

Untitled Message

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of unwavering commitment to the Holy Spirit's guidance and the transformative power of following Christ's true purpose.

Duration: 33:55

Topics: "Message"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Peter and his transformation from old Simon to new Peter. The sermon begins with the idea of bondage to man and the fear of what others will say. Peter's journey starts with a vision of unclean creatures and a command to kill and eat. Initially, Peter resists, but after the vision repeats three times, he realizes that God is challenging his understanding of the scriptures and his own natural disposition. Eventually, Peter is girded by the Spirit and goes to the house of a Gentile, breaking Jewish customs. This transformation of Peter highlights the significance of his own temperament and the fulfillment of Jesus' words about him being carried by another in his old age.

Transcript

His face, as a flint, to go up to Jerusalem. Do you know what that meant? All that was involved in that. He knew.

But he said his face steadfast, as a flint, to go. He's committed. He's committed.

He's under the spirits. You know, when you travel by air, you travel long distance by air, there is always a point which the pilot knows to be the point from which there's no turning back. We've gone too far to turn back.

It would be far more fatal to turn back if anything goes wrong than to go on. From this point, it's the only thing to do. Whatever happens is to go on.

We're committed. Jesus went all the way from the day when the spirit came upon him. In his heart, he'd gone all the way.

There was no turning back. I repeat, a life under the Holy Spirit's government is a committed life from which there ought to be no turning back. Have you reached that point of commitment? Have you really reached that point of commitment? As we say, all the boats bound behind, all the bridges with the paths destroyed, blown up, committed.

The wind has taken over. The spirit is in the position of mastery, subduing, controlling, a force which subdues every other force in us, every other force. See that working out? So, the first thing, and dear friends, I keep very strictly to the scriptures in what I'm saying, you know this is so, first thing about the Holy Spirit, as the wind from heaven, and as seen on the day of Pentecost, the great foundation of the dispensation, which is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, is that he just takes everything into his hands and demands that place of absolute sovereignty.

You're going to argue with the wind? No, it's futile to argue with a hurricane. It's futile to try out conclusions with a mighty rushing wind. You'll either be disastrously broken or gloriously broken.

It's possible to be gloriously broken. Everything of Christ comes along that line, following. Next thing about the wind is that the wind chooses and takes its own course.

You cannot tell the wind which way to go. You cannot dictate to the wind as to what its choice should be, this or that. The wind just chooses its own course and takes its own course, born of God, born of the Spirit.

The Spirit demands the right to do this with us, dear friends, to choose his course with us and to take his course with us. He demands the right to do it. Now, Peter is a very splendid example of this whole thing in a very real sense.

Peter is the embodiment of all that I'm saying. It's not without significance that it's Peter who is the foremost figure on the table. Not without significance, I've said.

What significance? Why, the very significance of Peter himself. Remember the last words that the Lord said to Peter? In the old regime, before the Ascension? Simon? When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and wentest whithersoever thou wouldst. But when thou art old, another shall carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

Whither thou wouldst? Whither thou wouldst not? Naturally. Here you have Peter present with his own natural temperament. This mercurial man.

What a descriptive word that is. Ever spilled some mercury on the ground and tried to pick it up again? Get it together again? Why, you've got to go after it in all directions. And when you think you've got it, you haven't.

That's Peter, isn't it? Simon? Very descriptive. The old Simon. His temperament.

His natural make-up and constitution and disposition. Diving off at all the times. Frustrated in one way, he's off in another.

Thou wentest whithersoever thou wouldst. And Paul had got Peter well shunned of him. Whither thou wouldst? You dictated your own course.

You chose your own way. You followed your own likes and dislikes and preferences. You were the sovereign of your own life and as you thought of your own destiny.

Another shall gird thee. Another shall gird thee. That belongs to your spiritual immaturity.

All that. Your spiritual maturity is going to go about by this. Another shall gird thee.

And carry thee whither thou, the old Simon, wouldest not go. This spirit that will gird you will work quite contrary to your own make-up, your temperament, your disposition. Make it impossible for you just to do as you like.

Or as you are disposed to do. The wind chooses its own course and takes it. So is everyone.

Peter on the day of Pentecost came under the mighty girding. And now the battle between old Simon and new Peter. Next thing you know, Acts chapter 10.

Peter is on the housetop praying. He's been fasting and praying and he becomes very hungry. Falls into a trance and sees a vision.

Remember the story. Full of unclean. And a voice arrives.

Peter, kill and eat. Old Simon rises up and says, not so, Lord. Now we mix things up, don't we? And we get into that realm of nature.

Lord, that word won't do. That word won't do when it's our saying, not so. You cannot say Lord and at the same time say not so.

And three times this happened. The vision passed. Peter thought.

Now you know the rest of the story, don't you? There arrived the three men from Caesarea. Cornelius, the centurion, knocking at the door. Read the story.

I haven't time. Peter was girded. The Lord said, go with them.

Go with them. The Spirit said, go with them. The Spirit said, go with them.

It was a headache for Simon. But he was girded and he went. Into the house of a Gentile.

Into the company of Gentiles. Unclean beasts according to Jewish ritual. According, mark you, and you've heard me say this before, to the scriptures of the Old Testament.

He got the scriptures on his side. As he thought. He is standing upon his interpretation of the scriptures.

They were supporting him. But the Spirit was doing something. It seemed a contradiction to the very scriptures.

And to his whole position. I know the danger of what I'm saying. But you see the point.

The Holy Spirit knows what he's doing. And he demands absolute sovereignty in this matter. For it is not even our interpretation of the scriptures that is final.

It's the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the scriptures. And very often, as we go on with the Lord, we come to the place. Yes, repeatedly in our lives, we have to say, I've got to make an adjustment over that.

I believed very strongly this and that about that, that I've got to adjust. The Lord has made a demand that I change my position over that. I remember some years ago, a retired army colonel with a friend of mine, who had written books, books and books on a certain prophetic subject.

Published them, well known and read everywhere. And he said to me, he said to me, you know I've got to recall the whole lot. The real life that the Lord has shown me, poured upon this matter, makes it necessary for me to change my whole position, my whole life position, over this matter.

It was honest, it was honest. But there was no doubt about it. And the Holy Spirit had taken over this matter, of his mental play upon the scriptures and interpretation.

And there's all the difference between a mental interpretation and a spiritual revelation. Well, here is Peter in the house of Cornelius and this wonderful story. What was Peter doing really? Or the old Simon doing in this matter? Listen, he was making Christ much smaller than he really is.

And if there's one thing that the Holy Spirit is against, he's against that. He's against that. Israel, the elect, the spiritual aristocracy, the Gentiles, the dogs, the unclean beasts.

Israel, the Holy Spirit is saying to Peter very emphatically, Jesus Christ is a much bigger Christ than ever you have seen Peter yet. And you have to adjust to that. If there is one thing that the Holy Spirit is against, it is exclusivism.

Make no mistake about it. When exclusivism makes Christ smaller than he is, that's the tragedy of Israel. Chosen, yes.

Elect, yes. Given the articles, yes. All that, but what for? Why? For the sake of the nations.

A testimony of God in the midst of the nations, that the nations might see and believe and turn to the Lord. That's the horizon. But Israel... Oh, Jonah, Jonah is really an example of this.

Go to Nineveh, that great, that mighty system. You know the story of Jonah. But Jonah represents the traditional position of Israel.

Exclusive. Shut up within themselves. We are the people and no other.

We are the chosen. We are the elected. We have received the light.

We have got the truth. But why? Not for ourselves. Not to make us something in ourselves.

Not to draw around us a fence, shutting out all others. But for the sake of all others. For the sake of all others, that's all.

And Israel lost their position, dear friends, for this whole dispensation on one issue. These 2,000 years of Israel's tragic, so tragic history is the issue of making God's Son less than He really is. Oh, what Christ He is.

What God meant Him to be to Israel and the world. See, it's in this very chapter that the most familiar words in all the Bible occur. God so loved the world, whosoever.

Nicodemus, Nicodemus. You've got to be born from above. Out of this exclusivism.

Out of this narrow traditionalism. Out of this fixed and set position of yours. Born right out into the greatness of God's all-comprehending purpose in His Son.

How great Christ is. Oh, may we be saved from having a smaller Christ than God means us to have. There's no danger in that, dear friends.

The Holy Spirit can look after that. But my point is that the Holy Spirit in this 10th chapter of Acts is just saying this. I'm not having any of your circumscribing of Christ on any ground whatsoever.

You may quote me Leviticus chapter 11 if you like. What God hath cleansed, call not thou unclean. The cross has dealt with all that ceremonial uncleanness.

And open up the vast vistas. Third occasion of Peter. See, first his temperament.

Then his spiritual bigotry. Chapter 15, Paul refers to what happened. In his letter to the Galatians, he refers to what happened.

Peter is called to account for this by the elders of Jerusalem. He's, as we say, on the carpet, on the spot. Having to answer for this, this unusual, unheard of behavior.

Well, you know, we quoted. Peter sums it all up in this. Who was I? Who was I to resist God? Who was I to resist God? But something else happened.

Peter's at Antioch. Gentiles at Antioch have been saved. Gathered in.

The Spirit has done something with the Gentiles. And Peter's down there rejoicing. He's following up, he's following up.

Caesarea, house of Cornelius. Happily following up with the Gentiles in Antioch. Eating and drinking.

All right. But certain came down from Jerusalem. James and certain others came down from Jerusalem.

And when they were come down, Peter withdrew. Peter withdrew. Peter withdrew.

There's a withdrawing. This is a dangerous offense to the Holy Spirit. Violating of what he's doing.

And Paul recognized the significance of this. He said, I withstood him to the face. For his dissimulation.

I withstood. Simon is having a bad time, isn't he? Under this aegis of the Holy Spirit. Really is.

What's happened now? Yes, something has come up of the old Simon. Bondage to man. What will the brethren say? What will the leaders say? What will the chief men say? I must be careful what they will say.

Perhaps what they'll do. And that kind of thing is set over against the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Two things in collision.

You cannot have this. I'm so glad that Peter must have got the better of this. He couldn't have written his two letters if he hadn't.

And he couldn't have said later on about this man who withstood him to the face. Peter, you stand condemned. Before God you stand condemned.

Guilty of dissimulation. Later Peter wrote, Our beloved brother Paul, In all his writings, In which there are some things difficult to understand. You see? But he's got over his hurdle.

The Holy Spirit who is choosing the way and taking it is finding Peter coming into line. Coming into line. There were some, Mark you, who did not come into line.

Demas hath forsaken me. Returned to Thessalonica. I don't know about Barnabas.

Even Barnabas, says Paul. Even Barnabas. Even Barnabas.

Unthinkable. Dear beloved Barnabas, to whom I owe so much. We also owe so much.

The church at Antioch owes so much. But even Barnabas was killed. Barnabas falls out of the New Testament.

I hope I don't exaggerate judgment, condemnation. But there are those who just get out of the way of the wind. When he's blowing toward this great full purpose of God.

Decimate. Withdraw. The Lord savior.

I don't know where. The wind searches. May I finish on this? Leave the other.

The wind searches and tests everything. Especially foundations and structures. Of what kind they are.

I've spent a great deal of my life in Scotland. My childhood and later. There's a common sight in Scotland.

We have there many pine trees. Pine forests and pine trees growing along the roadside. And it's a land in which the wind blows sometimes.

And after any of our great wind storms. You can go along and see these pine trees. Up, themselves lying level with the earth.

And their roots up in the air. Before, people admired them. Said very nice things about them.

What fine trees they were. What a magnificent sight. And the wind blew.

And the wind blew. Testing the depth of their roots. Testing their power of endurance.

Testing stamina. And down went so many of these. Before time, erstwhile, admirable, praiseworthy trees.

The Holy Spirit just does that, you know, friends. That is what he is doing. The Holy Spirit is going to blow on us all.

Christian experience is just this. Under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Our foundations are going to be tested.

Make no mistake about it. They are going to be tested. And our structure, our building, our stamina, our endurance.

It's the wind blowing today. My world is blowing over this earth. Look at all the testing.

See all the tragic crashing to the ground. Do you know, dear friends, that Christianity as we now know it is going to be blown to bits. Absolutely to bits.

And there is going to be nothing of it left. Christianity as we know it. All these things must be dissolved, says Peter.

This whole cosmic order and this whole Christian system as we know it is going. You say that's a terrible statement. Well, plenty.

I have lived through two world wars. What have we seen? Alone there is a simple and very small example of what I am seeing. We have seen many and many a place with a great Christian tradition.

Something that has stood simply crushed to the ground. Hardly one stone left upon another. Everywhere.

Destruction. No preferences. No favoritisms.

And God. Where is God? Where is God? Oh, if anything ought to have been preserved, that ought to have been preserved. God ought to have protected that.

No? Why? Because God is not interested in things. God is only interested in one matter. The Holy Spirit is only concerned about one matter, dear friends.

One matter only. History bears this out. The Holy Spirit is only concerned with Christ.

With what is Christ. What is of Christ. With the measure of Christ.

The Holy Spirit has only one in his vision, that's Christ. And he is always saying, how much really of the eternal essence of Christ is here. And so you can go to Asia Minor today and find no trace of the churches in Asia.

You can go to Galicia. You can go to all these places of the New Testament by nothing today as places. Now the first three chapters of the book of the Revelation just bear down upon that.

Note to the churches. To the seven churches in Asia. The wind is blowing.

Just to discover not whether this has got a tradition. Not this and that and something else. Not whether they've got a building and a place of meeting or a technique of worship.

Kind of New Testament order. But whether they have that or not. How much of the risen, living, exalted Christ is here.

And the Holy Spirit will go as far as to say, repent or I will remove thy lampstand out of its place. Because the light's gone. What's the good of a lampstand if there's no light? Mere ornaments, the Holy Spirit is not interested in.

You see the point? The light is Christ. The measure of Christ. It is Christ.

It is Christ. What the Spirit said is, not this and that. I know thy works and thy labors and thy patience.

All that's very good.

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