

# Wabanna 1966: Title Unknown 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the urgent need for spiritual enlargement among Christians to fully grasp the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

**Duration:** 52:21

**Scripture:** John 14:16

**Topics:** "Conference"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for Christians to increase their spiritual capacity. He refers to the apostle Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers, where Paul asks for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. The speaker highlights the importance of having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, as the heart has better reasons than the head. He suggests that preaching the unseen aspects of the gospel, such as the greatness of Christ and the reality of salvation, can lead to stronger and more genuine conversions. The sermon also mentions the three categories of people mentioned in the New Testament: the unseen, the convert, and those who have the light.

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## Transcript

We are still before thee, O Lord our God, with hearts reaching out, with every faculty poised to hear, to see what the Lord will say unto us. Our prayer most earnestly is that it may be the Lord saying, may be through a human voice, that the Lord saying, and for this one thing we pray, that it may be the consciousness of the Lord again in this hour. And that thou wilt so govern everything toward that end of thine own pleasure and satisfaction through the Lord Jesus, thy beloved Son.

It has been announced as the keynote to this week of gatherings and ministry, that we shall be concerned with the unsearchable riches of Christ. There has been no collaboration, whatever, between those who are ministering, but my own heart is greatly rejoiced in finding that so far we are moving in the same, exactly the same route. In what the Lord has said in our brother and through him, and in myself.

I trust it will be through me too. I told you last night that I had a great question about being here this week, because it has been so fraught with conflict and challenge right up to the last moment. After this last hour, I'm wondering whether I've got the answer.

Whether it hasn't been the Lord saying, you're not necessary there. Brother Frumke will be there. For you couldn't have any fuller vision than that which has been brought to you this morning.

Anything that I may have to say will be very largely a filling in. Well, our key word, Ephesians 3.8, we'll just read it again. unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And what I have to say this morning is very largely introductory to what the Lord wills I may be saying on subsequent morning. These words which we have just read are set in the midst of the letter which contains the consummate essence of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Christ's greatest self.

And this letter, more than any other, is the letter of spiritual enlargement. The range of this letter, as you know, is from eternity to eternity. Within that range we have been moving.

That is the horizon of the letter so called to the Ephesians. Unfortunately so called because it was never limited to that in the beginning. The space was left, as you know, in this letter for a filling in.

It was just a letter to, and then filled in Ephesus, Galatians, Philippians, and so on. Not reduced to Ephesus. And the Apostle says, unto the nations this grace was given, to preach unto the nations.

So the letter has that horizon of the nations within, the horizon of the two eternities. This phrase, the unsearchable riches of Christ, is just one of a number of superlatives in this letter. If you read it through carefully and watchfully you will come on phrases like these.

The exceeding greatness of his power. The fullness of him that filleth all in all. The exceeding riches of his grace.

Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Far above all principality and power and rule and dominion and every name that is named. Not only in this age but in that which is to come.

Unto all the fullness of God. Attain unto the fullness of Christ. To him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus unto all ages forever and ever.

A selection of superlatives. The Apostle finds language beggared to express what he has seen and what is in his heart. Am I not right in saying that this is the letter of spiritual enlargement? Well, the crying need, dear friends, the crying need of our time is the need for increase of spiritual capacity in the Lord's people.

I expect if you were asked today what do you feel to be the greatest need of Christians at this time your answers would be various and many. This may not be the greatest of them all but I do suggest to you that it will rank very high and take a very former's place when I say the need of Christians in our time is for an increase of spiritual capacity. And we are one with the Apostle Paul when we say that for when he found himself launched upon this wonderful unveiling in writing this letter he didn't get very far before he dropped on his knee.

There he was with his parchment before him and his great vision and his heart bursting and it was as though he said can I get it over? It's a hopeless thought. It's impossible unless the Lord does something. As he dropped on his knee he said and for this I bow my knee unto the Father of Glory.

He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your heart being enlightened. What a phrase.

The eyes of your heart being enlightened. You know the heart has better reasons than the head. Always.

You ask any mother about that. Yes, this is a day in many realms of mediocrity. The fact is that there are no people today who are big enough to cope with the situation in any realm.

In the political realm, in the social realm, in the industrial realm, in the realm of society, in the realm of human nature. No one is big enough to cope with the situation today and bring it under hand. And that is very largely true in the spiritual realm.

Christians are being, as has been said this morning, forced up into a corner. The church is being pressed up into a corner where the one consciousness which is overwhelming us is we are not sufficient for these things. We are not adequate for the situation.

We are just not going to cope with it unless the Lord increases our capacity. Is that not true? If it is not true, in the consciousness of any of you, leave yourselves in the hand of the Lord and that's the way he will take you. Where enlargement of spiritual nature will be the only solution to your problem within and without.

Yes, it is true, we are not sufficient to cope until the Lord enlarges us. And may it be, may it be that this week that happens. I believe the very first thing toward it will be a new vision of the Lord Jesus.

He has started on that. I believe he is going to carry us right along that line. Now you know it has been spiritual limitation, inadequate capacity which has been responsible for so many spiritual tragedies in history.

That was the secret or the cause of the tragedy of Israel and Christianity when they came to the border of the land and were wheeled around, turned back into the wilderness, perished as Paul puts it, in the wilderness and did not enter into the inheritance. It was on this one thing, not sufficient spiritual capacity. They saw the giants in the land, the walled cities, the forces which stood in the way.

They said we were in our own sight and in theirs as grasshoppers. Now you know it is quite a good thing to view yourself like that sometimes. Indeed it is quite essential in the divine economy that you and I should feel that we in ourselves are nothing more than grasshoppers.

Indeed feeling we are not able to hop at all. But there can be a wrong attitude like that. It depends on who you are measuring the situation against, yourself or the Lord.

And if you measure every situation by the Lord, grasshopper you may be but you hop over into the land. Take possession. They measured by what they themselves were naturally and not what they were by faith in the Lord.

That paradox of course comes out often with Paul. We may light on it as we go on because you see here the apostle is saying unto me who am less than the least of all saints. Less than the least of all saints.

Does that sound like spiritual capacity? Ah but he didn't stop there. Was this grace given to the least of all, less than the least, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the nations. Now his capacity in one whose conception of himself was so small, so limited, so he wrote and so he referred to himself as himself.

And yet he wrote this letter with all the superlatives. Contradiction isn't it? And yet depending entirely upon your viewpoint, entirely upon your viewpoint, I am for the moment speaking about the limitation which does

exist, which should not exist. This consistent tendency to reduce everything to what is called simplicity.

There is a simplicity in Christ, again paradoxical, which is quite right. But there is a simplicity which is quite wrong. When people say we want just a simple gospel, and they often say it, we're not interested in all this high load, language, this great realm of spiritual ideas.

Give us a simple gospel. People who talk like that do not know their New Testament. No.

Dear friends, the Lord is always well ahead of us. While we want him to come into step with us. And we're always trying to get him into step with us.

We're always trying to reduce him to our size. To make the Lord one with whom we can cope. Who we can fully understand.

And wholly agree with. And be on terms of absolute happiness. And the Lord won't have any of it.

If you know anything about life with the Lord, going on with the Lord, you will know that he is always well ahead of you. He is always making demands beyond you. Beyond your capacity.

Beyond your ability. The man who wrote this letter had also written we were pressed beyond our measure. Beyond our measure.

Yes, the Lord is always getting us out of our depth beyond our measure for very good reasons. But of course you don't accept that principle in any other realm but the spiritual. Of having things in your measure, do you? Why do you send your children to school? To be taught the things that they already know? It's quite easy to them.

They come home and say, well, I haven't learned anything fresh today. It's all that I've known. It's very easy.

You don't do that in any realm of education. You know quite well that the law of education and growth is that something must always be making demands upon you beyond your present knowledge and ability. And in the spiritual life it's like that.

I don't want to discourage you at all but it's going to be like that more and more as you go on. My brothers here who are ministering to you because, because they have gone ahead with the Lord, and it is true of myself, will agree with me that today they are out of their depth. We are out of our depth with the Lord.

Our capacity for understanding what the Lord is doing with us is too limited. No, he's got us beyond ourselves. And rightly so.

It must be so or we will never grow. He is on the road of increasing capacity, understand that, in all his dealings with us. We'll come back upon that again.

But the Lord's object is to increase and enlarge our spiritual measure. And it's a hard school. The enlargement of spiritual capacity is the solution to all our problems.

That is the only way in which the problems are going to be resolved. Understand that. For illustration, look at the letters to the Corinthians and the situation in Corinth.

If ever there was a situation representing spiritual limitation, that was at Corinth. I could not, said the Apostle, I could not speak to you as under spiritual, but as under karma. I fed you with milk.

You were not able neither are you yet able. And the result of that spiritual limitation was found in all the things mentioned in his letter. Tragic and terrible things.

Their relationships with and attitudes toward one another. Going to law against one another, saints and the worldly courts. Their attitude toward the Apostles.

Some saying, well Paul is our man. We like Paul. You can have Peter and you can have Apollos, but this is our man.

Others, well our man is Peter. We like his style. We like his way of speaking.

We like his material. You can have Paul. Paul is too beyond us.

Peter is more within our range. Others, now you know Apollos, he's a learned man. He's a learned man.

He's an eloquent man. He's mighty in the scripture. Apollos is the man for us.

Divisions over ministry and men. Human complexions, preferences and prejudices. The Apostle says, that spiritual smallness, that's a contemptible, mean state of spiritual life when things are like that.

Attitudes toward the Apostles, and God only knows from many hints given by Paul in those letters what their attitudes toward him were, summed it up I think in one phrase, the more I love the less I be loved. What about that spiritual measure? Toward the Lord's work, he made an invidious comparison I think between them and those at Philippi. They were ready, ready to give, ready to send.

Hearing you, you said a year ago that you'd do something, you've never done it. Now let there be a doing what you promised. Hardiness in outgoing fellowship and cooperation in the work of the Lord.

And when those things are true, what was this large section of his first letter about? Now concerning the spiritual. I don't know there was a tang of sarcasm in there. Perhaps I shouldn't even suggest there was.

Now concerning the spiritual. And then he went on to correct the spiritual. Within that category you know healing and tongue and the manifestation gift.

Not saying they're wrong, but when you sum it all up you have to say, you people are more concerned with these demonstrative aspects of Christianity than you are with Christ. Your whole focus is upon these things which appeal to the senses. By which a show can be made.

And you know the one word that Paul uses in that connection? And it is the word which is the focal point of what we're saying. Unto edify. What a pity that's in our translation.

Listen. Whenever you come on that word edifying or edify, we're intranlated into the original which is building up. For so many people when they read or hear the word edifying, really interpret it as being edifying.

And nothing that is edifying is building up. No building up. Paul is challenging these things after all issue in building up.

That is increased enlargement spiritually. Not as something in themselves. Which leave you in that state of spiritual immaturity after all.

But are you through these things or without them growing up? Becoming full grown. Spiritually mature. That's the thing.

I put in parenthesis here, it is a very impressive thing that so often people who are most concerned about these manifestation aspects of Christianity are the least spiritually mature. You can't talk about anything else with them but those things. You try to talk about the Lord.

Well the things go flat. Well that's in parenthesis. I'd probably be speaking up on that again.

But here it is. Over the spirituals, Paul is saying, well these things which you think to be marks of spirituality, are they really marks of spiritual growth out of these conditions which obtain amongst you. To which we have made reference.

Well there's Corinth in a nutshell and it's very limited isn't it. But we have said, what is Paul's remedy of Corinth? For the Lord, all the problems, all the conditions, all the disappointments, all the defeats. What is his remedy? It's in one word or one clause.

Be ye enlarged. Our heart is open to you, oh Corinthians. You are not straightened in us.

You are straightened in your own selves. On a recompense. Be ye enlarged.

That's the answer. If you were bigger people, these things would not mark your lives at all. You would have grown out of these infantile features and elements.

Now this is a challenge friends. What is the statement of fact? It's a challenge. It may be a challenge this week.

I don't want to be, come right down onto earth, ground over this, but it may be a challenge. You see, it's just possible that various ministries here, you might have your preferences and your partiality and perhaps your prejudices. It's quite possible for you to say, well you know, I like the American way of thinking.

Or you might say, I like the Asiatic way of presenting. Or you might say, well I've not much room for the European. And let me say, if we get into that realm we are in Corinth, it's poor, mean, contemptible, earthly, spiritual capacity means what has been said this morning.

But I cannot see a focus upon Jesus Christ. He is the criterion of ministry. Has this man and that man and the other man something of Christ to minister? If so, we focus upon that.

Forget the man. All other natural things. It is Christ.

And I beg you that if you don't find that you are getting anything of Christ under my ministry, don't come. No, it's to be the Lord Jesus, isn't it? The remedy be ye enlarged or restrained. Restricted and limited with Corinth.

He had to put an embargo upon himself as he approached them. He said, when I came to you I determined not. I determined not.

In other words, I limited my scope and concentrated on one thing only for you, Jesus Christ and him crucified. He was limited. Not that he wanted to do more than Jesus Christ and him crucified.

But my word, the dimensions of Jesus Christ and him crucified are not Corinthian dimensions. Not at all. Now you see, when Paul passes from Corinth to Ephesus, to use the phrase, to Ephesus, look at the dimensions.

It's almost like two different worlds, isn't it? From Corinth to Ephesus. Speaking spiritually. The dimensions.

The man is released. He is emancipated. He is out of all bonds.

He is out of the bonds of language. He cannot, master of languages he is, he cannot find language in which to speak what is on his heart. The flood gate is not open.

He is out of this world in the heaven. Man is free. His only problem is, how am I going to bring the infinite to this people to whom I'm writing? That's his problem here.

And at last, this great apostle is free from the personal occupation with local problems on the spot. Problems of the churches on the spot. And all the work of here and there and there and there, the different conflicts that he was meeting all the time.

He is free by the sovereign will and way of God. He is in prison. Is he? Is he in prison? There was never a man more at large than the man with that chain on his wrist.

And the Roman God watching nearby. Within the restrictions that were his, never a man more at large. He is out and free.

And now by that sovereign will of God, that sovereign ordering of God, so strange, so mysterious, before he was able to sit down quietly and look the thing in the face. Strange that he should have come to Rome like this. When he said that he longed to come to Rome, he longed to come to Rome to give them some spiritual blessing.

All his ambition was get to Rome, the center of the world, and preach Christ there and then, the way he got there. All the conflict, the battle, the shipwreck, obstructions and frustrations and the devil and everything else. Many a question in other minds as to whether they would ever arrive, but at last the all-governing praise, and so we came to Rome.

All right, all right, we are here anyway by the sovereign power of God. But it's been strange this way, perplexing and difficult and hard. Seems so, so much contradiction in the methods of God, but now he sits down quietly, everything is set back.

Now I have the opportunity that I've longed for for years. I've never been able to do this before. I've been too busy, too occupied in the work of the Lord rightly so, too obsessed with the problems of believers and churches.

Now, the thing I've longed for has come. I can unburden my heart of all that has been accumulating there, stored up that I wanted to get up, and I had no opportunity, no facility. But I got it now, and so this letter came out with all its unspeakable fullness of the uncertain riches of Christ.

Here then in this letter is the great eternal calling of the Church, the great capacity which God desires the Church to have, and the great responsibility resting upon those who have the light. That is what is here. Now you know the New Testament takes account of three categories of people.

Firstly it takes account of the unsaved, and here I want to say a thing that I think needs to be said, and said with emphasis. Where the unsaved are concerned, and it is thought that to them the gospel must be preached. And when that word gospel is used, is employed, people think something you know elementary, quite simple, just the beginning thing.

You'll not find that in the New Testament. And I, dear friend, do believe that here is one of the great mistakes. For I believe that the greater the gospel you preach to the unsaved, the better kind of Christians you're going to get.

Put that round the other way, the tragedy is that so many Christians are so poor in their birth because they haven't had a big enough Christ with them. Isn't that true? And the New Testament says, give the unsaved the greatness of the Lord Jesus, and you'll get better converts. Take that to heart.

Take it to heart. Oh I do wish that to the unsaved, to the convert, to the beginner, some of the greatest realities, the big things of the gospel of salvation were made known. Oh yes, oh yes.

You might find it necessary to have your counselors afterward, and advisors, and instructors, all so good. But you know, dear friends, the New Testament is based upon this. If when you truly believe and come to the Lord, you receive the Holy Spirit into your heart, and understand that you have received the Holy Spirit, He'll teach you.

He'll tell you what you ought to do and what you ought not to do. And you won't have to have people coming along and saying, now you're a Christian, you know you mustn't do this. You mustn't go there.

This is what you must do. Not a village. We always remember our dear brother Watchman Knee over this, in dealing with that convert in the country, when he went out, out from the city for a rest in the country, and lodged in the house of a peasant, a heathen peasant with his wife.

And he didn't say anything for some time, but he lived. He lived, right. Then eventually he spoke about Christ, told them about the Lord Jesus, and left with them a Bible when he went back to Shanghai.

He didn't tell them anything what they ought to do and what they ought not to do, and the man was a great drinker. After he had gone, the man said to his wife at the next mealtime, bring me my drink. And she put the drink in front of him, and he said now, Brother Knee always asked a blessing before we took our meal, we'll ask a blessing.

He bowed his head and tried to ask a blessing, but nothing would come. It just stuck, it didn't come, he couldn't pray. He said I can't ask a blessing, what's the matter, Brother Knee always did.

Well, let's try again. No, no, and I can't ask a blessing. What shall we do? Well, she said, Brother Knee left us a Bible.

You can read the Bible, I can't. I'll bring it, you'll find it in the Bible. Well, is there something about this? So he brought the big Bible, I suppose in Chinese it was a big Bible.

And he went over and over and over trying to find something. I can't find anything about this. So he said, take the Bible away, we'll try again.

And finally, no, no, I can't pray. So she said, well, you better go and see Brother Knee and ask him about it. So off the man trotted to the city and looked up Brother Knee and he said, Brother Knee, after you had left, I asked my wife to bring the drink and I tried to pray as you did, but I couldn't pray.

I couldn't pray, I tried again and again, I couldn't pray. Brother Knee, Resident Boss wouldn't let me have that drink. Brother Knee had taught the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit at new birth.

Resident Boss dictated what should be. It's not very simple. You've heard it perhaps many times before, but you couldn't have a better illustration of what ought to happen through the gospel to the unseen.

Already the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit ought to be a reality and in action. And yet, at Corinth, believers of some longstanding didn't understand that, didn't know that. They wouldn't have gone to law against one another if Resident Boss had been heard or anything else.

Oh, this challenges us, doesn't it? It does, but my point is, and what is it? The gospel is a bigger thing than that little so-called simple thing that is so often preached. Give them the greatness of Christ, but overwhelm them with that to which they are called, and they'll make better Christians. There's one realm, and then there's the realm, the category of the saved, category of the saved, recognized by the New Testament.

And what about them? The whole of the New Testament is focused on these people with warnings, exhortations, admonitions, entreaties, to go on. Ninety percent of the New Testament is on this line, to believe us, not to stand still, not to remain where they are, but to go on. And be ever going on because God is going on, and if you don't, he'll leave you behind.

Go on. And there's a third category, which would take a much longer time than the warning allows, the third category. Amongst believers, you know, there are what the New Testament calls the victors.

The word is too common, overcomers. Amongst believers. For whom bears the crown? Paul was not concerned about his salvation, whether that was in jeopardy, when he said, my brethren, I have not yet attained it.

I'm not already complete, but this one thing I do, leaving the things which are behind, I press toward the mark of being saved, of the prize, of the on-high calling. Something more than just getting into heaven, saved, getting into heaven. Much more, the prize.

I can't dwell on that now, it will come up again as we go on this week, the Lord will, but these are categories of which the New Testament takes account. And I'm being gone this morning, we must leave it there with this inclusive statement, that when all is said, everything depends upon our apprehension of Jesus Christ. What kind of Christ? How big is he? Well, you'll never be able to say, if I'd be able to measure him, but have we got such an apprehension of Jesus Christ? On the one hand makes us feel, this is beyond us, altogether beyond us, but on the other hand, to me, whom less than the least of all, was disgraced, disgraced unto the riches of Christ.

We will leave it there for the time being, to go on later with what those unsearchable riches are, or some of them, if the Lord will. And now, unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or

think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory, in the church, by Christ Jesus unto all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

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