

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ in the Heart

by T. Austin-Sparks

A personal and continuous revelation of Jesus Christ is essential for spiritual growth and maturity, leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's purpose and plan.

Scripture: Galatians 3:1

Topics: "Revelation of Christ", "Spiritual Liberty"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the transformative power of a personal revelation of Jesus Christ, as experienced by Paul, who moved from Judaism to a life of liberty in Christ. This revelation not only liberated Paul from the constraints of religious law but also deepened his understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of all spiritual values. Sparks warns against using grace as a cover for sinful desires, urging believers to embrace the true liberty found in Christ, which leads to spiritual growth and maturity. He highlights the necessity of continuous unveiling of Christ in the heart for true emancipation and warns against falling prey to distractions that sidetrack believers from God's purpose. Ultimately, the message is that Christ must become everything in our lives, guiding our actions and decisions through His Spirit.

Transcript

Reading: Galatians 3; 5:13.

Paul was continually growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but it was a comprehensive knowledge or revelation which took him immediately away into Arabia for an extended period, that he might be occupied with its implications, and when he came back it is quite clear he had grasped the significance of that revelation; he had seen what Jesus meant in God's thought. One of the things that had happened was that, with that revelation, he had gone back over the whole of the history of the people with whom he was joined by birth, right back over Jewish history, right back over his own relationship with Judaism, and he had seen very clearly that the Lord Jesus was the centre of all that in the thought of God, that He took up all the spiritual values into His own person, and that Judaism as a religious system, traditional, historical, no longer obtained in the thought of God, but that what did exist in the place of it was Jesus Christ in heaven. All that Judaism meant which was of spiritual value was centred in a living person, and no longer to be had in a system, in a tradition, in an outward order of things, all of which was lifeless, ineffective, incapable of bringing about heart satisfaction and the realisation of heart longing, deliverance from sin and the quietening forever of conscience. What Paul had now come to see was that all that to which Judaism pointed, but which it was incapable of realising or fulfilling, was to be had and that he had it in the living,

risen person, in Jesus Christ.

Liberty a Fruit of Revelation

That is only one thing which Paul saw, but that had a tremendous effect upon him. It did what nothing else in all this universe could have done. It absolutely delivered Saul of Tarsus, the rabid, vehement Jew, from his Judaism. It emancipated him from the whole of that system as an earthly system, although it had been given of God for a purpose. Nothing could have delivered Saul of Tarsus from that but a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is always futile and dangerous to advise people to leave one thing until they have a revelation of the fuller, and only such a revelation will accomplish the true emancipation. The word liberty and similar terms in this letter is what is meant by that. It is the absolute emancipation from the limitation, the bondage and the tyranny of an earthly religious system which constantly says, Thou shalt! and, Thou shalt not! You must! and, You must not! bringing under the hammer of law all the time. This deliverance emancipates completely from that into glorious liberty, in which you may do exactly as you like, because your lives are all lifted into the heavenlies.

In so saying let us be careful, because there are those who take cover under grace, under emancipation from law, for doing the desires of the flesh. There are many people who serve their own pleasure on the Lord's day, and argue that they are not under law but under grace. Be careful, because Paul says here, "For ye, brethren, were called unto liberty; only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." If you do that, remember you are undoing the work of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and are violating the work of the Holy Spirit, and are not at all in the realm of grace as set forth here. So let us not think that because we are not under the law of the sabbath day in which we are forbidden to do a lot of things we can just do as the flesh likes; for the difference here is between the flesh and the Spirit. It is not a new bondage, but a new liberty, the liberty of an entirely new power of life and direction in life.

Paul says that his emancipation, the effecting of that glorious deliverance, was by the inward revelation of Jesus Christ. That is where we begin in our spiritual maturity. We must come there. That is rest. People who are still under law, even though it be Christian law, hedged up by, Thou shalt! and, Thou shalt not! are people who are usually very limited in their spiritual capacity, in their spiritual measure. Those who have really seen by revelation of the Holy Spirit what Jesus Christ is, have been set free, and have been put in the way of a great capacity for spiritual enlargement. They are at rest, and rest is a basic factor for spiritual growth. There is nothing which limits and defeats increase like unrest. That is a law in the physical realm. If in the physical realm you are without rest, then you do not make progress, you do not grow, you do not develop. It is those carefree people who arrive at the large physical proportions in the natural realm. It is like that in the spiritual realm with regard to our spiritual life, that it grows apace once there is basic rest. The law is a distressing thing, a wearying thing, a fretting thing. Whatever the law is, whether Jewish or Christian, it is an irritating thing, saying, You must do this! and, You must not do that! The Lord would have us to be stripped of that, and not be brought under that yoke of bondage as His children, but be living in the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus. We shall not do less because of that. We shall not refrain on that ground from many things which we do by compulsion. The matter of going to the gatherings of the Lord's people may serve us as an illustration here. You can go legally, or you can go in liberty. You can go because you are expected to, because people will wonder if you are not there, and the Lord will be grieved if you do not go. That kind of constraint is legal, and the Lord, if you only knew it, does not want you to gather on that ground at all. You will not gain very much if you do. It will all become a great burden, and you will be wishing there were not so many meetings. If, however, you are living in the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus you will not put in fewer meetings; you will be there, but you will be there in life, in enjoyment; you will be

there unto gain, unto real good. That is liberty.

I simply take that as an example, by way of illustration. It applies to everything else. If you are really living in the enjoyment of the Lord, no one will have to say to you, "You must not do that! Were they to do so you would reply, "I do not want to, I have no interest in that, I have something better." Liberty is the transcendence of the Lord Jesus, the infinite realm into which we have come, the greater, the heavenly, the more glorious, and we are out of all the other.

That is exactly what happened with Paul in this great matter of deliverance from Judaism. He saw what those Judaisers were doing, that those who had been led to Christ through his instrumentality were simply being brought down out of that glorious realm of liberty and fullness in Christ, on to the old legal basis again, that the Judaisers were destroying all the work that Christ had done for their emancipation. They were in fact setting Christ aside. So Paul brings Christ into full view again and makes this the issue -- and it is a tremendous thing, it is the old issue, it is the continuous issue -- Christ or law, Christ or Judaism, Christ or merely traditional, historic religion; the living Person or the system.

Now, he says, I was delivered from all that burden and nothing but that revelation of Jesus Christ would have delivered me. He goes on in this letter to speak of his life in the Jews' religion. He waxed zealous above those of his own age, more exceeding zealous. He was a devotee of Judaism, and he would go all lengths for that system of things. Nothing would have changed him, but he saw Jesus Christ. God revealed His Son in him, and that brought it to pass.

It may not be applicable to many of us, but the principle is what I want you to recognise. You may not need to be emancipated from anything like Judaism or legalism, but the principle is this, that for all increase, progress, enlargement, growth, maturity, it is essential that there should be in the heart a continuous unveiling of Jesus Christ, and you and I will never get to the end of that unveiling. It is possible for some of us to say with truth that this year we have seen more of the meaning of the Lord Jesus than in all the previous years of our lives. Can you say that? It is the most blessed and most wonderful thing to be able to recognise that there is a growing revelation of Jesus Christ within; you see more and more of what He means from God's standpoint, and as that is so, there comes this increase of the Lord Jesus, this increase to which this letter moves towards its close, the fruit of the Spirit, love. An increase of the revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart is an increase of the love of the Lord Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit. You are conscious that your heart is coming more and more under the constraint of His love, and that unloveliness is becoming subordinate to His love. There is more joy in the Lord Jesus today than ever, because you are seeing more of what He is. It is practical. That is spiritual growth: "It pleased God... to reveal his Son in me..."

The Relationship of Revelation to Falling Away

Let us lay the emphasis upon that principle as we pass on, the necessity that every one of us should have a personal and individual revelation of the living Christ by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. If we do not have that, then we shall be a prey to anything else that comes along. These Galatians fell a prey to the Judaisers, and I see so many of the Lord's people who have fallen a prey to some doctrine, to some theory, to something which is altogether a sideline. Whether it be truth, or not, is not the point, but people get carried away by universalism, for instance, or British Israelism, and become absorbed in these things. In some of these there is no truth at all; in most there is sufficient truth to make them a positive deception. But even supposing they were entirely true, the point is: Are they leading straight to God's end or are they

something just up in a corner to hold us away from reaching that end? These Galatians became locked up in a side-issue of theories, of teaching, and they were not going on towards God's end.

How did that come about? An answer which is more often true than not is this, that they got into a low spiritual condition. There was not a continuance of inward, living seeing of the Lord Jesus. They had grasped Christianity at its beginnings, but Christ was not formed in them in this sense of taking shape, and because they were in such a position, with Christ not formed, not taking clear shape, not clearly defined and apprehended in the Spirit, these other things came along and captured them, sidetracked them, and now there they are in these little side-interests and you cannot touch them. That thing is everything to them, and it has kept them back from God's full purpose.

Revelation must be Continuous and Progressive

It is so important that there should be this continual, living unveiling of Christ in the heart if we are to reach God's full end.

Paul came to that revelation right at the beginning. It was initial, but also a directive revelation continuously. It was the basis of the direction of his life. "When it pleased God... to reveal his Son in me... immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me..." Why did he not do that? If he had accepted a system of teaching he would have gone and discussed it with other people who were interested, and who were in that system of teaching, to see if he had grasped it aright. He would have compared notes and said: "Now, look here, I have accepted this teaching; you are interested in it, and I want to know whether I have been right in my understanding of this teaching." Is this what it means? That would be conferring with flesh and blood. He would have sought out the authorities at headquarters on the matter. But no, "I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me..." If you follow this letter through, you will find that here is a movement which is not a wrong kind of independence, but is the true movement of a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It is directive throughout his life. He speaks of going up by revelation of Jesus Christ; a revelation of Jesus Christ was given to direct his movements. Mark you, it was not a revelation which took the form of a dictation: Paul, you go here, you go there, you go somewhere else. It was a revelation of a Person.

You may find difficulty in understanding that, but if the Lord should open our understanding on that matter we should see that all the movements of the Spirit of God are in some way bound up with the person of the Lord Jesus. They are an expression of Christ in some way. He is continuing His doing, and His speaking, He is going on with His work to the end of the dispensation. He has not abandoned the field, not left the scene of activities and withdrawn, and given it to us to go on; He is going on. He is the chief worker, the one who has all in His hands. But what He has in His hands is not a multitude of things that He is doing, it is an expression of Himself in some way. The Lord Jesus is putting Himself into things, and bringing things into relation with Himself. You look to the end of God, and you find that universally Jesus Christ is to be expressed in a spiritual way. What He is will at some future time fill this universe, and you need to know what the Lord Jesus is in order to have your life directed. You need to be governed by what He is; you need a revelation of Him.

We can take an illustration from the tabernacle in the wilderness. That tabernacle is a comprehensive expression in type of the person of Jesus Christ, and if we look at it at any point, whether of its constitution or of its operation, we see something of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we look at a pin of the tabernacle, we

shall see something of Him expressed. So that the tabernacle becomes a great spiritual system, and Christ is that. Christ is not only a person, Christ is, in effect, in outworking, a great heavenly, spiritual system. When we come into Christ we come into a heavenly order. That is not some manual of instructions but a living person. If the Holy Spirit gets a real hold upon you and me, so that we are moving by the Holy Spirit, all our movements, on the one hand, will in some way be an expression of Christ, and, on the other hand, a bringing of things into relation to Christ, so that Christ becomes raised up in them. The question is not, Shall I go here? Shall I go there? Shall I do this, or shall I do that? The question is, Is Christ going to express Himself in some way? Is He going there? Is He going to manifest Himself there? Then I go with Him to be His instrument, His vessel. It is a matter of the person, not of a lot of things to be done.

That is a very difficult thing to explain, but Paul does make it clear that his life was governed by revelation of Jesus Christ. He went up by revelation of Jesus Christ. He recognised in the spirit that Christ was on the move in a certain direction, for a certain purpose. That was revealed to him, and so he moved by the Spirit because it was a case of the goings of Christ. That is how life is to be governed. Our prayer must not be, Lord, shall I do this, and shall I do the other? Shall I go here, or shall I go there? Our prayer is, Lord, art Thou going there? Art Thou going to do this or that? Dost Thou want me for Thy purpose here and there? It is all related to a living person. Otherwise you build up a great system of activities which we say are for Christ, instead of it being the direct, pure work of Christ. There is real value and meaning in that. It is a governing factor. What was initial in the life of the apostle was continuous; that is, his whole life from beginning to end was governed and actuated by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

A Position of Complete Dependence

It all amounted to this, that Christ had become everything for him. It was not a new religion, and it was not a new life work. It was not a new mission on the earth. If you have not got there already, you will, if you go on with the Lord long enough, come to the place where you do not want any more life-missions or work, or any more commissions; you will come to the place of such utter weakness and dependence and helplessness and self-emptiness that your whole attitude will be, Oh Lord, do save me from ever attempting anything unless Thou art going to do it. Lord, if Thou art not going to do that, then in mercy keep me from putting my hand to it. Paul was not out in some new enterprise; Paul was bound up with the person of Jesus Christ, and he says, "that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God..." Christ and His life actuates the apostle. It is Christ's mission, Christ's purpose, not his. It is what the Lord is doing, and not what he is doing for the Lord. That is what it means; Christ becoming everything. So that for this we have no life apart from Christ, no strength, no wisdom, no knowledge; we have nothing, not even ability to live apart from Christ, to say nothing of ability to do; all natural energies and resources reduced by the sovereign act of the Lord, so that it shall be no longer I, but Christ, to live and to do.

That represents a position that is painful to us naturally, exceedingly painful. Even though we may sometimes come to the place where we say to the Lord: "Well, Lord, we are prepared to have infirmity and weakness and suffering if only it is made a background of Thy more exceeding power", we say, at the same time, "If it can be, deliver us from our infirmity." There is always a kickback from that utterance. Here is the man whom we are taking as a personal representation of the truth which came in through him. If ever there was one man who stood in the light of God's full purpose in this dispensation it was the apostle Paul. Here he is and he is saying very much about his infirmity, the weakness which was in his flesh. He tells these Galatians that because of the weakness and infirmity of his flesh they did not despise him; nay,

that they would have plucked out their very eyes for him could they have done so; showing what that infirmity was, something which made him despicable. I think there is a close resemblance between this statement and that in 2 Corinthians 12: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me..." He says that it was given to him lest he should be exalted above measure. Here is a statement that the infirmity, the trial, the temptation that was in his flesh they despised not. At the close of his letter he said: "See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand." Now all that is the human background of this work of bringing the saints to maturity.

Maturity demands that there shall be ever a lessening of the human element, the natural element of the flesh, of our own strength, our own wisdom, our own competence, our own self-reliance. We must be brought down, so that we cry to God: "Do not allow us to be brought into things unless Thou art going to do them". When you get there, you are in the way of being a vessel unto the maturing of the saints. It is true that the more there is of us the less there will be of Christ through us to others; the less there is of us the more there can be of Christ through us to others. It is the way of maturity. That is what is meant by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of our revelation of Jesus Christ? We have found Him our strength in weakness; we have found Him our life in death; we have found Him our wisdom in difficulty, in problem, in mental defeat; we have found Him our rest in trouble, our joy in sorrow. We have found Him. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ to us by the Holy Spirit. That is the way of growth. That is the way of a ministry of growth. This is emancipation, this is liberty, this is life-union with the living person by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Paul shows that there are a good many other things which come out of this revelation. There is deliverance from the flesh along this line. You remember he cried, as recorded at the end of chapter 7 of his letter to the Romans: "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Deliverance is through our Lord Jesus Christ: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now Paul says to these Galatians, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts"; they are delivered from the flesh by revelation of Jesus Christ. "I thank God..."; I see the way out; it is through Jesus Christ. He sets this over against the law. How did they, under the law, hope to get deliverance from the flesh? By all kinds of rites, and ceremonies, and forms, and religious practices, and observances, by the "Thou shalt", and, "Thou shalt not"; and it never came. When the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus there is that deliverance. There is no spiritual growth and fullness until there is the deliverance from the bondage and tyranny of the flesh.

Now that requires a great deal more time than we can give to it at the moment, but we have so often said that if we really do see the Lord Jesus, the one in whom the whole question of sin was fought and finally defeated, and the power of the flesh was entirely overcome by the power of the Spirit; and we see Him because of the full, complete triumph which took place in Him over the flesh by the Spirit at God's right hand, there is a virtue in what He is there for us as victory over the flesh. We gather round the Lord's Table and eat and drink of symbols of His Body and His Blood. What does that mean? It is an act of faith that we take Him to be our life down here. This Blood is the incorruptible life of the Lord Jesus, sinless, deathless. It is for me down here now until my work is done, to maintain me in the midst of these conditions. There is a living Lord to minister to me, to maintain me against the working of infirmity until God has finished with the vessel. There is something in Jesus Christ for our deliverance now from the working of all the old creation.

Let us pray on the ground of His victorious humanity, and let us live on the basis of His victorious humanity; He is there for us. All the virtue of what He is in glory is to be ministered to us by the Holy Spirit

now. By revelation of Jesus Christ we are delivered from the law, from the flesh, yes, from all things. If you do not understand that, nevertheless it is important and valuable. Ask the Lord to make it so for His glory.

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