

Vocational Fellowship - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the church's role in God's plan for reunification through Christ amidst the chaos of sin and disruption.

Duration: 1:08:33

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:5, Jeremiah 17:12, Matthew 26:31, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 1:8-9, Hebrews 2:10

Topics: "Fellowship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of evil and its constant presence in the world. They explain how evil works to break up and divide, leaving nothing whole or complete. The speaker suggests that where Christ is given more prominence, the enemy becomes more concerned and seeks to disrupt and disconnect. However, the sermon also highlights the hope of recovery through the Son, who voluntarily came to earth to recover what was lost and testify against the wrongs of the world. Ultimately, the Son took on the evil and its consequences, drawing it onto Himself and offering a solution for redemption.

Transcript

Instead of reading one passage of scripture, we're going to bring together a number of short passages which will test your dexterity with the word. It's scattered all over the place. But we, first of all, take the passage which has been like a banner over this season, under which we have been gathering everything else.

That is, in the prophecies of Jeremiah, chapter 17, and verse 12. A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.

Now, along way on to the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 1 and verse 8. But of the sun, he said, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever the scepter of uprightness, is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast love for righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, about thy philip, glorious throne, set on high from the beginning. Of the sun, he said, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.

And way back to the psalm, to the second psalm, in verse 8. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. You notice, the context relates

that to the sun. Now, another flight into the New Testament, to the book of Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.

Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Ask of me, I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession. Ye shall be witnesses, my witnesses, unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The letter to the Ephesians, and what conference would be complete without Ephesians? Chapter 1, first part of verse 4. As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Verse 9. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he published in him, unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth, in him, I say, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. He made known unto us the secret of his will, to sum up all things in Christ.

And I pay back to our prophet Jeremiah to re-read the words in chapter 1 and verse 4. Now the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee, I knew thee. Before thou camest forth, I sanctified thee. I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance. I have appointed thee a prophet to the nations, and shall be my witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth. And so on.

I wonder if you have noticed a very obvious thing in the Bible. Most of the great things were connected with mountains. You only have to have that said, and your memory will take a flight through the Bible and light upon many a mountain in which some great thing took place.

Which was indeed a point where heaven and earth met. Now the value of a mountain is that it helps perspective. It gives a command of the whole situation.

It brings all details and particular things into a right relationship. So that everything can be seen as not just something in itself, but as a part of a whole. There you get a sense of proportion and balance.

These are some of the values of a mountain. And by way of parenthesis, don't you think that that is just what the value of such gatherings as these we call conference times should be. For we all feel the need to have our sense of proportion maintained, preserved.

We write up against things too closely. The details press upon us. The immediate situations take possession of us.

Things immediately before our eyes and in our experiences tend to become everything and exclude so much more. And they get on top of us just because we are so close. The perspective is upset and there is a good deal of confusion for this very reason.

These passages which we have read are themselves mountain peaks. And together they constitute one great glorious mountain which could deliver us from all this obsession of the oppressive, immediate, too close touch with just what we ourselves are going through. So we have to leave our spiritual insulation and isolation and climb to some vantage ground of the heavens.

That took its great place in our New Testament at a time when the near view could have brought complete despair. The immediate happenings in Christianity amongst believers in the churches could have

produced in the apostle a hopelessness that would have cast him deep down in the valley of despair. He climbed to the heights.

And you and I dear friends and the church ever since to the end of the age will owe a vast debt to that man's climb up the mountain in spirit from his prison cell. And repeatedly used that very word, that mountain word, the heavenless, in Christ Jesus. Then we need to get up there again.

May the Lord give us mountain energy today to rise up as on wings. To see anew what we are called unto and what we are called into. That is the saving vision.

That is the redeeming view. What it really is that we are called into and unto. What we are in if we are really in full fellowship with God.

What it is all about. What is all the conflict about. What is all the pressure about.

What is all the discipline about. What is all the suffering about. Is there some one thing that can and does answer all such inquiries and cries.

For I am quite sure that sometimes, sometimes you ask that question. What does it all mean? What is it all about? Why this and that? The Lord will answer that cry. It would have been worth our coming here.

So we climb the mountain. We are all familiar with the line of a very well known and I think greatly loved hymn by George Madison. Oh love that will not let me go.

I remind you that after his death when the poem was found and the thought was to publish it. Those who found it and were about to publish it came upon one line in it that perplexed them. Couldn't quite grasp it, understand it.

It seemed mysterious, abstract and so they decided to change it. And we have in our version the line. I trace the rainbow through the rain.

What George Madison had written. I climb the rainbow through the rain. Quite a difference.

Trace, well that's alright. That's an artistic contemplation, poetic way of speaking. But when George Madison wrote that poem he was in the grip of a tremendous spiritual conflict.

For him everything in life was rocking. There was a perfect deluge upon his soul. He did not sit back in poetic contemplation and say I trace the rainbow through the rain.

He guarded himself. He said I climb the rainbow through the rain. We have got to take hold of things and discover what lies there behind.

And get hold of that, bestir ourselves to find out what does it all mean? What is it all about? What is the explanation? And there is one. And it does lie right at the heart of this that I have just said. What we are called into and unto.

That explains it all. These difficulties, trials, adversities, sufferings and conflicts are very real. Very real.

For the saints they are sometimes terrible. And if that is true the explanation must be one that is at least commensurate with them. The answer must at least be adequate to all this.

Think of all the suffering of the saints. Why we have some but is it comparable to what some of the Lord's people are going through while we are sitting here in if not absolute comparative comfort. What justifies all this? What is an adequate answer? We are driven, we are forced to seek that answer.

Again I say the only answer that is sufficient is that of what we are called into and called unto. Now in order to get that we are going to take three cycles. The scriptures which we have read which are only a selection from many more of the same kind bring these four things into view.

Firstly, all that which is comprehended by a repeated clause. All things, all things. Can't get outside of that.

That comprehends everything. All things were created by God for his son whom we now know as Jesus Christ. That's the beginning of everything.

They were created for him, through him, unto him. He we are distinctly told was appointed heir of all things. That's where we begin.

All things these scriptures show were integrated in him. Consistent in him. Held together as one whole by his person.

Not only by his power but by his person. There was a wonderful, beautiful, harmonious unity in the creation. All centered in God's son.

Held to him while he was there everything was harmonious and in accord. While he was in his place there was a beautiful oneness running through everything. The great harmony of creation.

He was the keynote. Everything came back to him and moved from him. And the explanation of the music was God's son.

God's son. All things were integrated and consistent in him. All things were disrupted by putting him out of his place or refusing to recognize him in that place.

That's of course the great story. Heaven's disruption. That to which an apostle refers when he says the angels which kept not their first estate.

Their first estate. A lot there is in that. Are reserved in chains unto everlasting destruction.

Well I'm not dwelling at length upon any one of these things. But there was discord in heaven to begin with. And it had to be cast out.

And there came into this world that disputing of the creation rights and place of the son of God. And by that we know everything here was disrupted. And became disconnected.

First picture of creation is a beautiful picture. But that changed. We see all things now with something working like an evil level.

A power which is all the time breaking up. Never ending in its breaking up work. Leaving nothing whole.

Complete. Terrible story in history all through the ages of this evil thing working so that the last bit of unity is destroyed. The last bit of harmony is spoiled.

What is this evil spirit about? It is not going to allow anything to remain. Integrated in Christ. And dear friends does not that explain perhaps a lot.

That where Christ is the more given his place. The enemy is the more concerned. To break up.

To divide. Sad history isn't it? Do you see it? Will anything survive this? Will anything escape this? And the most beautiful thing will be the object of the most vehement attempt to break up. Disruption and disconnection.

Faultly we have things all in chaos and confusion. Because he the unifying integrating center of all things is not in his place. The answer.

The explanation. Because he is not in his place. That may be a terrible indictment on some situations but we have got to face it quite honestly and frankly.

That is the first cycle. The second cycle the scriptures before us present is. Firstly.

The sun himself. The air and center of all things undertakes the work of recovery. Viewing the chaos from heaven.

He voluntarily stripping himself of heavenly glory undertakes to come down into it. And recover that which has been lost. He undertakes the great work of recovery.

Now that word recovery is a favorite word with us isn't it? The recovery of this and that. Which is God's mind and thought. The first one who engaged in that work and that ministry was God's son himself.

And he has committed himself to that work of recovery. Having undertaken it he comes down and enters into this kingdom of disruption. Comes right into all this chaos and disorder and discord and ruin.

Right into it himself. And by his very presence. As we see him in the pages of the record.

By his very presence shows what a disrupted and discordant scene this is. There is only one person in the whole picture. Who in himself is integrated.

Is harmonious. Is balanced. Is a whole.

One of the impressive things about the Lord Jesus. Is that he himself moved in this scene. So harmoniously in his own person.

Not an easy thing to do in this world as you know. But he did it. But on the other hand.

How that presence annoyed and that's a very very weak word. It perfectly aroused these chaotic forces. So that they grew and grew and grew.

Through that brief period of his earthly sojourn. An atmosphere of conflict. Of hatred.

Of discord. Until at last it breaks out. An awful storm.

Tearing the very creation. Tearing the very atmosphere. And no one.

No one. Has any kind of control. And mastery.

The very elements are disrupted. This evil thing. And it's all focused upon him.

He has entered into it. To witness against it in the first place. In his own person and presence.

To witness against it. To be an offset to it. And to speak the words.

The words which are in the strongest contrast. In his own person and presence. To witness against it.

To be an offset to it. And to speak the words. The words which are in the strongest contrast.

To men's state, condition. What are his words? I will give you rest. You shall find rest.

And peace. I leave with you my peace. I give unto you.

How such words clash with the condition. Here, right in the midst of it. Testifying against it.

Manifesting what it ought to be. And intensifying the condition that really is. To show how evil it is.

You never know how wrong or evil a thing is. Until you get the absolutely right and good. Right in the heart of it.

He became by his presence. The example. And the witness.

The personal testimony. To what was intended. And against what is.

Probably your minds are running ahead of what I'm saying. Mine is. Because you can see what the next cycle will be.

Let's go on. Having come in. And the explanation of being here long enough.

And it proved to be long enough. Though it was only three and a half years or so. It proved to be long enough to show the contrast.

And to bring out the contrast. And to testify against it. Having brought it all out.

And shown in word. In word. In word.

What's that word on his lips? Blessed. Happy. Are the peacemakers.

So on. In word. In deed.

All his work. Testifying against this. Wrong state.

Amending it. Having been here long enough. To be a witness in the midst of it.

He then. And this is our third point in the second cycle. He then.

Took it all on himself. Took it all on himself. Took on himself the evil.

And the consequences of the evil that had come in. Drew it on to himself. Yes.

Verily drew it on to himself. Sought not to ward it off. Sought not to argue himself out of it.

Though he knew what it meant. The marvel of his silence. When such as he could have made a case for himself.

He who again and again sent wise men. Scribes and Pharisees. With all their trickery.

And subtlety. And all their attempted snare. To ensnare him sent them away.

Like dogs with their tails between their legs. Without a word. Without a word.

See him. All right. Let him that is without sin.

First cast the stone. And they went out one by one. From the least to the greatest.

Master. Master. Is it right to give tribute to Caesar? To pay tribute to Caesar? You can see.

The trap they've laid for him. Show me. Coin.

Whose inscription is this? Caesar. Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar. Now then.

Your whole. Honesty. Conscientiousness.

Integrity is at stake. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And unto God the things that are God's.

You notice the effect of that? Completely defeated. Had to confess that no man speak like this man. Man who can dare do that sort of thing with the rulers.

Could in the day of his ordeal and trial. Have. Put them all out of court.

But the marble. He opened not his mouth. He opened not his mouth.

Not a word. Not a word. As the sheep before her shearers is down.

He opened not his mouth. He is not pulling it out. He is not keeping it at bay.

He is letting it come on. Even drawing it on. And so.

He became sin. Says the word. That he might destroy sin.

Drawing it on to its own destruction. He became broken. This is my body broken.

He became broken. In order that he might unite. The great testimony of the Lord's table.

One loaf. One body. Through brokenness.

He was broken. That he might unite. He became defeated.

In order that he might. Triumph. He became dead.

In order that he might destroy death. Forever. He emptied himself.

And became empty. In order that he might be filled. With all things.

All things. That's the second cycle. But now we come.

To the third. Having done it. Accomplished all that.
In his cross. And having received. The great.
Appropriation. Seal. Of heaven.
Of his father. Thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee.
Referring to his resurrection. All that is scattered. And what a scattering has taken place.
They're all scattered. All ye shall be offended. Because of me this night.
For it is written. I will smite the shepherd. And the sheep of the flock.
Shall be scattered abroad. All scattered. And.
Then he begins to gather. These fragments. These broken.
Scattered fragments. Together. And.
The sun. Brings. In.
His. Suns. And fellow air.
Need to read again that first chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. Of the sun he said. And then.
It goes on about. His brethren. I and the children which God hath given me.
And later. Bringing many suns to Galilee. In the third cycle he.
The sun brings in his suns. As his fellow airs. And it is.
In that letter. The phrase occurs. Airs of God and joint airs.
With Jesus Christ. These suns. Are a family matter.
We call that family the church. The New Testament calls it the church. But in this.
Third. Cycle. This is what comes so clearly into view with the passages read.
This. Family. This.
Church. This. Body.
Was eternally known by God. Foreknown. And.
Chosen by God. In. Him.
The sun. Before the foundation of the world. That's very wonderful.
Chosen in him. Whom he appointed heir of all things. He also chose.
And. Appointed the heirs with him. Of all things.

Even as he chose us. In him. Before the foundation of the world.
And has made known unto us the secret of his will. In so doing. We gather together.
All things. In Christ. This.
Church. Foreknown. Eternally chosen.
Elected. Elected. To this.
One. Great. All comprehending.
All inclusive. Purpose. Now here's a point where you and I must be very clear.
And. Very positive. This matter.
Of. Election. Predestination.
And so on. Does not. Relate to salvation.
Only in so far as salvation is the way. This election. If the letter to the Ephesians means anything.
And all that is in harmony with it. This relates to the purpose of God concerning his son. We come to it.
Through the cross. We come to it. Through being born from above.
But that is not the object. And that is not the end. That for which you and I are born from above.
Chosen in Christ. And in time called into the fellowship of God's son. That dear friends.
Is this purpose. Of God concerning his son. To gather up.
Into him all things. To. And this is the real word.
The original. Reunite. Reunite all things in Christ.
The church. You see where we've arrived. The church.
Is seen by God. Through the ages. Through all the destruction.
Through all the cost. All the consequences. All the cross and its agony.
Church has been seen. Before it all and through it all. As the vehicle.
The vessel. The instrument of the son. To bring back that original.
Pristine harmony. Unity. Centred in the son of God.
Church is called for that. That's the heavenly vocation. Purpose.
Perhaps too big for little people like you and me. To grasp that. To believe it.
But we're a part of a great thing. Isn't all in us. Thank God.

We haven't got to take the full. Burden and responsibility of this individually. But.
We are related. To something. That is elected of God.
Called of God. For no lesser thing than this. And this.
What a lot. That explains if it's true. What a lot it explains.
What an answer. To all our suffering and our discipline. If only we could see it and we don't.
It is not present with us in our hours. Of anguish. As it was with the apostle who.
Knowing perhaps more of. Sufferings and sorrows. Than any other man of his time.
In Christianity. Because he climbed the mountain. Because he was seeing from the heavens.
Our light. Which is but for a moment. What if for us.
A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look. Not at the things of the scene.
These things right on top of us. These. These close up things.
Present experience. But from the mountain top. While we look not at the things of the scene.
But at the things that are not seen. For these things that are seen. Are transient.
Temporal. Are seen. The things that are not seen.
Are eternal. You need. To get on a high mountain.
To view it like that. To get that balance. In life.
Well friends. I said that answers a lot of inquiries and questions. If that were true.
If that is true. If that could come really to us. And we knew it.
Oh to be delivered from our familiarity with the bible. And this teaching. Might break upon us.
This own real impact. My brother. My sister.
You are called. Of God. In relation to a vocation.
Which he foredetermined. Which you should have a part. And it is no lesser thing than this.
That in union with his son. You should answer this whole challenge to his son's place. And right this whole wrong.
That his son has suffered. And be with him at last. In the writing.
In the adjustment. In the recovery. Sons in glory.
I say if that's true it's a great gospel. It's a great gospel. No wonder the apostle felt it necessary in the midst of saying these things.

To fall on his knees and say. I pray. I pray.

Father of glory. You grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge. The eyes of your heart being enlightened that you may know.

It's a prayer that we ought to pray continually. Because only so shall we be saved. In the hour.

The day. Of traveling. And suffering.

This church is the sovereign act of God. The sovereign act of God. It's God's act.

It's God's thing. Forever it existed in time. God has acted about it.

It's God's act. We are brought into something that we never thought of. Or thought of.

Or planned. Or intended. Or meant.

Or understood. We are brought into something that is God's own thought. And God's own act.

You did not choose me. But I choose you. This church.

And it is important as a part of the whole to really understand the nature of this church. Again, we need delivering from well-nigh two thousand years of distortion on this matter. That word church.

What a lot has been put on it. What a lot it carries. What a lot has to be stripped off of it to get to its real meaning.

This is a spiritual thing. This is not a temporal thing. This is not a temporal thing, this church.

This is a spiritual thing. This is comprised of the very beginning of such as have been born of the Spirit. And are indwelt by the Spirit.

And the measure of their churchmanship, may I use that phrase, is only the measure of their spirituality. The measure of their spiritual life, that is in its effect, in its outworking, in its value. This is a spiritual thing.

This does not belong to this earth at all. This belongs to heaven. Its roots are in heaven.

Its life is in heaven. Its Lord is in heaven. Its everything is in heaven.

All its government is from heaven. But when we have said all that, we have to come back to this. And re-emphasizing this, we close for the moment.

This church, this church, is an essentially vocational thing. I do want you to get a hold of that these days. An essentially vocational thing.

Of course the vocation can never be fulfilled only as the conduct is right. So the apostle in this very connection says, I beseech you to walk worthily of the calling, the vocation with which you are called. In all lowliness and meek character must be there.

Or there can be no vocation. Because with God and with heaven, vocation rests upon character. That we should be holy and without blemish before him.

That's his mind. The Holy Spirit, because of the greatness of the vocation, dear friends, is very meticulous and particular over details of conduct. You see, you cannot lift this great heavenly vocation out of the affairs of daily life here.

You cannot put your church position and your church doctrine and your church mentality outside of your accounts, your money matters, your family life. And so we could go on. Can't do it.

All that is a part of the whole. Walk worthily of the vocation. Because that basis affects your vocation.

But seeing how the Holy Spirit is particular, very particular, and sooner or later will bring us all up sharp on this. Look here, you've got a great idea of church teaching and truth about church. But you're not consistent with it.

There's that which is inconsistent with it. Oh, what a challenge this is that you and I here this morning might almost shudder to face, tremble to look at. Let me put my finger upon this one point at once.

If what I have been saying as from the Word of God is true, that in Him the Son, when all things were created and for whom all things were created, there was, and we know not for how long, beautiful harmony, complete integration and coordination, all moving together, one whole. And then that was all shattered like a beautiful vase broken to pieces and this terrible discord was shot through and through the creation, touching everything. We know well.

If it is true that God had already determined by His Son and with His Son that church should be the vessel and instrument of recovering that, bringing into effect the reuniting of all things in Christ, where are we over this matter of unity, of oneness, of harmony? Or all to the contrary, what are we doing about that? The vocation is that. Oh, the Lord help us not to play into the hands of and work together with this great adversary of the harmony of God. It's a vocational fellowship with God and with His Son.

It's all related to the Son and His appointed place in the counsels of the Father. Yes. It's all related to the throne.

The throne. Because it's in that throne and by that throne into which He is exalted, that glorious throne on high from the beginning. It's in that and by that that this is made effective.

And as we were hearing last night, the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ in everything, over everything, is affected by the state of the church. It's related to the throne. And being related to the Son and to the throne, you see it's related to the nations.

The uttermost part of the earth, the message of the gospel to the nations, is not only the message of salvation and redeeming love and redeeming grace, but over and above all that, it's the message of the crown rights of God's Son. That's the message. He is Lord of all.

Of all. We are not called to offer Him as Lord but to declare that He is Lord. But the lordship, the throne, has its seat and center in the church.

It must be here in ourselves, in our own hearts. I wonder if I've failed, have you really grasped, dear friends, that however you may feel about it yourself, you may feel you're too young, too inexperienced, or too something or other to be in such a thing. No, if God has called you in Christ, that calling contains all that I have said for you in relation to a home.

In relation to a home. Perhaps this afternoon we'll be able to get nearer to this thing in that way, but for the moment, the object that the Lord is bringing before us this time is this. We are called with a great calling.

And that word calling can be right today changed for vocation. Vocation. We are called according to His purpose.

You ask, what is that purpose? To save? Oh, infinitely more than to save. To have a body, a body of people saved and glorified at the center of His coming new creation. What the letter to the Hebrews calls the inhabited earth to come, through which He will express this perfect harmony, maintain the government of this glorious integration, be the coordinating center, Christ in the midst, this church, this city, there is the metropolis of His creation.

Because of that, everything, everything in peace, everything in rest, when He gets it. We are called unto that, to serve Him in that matter. But let us remind ourselves that this is not going to begin when we get there.

The beginning of this is now. We in ourselves have got to be one person, not two or three persons. Understand what I mean by that? That is, this one thing I do, I am completely one in my whole being set upon a single object.

There is one thing in God's universe that unites my whole being. Unites my whole being. My spirit, soul and body are concentrated and focused.

And united upon this purpose of God concerning His Son. I am not a divided person. We have got to be harmonized in that way by the interests of the Lord Jesus.

Together it must be so. Our personal divided interests must go. Must go our ambitions, must go all secondary considerations, must go.

We must be a one people for the sake of the Lord Jesus and His rights. And we must go out to be His witnesses. And like it was with Himself, it will be with us.

Oh, if only there is the right thing there. As the example, the witness. If it's there, hell will be stirred from within.

That's a good sign, if it is. No compliment to any Christian or any church or any body of Christians in this world for the world to be able to go on without feeling its presence, the presence of Christ. No compliment at all to have an easy time like that.

Well, that's not a pleasant thing to say. We'll probably have to face that in practical ways. But there it is.

It was with Him. But, we have this. Be a good chair.

I have overcome the world. We have His victory upon which to count. The Lord helps.

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