of the shortest sentences in those first three chapters--they will defeat you!

Now, the subject matter contained in the second half (chapters 4-6) of the letter ranges itself into four sections, the first two short, the last two long. Whilst we shall review them very briefly, let us not fail to apply them.

(a) "Walking Worthily Of The Calling"

Paul, having thus presented the Church, now, by a perfectly natural movement, passes to a consideration of the practical consequences. His opening words are full of challenge and test. "I... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit..." (Eph. 4:1-3; vs. 3 R.S.V.). Now, these are things that are directly related to certain very common 'secondary causes'. But this whole immense purpose, that has been unveiled, divulged, as out from eternity, rests for its true expression, for the proof that it is no mere vision, no mere idea or ideal, but a reality--it all rests upon our 'walking worthily'. It rests upon our walk. Everything depends upon our lowliness, meekness, patience, our forbearing one another in love, our eagerness to keep the unity. Does that challenge us? But those are our spiritual weapons in the field, and much grace and faith is needed if they are to be used effectively.

Oh, the provocations, the annoyances, the irritations! --all that comes upon us in the course of a day to make our life a contradiction and our walk unworthy! The challenge to lowliness! The snare of self-assertiveness, loudness, occupying the limelight, bringing ourselves into view, drawing attention to ourselves, wanting people to take note of us--all that and a thousand other things contrary to lowliness and meekness! "With patience, forbearing one another, giving diligence to keep the unity"--so our Revised Version; the Revised Standard Version has: "eager to maintain the unity"--eager, eager to maintain the unity! Ah, that is a battle, a tremendous battle, a desperate part of the conflict. The enemy is particularly persistent and persevering with things like these, because they make a caricature of the Church, and they touch the Throne.

But every one of those things can be carried into the realm of what we call 'secondary causes'. 'But he did so and so... she said so and so... and I got upset... and I have a right to be upset!' That is looking at things as they appear on the surface, instead of looking right through the things and seeing something else. Ah, yes; if we look deeper, we shall find that there is a primary cause. Often the very timing of the thing proves that--it is so sinister and so uncanny. Or a consideration of where the attack comes from, or the why of it, may reveal its true source. But we are not always alive to that. We get caught in the thing and defeated, and all our wonderful conceptions of this marvelous Church count for nothing--they just go to pieces.

#### (b) "The Unity Of The Faith"

We turn to the second section, chapter 4:4-6. Here, quite briefly, the thing challenged is the peril of making something extra to Christ the basis of unity. "There is... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all". That is the basis of unity. But it is possible to make a division by means of that, if you are so minded. I have heard people ask, 'What does the "one baptism" mean?' Some say: 'Of course it means the baptism of the Holy Spirit', and others: 'Of course it means the baptism of water'--and at once there is a division on the very fundamentals of unity! I do not think that either of those interpretations necessarily applies here. What it does mean, I believe, is this: that 'we were all baptized in one Spirit into one Body' (1 Cor. 12:13), and the "one baptism" is baptism into Christ. You can say that it is by the Holy Spirit, if you like. I challenge you to say that it is by water. No one is baptized into Christ by water. They may testify to baptism into Christ by means of water, but that is another thing. The one baptism is that, when we believed, we were all baptized in one Spirit into one Body.

The issue, then, is: Are you in Christ? Have you been baptized into Christ? That is fundamental to unity. If we make something more to be a basis of unity, then we split the unity, we destroy it, we contradict the truth of the oneness. This foundation is sufficient. If we knew all that is included in this "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father", we should have enough. If we live according to that, we take a lot of ground from under the enemy. Immediately we begin to add to that, as the basis of unity, then we begin to give the whole position away. Our special interpretations and teachings and doctrines have no value whatsoever as a basis of unity. All that matters is the foundation, and that is sufficient.

#### (c) Holiness Of Life

The third section, chapter 4:17--5:20, is a long section, containing a great many things and covering much ground. But if you read the section through, you will find that it all amounts to this: holiness of living, personally and relatedly. And remember that the enemy is against that. He triumphed in the greater part of the churches in Asia along that line. The chief thing that the Lord had to lay at their door, in His messages through the Apostle John, was corruption, defilement, wrong in the moral life. Paul, here, has much to say

on this matter of holiness, first in ourselves individually and then between us and others. For if the enemy can touch us and spoil us on that ground, he has struck at the Throne: he has brought reproach upon it, he has limited the sphere of its influence, he has robbed us and others of our inheritance. And that is searching!

#### (d) Human Relationships

Finally we have the fourth section: chapter 5:21--6:9. This section deals, in the main, with domestic relationships-- husbands to wives; wives to husbands; children to parents; parents to children; servants to masters; masters to servants. And these relationships present peculiarly good opportunities for enemy activity. But here, again, we are so insensible to reality that we habitually make these secondary causes the primary ones. How often it is that provocations and strains and difficulties in these family and social relationships have the effect of putting us spiritually right out of action, of crippling or even nullifying our spiritual life. And, again, these things often come up in such an uncanny way. Can we not learn this lesson from our defeats? So often the enemy comes along, either through the wife or the husband, in relation to something of very great spiritual interest that is about to emerge. We may know nothing of this--but he knows! The same thing may happen with regard to the children; the Devil can play many tricks through them.

So the whole range of these relationships is brought in here. The point is: we must not always lose our heads and straightaway blame the persons concerned. If we do, we have lost the battle. Let us first of all, if opportunity offers, go quietly away and say: 'Now, what is the enemy up to--what is he after? There is probably something more here than just this upset, however real and justified it may seem. It is quite true that this and that has happened; it is not imagination: but is this the beginning and the end of it? Cannot this be completely destroyed from behind? Cannot this be dealt with at Headquarters?' You see what I mean. On a hasty and superficial view, we might take all these things for primary causes. But quiet and prayerful reflection will enable us to recognize them as in all probability only secondary ones. We must not make secondary causes the criterion, but must get behind them to the hidden primary cause--in this case the activity of the great enemy.

#### Revelation And Warfare Related

Now you will notice that the four passages, or sections, that we have just considered are placed between Paul's mighty unveiling and presentation of the Church and his great exposé of the spiritual warfare over it. A significant position! Here is this matchless thought of God, the Church, presented. Here, at the other end, is the warfare with myriads of evil spirits. And, sandwiched right in between, we find husband and wife, and wife and husband; children and parents, and so on. Do you protest that there is no connection!? I submit, in reply, that the "therefore" of chapter 4, verse 1, holds this middle section, concerning our conduct and behaviour, in direct relation to the preceding revelation; saying in effect: 'Therefore, unless you watch these relationships, all that revelation counts for nothing!'

And the "Finally" of chapter 6 (which word does not mean 'Last of all'; it means 'Now, taking everything up from this point onward', 'Gathering everything up to go on')--that "Finally" gathers into the battle both the revelation and the conduct. "Finally, be strong in the Lord... For our wrestling..." This is all part of a tremendous fight. It is as much a part of spiritual warfare to deal with all the things which you may regard as the trivial commonplaces of everyday life--as much a part of the great spiritual warfare and the great issue of the Throne, as to be right out in the naked battle with the enemy himself.

In closing, we note that all this that we have seen carries with it certain serious implications. It says this, to begin with: that the holding of the doctrine of the Church, as in Ephesians 1-3, without corresponding life and walk, may sabotage the whole issue. We may have the conception of the Church --wonderful terms, wonderful ideas; we may talk endlessly about it, because it is so marvelous, so fascinating--but is it working? Is it really working? Are we truly in it? The answer will only be found in our daily walk and conduct, in all the so called 'commonplace' relationships that we have mentioned. That is the answer. It is really a matter of how much we are in this with all that we are and all that we have.

I remember hearing Dr. Campbell Morgan make a very challenging remark. He said: 'Allow me an impossible proposition: Supposing Christ is to be defeated, what do you stand to lose? How much of you is invested in this matter? Do you stand to lose everything if Christ is defeated?' Yes, it is an impossible proposition, because He never can be defeated. But supposing that in some way or other He is defeated in us, what do we stand to lose?

#### At The Heart Of The Conflict Is The Throne

Again, to divorce all these practical matters from the interests of the Church and from spiritual conflict is to have no dynamic with which to deal with them. Do you grasp that? If you cannot deal with these domestic situations effectively: if you are just struggling with them--'he is such an awkward husband', 'she is such a difficult wife', 'those children are such a handful'--if you are struggling to cope with them, and you know that you are not getting very far, may it not, after all, be a Church matter, that you have not an adequate background for dealing with the situations? May it not be that you are trying to deal with it as something in itself, instead of bringing it into relation with the Lord's testimony? that you are not recognizing that this discord, this disagreement between you and your husband or your wife touches the Throne, touches the Lord's honour, and must be dealt with on no lesser ground than that? It is not merely a matter of settling our little domestic problem--we must have a dynamic for dealing with situations in general. And it may be that, when we bring these things into the right realm, recognizing that they are a part of the great spiritual conflict in which the Throne is involved, we shall find things happening surprisingly.

But we come back at length to where we started. Beyond and above all this detail, the dominant issue is that of the Throne: its honour and glory; its sphere and range of influence; the rights and claims and interests of the Throne, and the well being of the people under it. Everything comes back to that, for that is the object of the conflict. In our homes, and in our local companies, let us cease to criticize, to judge, to condemn, looking at one another, and laying the blame at the door of things and people; and let us see if our problem ought not to be dealt with from behind. And let the Church deal with it so, in any locality. Let the Church face the situation squarely: 'Look here, the Lord's Throne and the Lord's honour are touched by this. We believe that God raised up this instrument and vessel: if so, it was in relation to the Throne. It is necessary, therefore, that this vessel be a true representation of the Church, according to the Word of God; and hence we realize that all Hell will be out to spoil it, to mar it, to wreck it, to destroy it.'

Why is this so? Not because the enemy cares anything about you or me, as individuals, or about any little local group or company, as something in itself; but he has his eye on that Throne, and our situation--either in the home or in the church--is touching that. Let us adjust to this reality--for it is all here in the Word, it is true; let us deal with matters in that way. Let our attitude be: 'This situation must not proceed any further; because of what is involved, it must not remain another day. The enemy must at all costs be spoiled in this!'

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