

Wabanna 1966: Title Unknown 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the transformative power of the cross in increasing spiritual capacity and the necessity of being adjustable in faith.

Duration: 54:11

Scripture: Acts 10:9

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the question of how to truly understand and apply the truth of God's word in our lives. He emphasizes the need for increased spiritual capacity among believers. The speaker then uses the example of Peter's vision in Acts 10 to illustrate the depth and practicality of God's instructions. He also mentions the story of David and his son Absalom to highlight the importance of genuine repentance and the consequences of unspiritual actions. The sermon concludes with the speaker urging listeners to bring their knowledge of God's truth to the Lord and seek His guidance in applying it to their lives.

Transcript

Lord, we are very strongly and deeply conscious this calls for particular grace, particular wisdom, particular help from thyself. Thou knowest we are seeking to bring everything to very practical issues. All the words, all the messages, all this volume of expression verbally it has got to have something of a really definite and concrete outcome and we are in these particular hours seeking to find the way for that.

So we ask thee for what is not possible to man that thou wilt show us the way. Teach us thy way, O Lord, and lead us in a straight path. For thy name's sake, Amen.

Shall we remind ourselves of the special object of these afternoon hours this week? It is that we should bring all that is being brought before us to the focus of practical outcome what has been, by our brother, called the why or the how rather. The how of it all is a question, no doubt, which occupies many hearts, many minds. Well, yes, we see the truth.

We accept the truth. We believe that is the truth. But how are we to get into it? Or how is it to get into us? And it is to try to answer that inquiry of how that we are spending these hours together in the afternoon.

And each one is intended to focus upon a particular message although the whole will, of course, be punished. Now, so far as I am concerned, you remember that the first message I gave had to do with spiritual capacity, the great need for increased spiritual capacity amongst the Lord's people. All the tragedy of life, of the Christian life, due to limited capacity.

How great is the need for inward enlargement, as Paul prays, that we may apprehend with all things what is the breadth, the length, the height, the depth, the knowledge that passes. And we are attempting to get into that. It's an impossible thing, of course, without that enablement of the Lord.

So this afternoon we ask the question how is enlargement of spiritual capacity to be attained? The answer commenced this morning. And I wondered just how far our brother was going to undercut the afternoon. He brought us right on to it and said some very vital things about it that you will suffer repetition, if it is that, or underlining.

The answer to this question of spiritual capacity, spiritual measure, spiritual ability is of course found entirely in the cross. The cross is the answer to that question. But when that is said, that word is used, it has become so familiar, so familiar, that it has no longer any music, any charm, very little appeal.

You only have to mention the cross and so often the reaction is, oh well, we know all about that. We've heard all that. You can't tell us much that is new about that.

All right, let's see. We will see what kind of a knowledge it is that we have. When we speak of the cross, let us be very clear at once that we are speaking about death and resurrection.

They are both, they both meet in the cross. The cross combines them both. They are centered there.

And when we speak about the cross, we mean death and resurrection in our own history. Not in history dating right back 2,000 years, almost. Not something that happened back there, although of course that's where its root is.

But we are now meaning, concerned with death and resurrection and that of Christ in our own history. In our own history. A part of our very history.

An inward part of us. You do not need that I should say to define that. You know what it is to have history in your blood, don't you? History in your blood.

You may go to some parts of this world. For instance, when I go to Canada, I go to Canada and meet with Canadians. They immediately say, Oh, how is the old country? And they want to talk about the old country.

And it isn't long before they will tell you all about their grandparents and their parents and their own birth and their own home and the old country. It's in their blood. That's their history.

They've inherited that. It's a part of them and they can't get away from it. First opportunity to refer to it, there you are.

And that may be true of other nationalities. There are many of them here and probably you more or less have that history in your blood to which you revert. And when I say the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in our history, that's what I mean.

It's a part of us. A part of us. It's not something we have taken on, accepted, adopted, mentally assented to.

And if some other thing came along equally appealing and attractive, we could let this go and take that. No, this has got to be so much a part of us, and this is what we mean, as to be spiritual suicide. To leave it.

It's a part of us. Death and resurrection. Well now, let me say one or two things that I don't like saying.

It may not sound very pleasant. But we must get to the root of this. I am not talking about the doctrine or the teaching of the cross.

You wouldn't believe, dear friends, how somehow or other I don't know what has happened. Somehow or other, wherever I go, I seem to be the synonym for the doctrine of the cross. And immediately people say, you know, I have heard, I have received the teaching of the cross, the message of the cross.

The message of the cross. Oh dear. And dear friends, I want to confess to you that I feel bad about that.

I really do. It may be quite all right, and they may be quite sincere. But I am not talking about, and we are not concerned with, what is called the message of the cross.

Which is found in a book, or books and literature, in the bound volumes, brother, that you accumulated. Not found in some persons who stood for that, who are known, more than for anything else, for the message of the cross. None of that.

No, I am not talking about that, and we are not concerned with that. I am not asking you to accept the message of the cross. However you may phrase it, identification with Christ in death, and burial, and resurrection, and so on.

Oh, I often wish we get rid of a lot of our phraseology. It is really misleading, it really detracts, very often becomes empty and meaningless. Although it may be, for the people who use it, very meaningful, but I think in every realm of our Christianity, we need to revise our phraseology.

We do. Now that is a subject that we could stay with for a long time, isn't it? You know what I mean by that? If we had a revolution in the realm of phraseology, my word, what things would happen? You would never again, on Sunday mornings, say you are going to church. Never again would you use that phrase, I am going to church.

Never again would you look at a certain kind of building and say, that church. And I could go over the whole gamut of phraseology which is not true to the New Testament meaning. Well, I must leave that.

But let it be understood that this is not what we are concerned with this afternoon, something of a doctrine, a specific teaching, a phraseology, a terminology. No, not a terminology but a terminus. That is what we are talking about.

A terminus. And a terminus, dear friends, which is nothing less than a devastation in our history. A devastation.

If the cross of Calvary of our Lord Jesus Christ was anything in the history of his disciples, it was a devastation. For the days immediately following, they had lost their words. They had lost their hope, their

expectations.

They were lost men. No longer were they integrated. They were scattered everywhere.

To off down to Emmaus. Here and there. Poor old Didymus Thomas.

He is somewhere, somewhere, waiting on his own, shut up in dark, dark despair. Peter, where has he gone out weeping bitterly? Where has he gone? What is this language that these two are saying? We had hoped, we had hoped that it should be he who would redeem us from our we had hoped, implying hope shattered. It was a devastation, the cross was.

And if the Lord Jesus hadn't risen, that's how it would have remained. And when he arose, his first thing was to gather up the scattered pieces, fragments, bring them together again, and put new hope into them. The cross is a devastation.

Maybe more or less that at one time, at one time. But sooner or later it's going to be that, absolutely. If you wait thirty, fifty years as a Christian, it's going to be that.

I was a minister, accredited, of two denominations at the same time, preaching every prayer, and all that. A full, full program. And sincere, and very honest, preaching out for the best that I knew.

And I was there for a large number of years before I met the real meaning of Roman faith. And I tell you, it was a devastation which cut my whole life in two. And like two different worlds, but I don't want to talk about myself and what it meant there.

You have to deduce from some of the things I say this afternoon, that they are not things just being said. They've come out from somewhere. From this history with God.

But we are talking about what the cross really is. And what it is not. Perhaps the best approach is along the line of the positive and not the negative.

The positive will prove the reality of the cross. The reality of our talk, our speech, our phraseology, our profession, our claims, all this. Whether it really is real.

The positive will show that. And the first thing that I would suggest, and this is where we come this afternoon to a very practical issue that we may all have to face. The first positive thing which arose with those disciples and must arise with all who have truly had the cross planted deeply into their history, into their very constitution, is they're adjustable.

They're adjustable. And that's a tremendous ordeal. For many, for many, you know, tradition is a tyrant.

Tradition is a tyrant. Tradition is a padlock upon the soul. You've heard that? Don't write it in your notebook.

Write it inside. Tradition is a padlock upon the soul. Read your letters of speculation and other things.

Oh no, come back. Earlier than that. Have a look at Peter.

Peter. He stands out as the first of the apostolic group. The cross has been planted very deeply in him.

It's devastated him undoubtedly. But now, now the test is arising and Peter is on the housetop praying, fasting and praying, and he falls into a trance and he sees the heavens open and a great sheet let down by four corners and in the sheet all manner of creatures, reptiles, four-footed creatures, this, that and the other. All the things forbidden Jews to eat in the book of Leviticus chapter 11.

An embargo upon all those things written in Holy Scripture. And the voice from heaven says to a Jew, rise Peter, kill and eat. Now look.

The issue is how deep, how practical is the cross. I know what you're thinking. Does the Lord ever contradict his own word to break upon it? Yes, he does.

If you understand him rightly. Rise Peter, kill and eat. Eat.

Eat that reptile, that unclean beast, unclean creature. I who stand four square upon the inspiration of the Bible, I who have observed meticulously Leviticus 11 all my life, you tell me to go back upon that? Do the very thing that is forbidden there? This can't be the Lord. Lord, you're making a mistake now.

No, no. This is not you, Lord. Nevertheless, this thing was done three times.

The Lord is insisting. Not letting him off. And then the Lord brings him the cross.

Brings the cross right before Peter and in effect says, well Peter, what about the cross? What about it? What God hath cleansed. What God hath cleansed. There is a fountain open for all unclean men.

What God hath cleansed. Oh, surely, surely, it doesn't apply to this kind of person and that kind of person, this nationality. We are the people.

Now then, Peter, your tradition is right in the way. It's right in the way of the outworking of the cross. The cross makes tremendous differences in these matters.

You've got to undo that padlock on your soul, Peter. You've got to let me have my way through your tradition, Peter. The cross has done something to change the whole tradition over Leviticus 11.

What God hath cleansed, hath cleansed. And do you see the application? Who were the unclean creatures in the conception and conviction of Simon Peter? The Gentiles. The Gentiles.

Those outside of the pale of Judaism. They are the dogs and you don't make a meal of the dogs. They were called the dogs.

The dogs. Unclean. For food.

They were the unclean. The Gentiles. But God hath cleansed the Gentiles.

The cross embodies and embraces all. All. You know, dear friends, we have made a great mistake.

I'm preaching now instead of introducing this. We have made a great mistake in our doctrine in this matter. We think that only the saved people are redeemed.

If you do, you have made the biggest mistake of all. The whole world, to the deepest, blackest sinner, is a redeemed person. That's not... That is not universal.

No, don't misunderstand. The tragedy will be that those for whom redemption was accomplished may not enter into the good of it, refuse it. It's there for them.

They are redeemed. They are redeemed. The whole world is a redeemed world and the whole world will not accept it.

Oh, the cross of Jesus Christ, you see, goes far and it goes deep. But Peter is drawing a line. A line.

By his tradition. And the whole issue now for Peter and for all of us is that our adjustableness by the cross. Can we be adjustable? Can we be adjustable over our tradition? You know, dear friends, that the Lord does some very strange things in his sovereignty.

And in that sovereign economy of God, he contradicts himself from time to time. That's only a way of putting it. It's only a way of putting it.

Let me take the instance of the Apostle Paul. Paul was born, bred, brought up and deep died. A Jew, a Jew, a Hebrew.

He tells us how deep it was and strong it was and far-reaching it was and involved it was. He was in it up to above his eyes. By birth, inheritance, tradition.

It was a very part of him naturally to be enduring. And when the Lord comes to that man, he hooks him right out of everything. Right out of Jewry.

Right out of Judaism. Right out of his inheritance. You might say right out of his blood.

And makes him the Apostle of the Gentiles. Oh, do you say, you see, in the sovereignty of God I was born in such and such a setting and brought up in that and taught this and that. Therefore, therefore that's where I ought to stay.

God brought me into that at birth. And God having done that, if God is sovereign, I ought to stay there. Well, Paul's life contradicts you if you say that.

There's a reason. Always God is governed by a reason. See, I was, as I've told you, fully deeply in that setting of organized Christianity.

And I believe to this day that the Lord sovereignly put me into that. Why? So that I would know what it's like. And know how to speak of that realm of emancipation and the difference.

And Paul sovereignly brought up, Paul brought up in Jewry, knew it as no other man knew it or as few men knew it. Knew it inside out and upside down. Knew it all.

And he could talk about it with authority. When he spoke about the cross, my word, he could speak about the cross with a background in his history. God doesn't contradict himself but he sometimes leads in a way, yes, leads in a way, and then pulls you right out of it.

And says, that is not ultimately what I'm after. That was only for a purpose. To teach you something, to show you something, so that your life would be based upon a history, a knowledge.

No theory. You know what you're talking about from your background. You see the point? Now the cross, you see, with Peter just did that.

So the Lord won the battle, although Peter said, not so Lord, not so Lord. The Lord won the battle and off he went to the house of Cornelius. And the Holy Spirit fell on him and you with all that were in the house.

All right, that's the Holy Spirit standing by the cross, you see, upholding the cross. Now if we are not adjustable, we may be in the way of the tragedy of missing. The tragedy of life's verdict may be involved in a lack of adjustability.

Oh, I've lived long enough, long enough, and I've had contacts enough to see some tragedies. I can tell you of them. I knew a dear man, quite intimately, who was greatly used of the Lord.

He was on the platform of the biggest convention. He was in demand as a conference speaker everywhere. And I felt, this man's going a long way.

This man's going a long way. This man's going to stand for something. And then an issue arose in that man's life.

I've got to safeguard what I say because I do not want you to feel offended because I say a thing and give something to support it, that you've got to go and do that. It's got to come from God, indeed, not from man. Therefore I am free to say what it was.

The question arose. You see, he had got a wide, worldwide ministry of real value. And then the question of his denominational connection, it was in the tragedy of God, I believe, arose for him.

And the issue became the whole church of God, the whole body of Christ, the great universal cause of the denomination. He had a place in it and it was no small thing for him to have to face this. And I saw him going through the crisis and the contortion.

And eventually he decided for the denomination. That man is hardly heard of today. He's still alive.

But as his name was connected with all the spiritual movements, you could read in the religious papers, he's speaking here this week and there next week. You never see it now. Never see it now.

He's got a place in his denomination, yes. And they make a lot of him stop. He's lost those platforms.

He's lost all those platforms. He's gone. He's nothing.

Now, I say again, because if I said that, don't you go and leave your denomination because I've said it. This thing must come from God to you as a matter of life or death. And don't move until it does.

But here's a tragedy. A tragedy, you see. Playing safe.

Playing safe. If I do that, you see what will happen to me? I will lose prestige. All right.

I knew another dear servant of God. I could mention the name and all would know, but I'm not going to. Even wild horses won't draw these names out of me.

But this man, foremost amongst evangelical spiritual ministries, in great spiritual responsibility, with a large heart, a very large heart, too large a heart. Is that possible? Too large a heart. And a man, a man who was a noted liberal and modernist in theology.

Nice man. And there's some good nice men in that realm. Nice man.

Capable. Attractive man. This man, this modernist, asked this other man to write a foreword to a book that he had written, which was liberal theology, Durham Symposium.

Oh, will you write a foreword commending your brother? And he did it. He did it. He lost everything of his great fear of spiritual usefulness and died with a broken heart.

Tragedy of popularity. Popularity. And I could go on and I won't give you any more.

I'll give you some even more sad than this. But here's the point. The cross, dear friends, will prove whether it's real in our lives if it deals with our prejudices, preferences, our likes, natural, dislikes, natural, our ambitions, our popularity, our compromises, or whether we are really in the Lord's hands to be adjustable at any cost.

At any cost. And you and I ought to know, ought to know, that the cross is suffering love. Oh, some of the exponents of the message of the cross are so legal, so harsh.

They put such a drive on other people to get them crucified, putting their hands on people's lives, as they say, to get them to the cross. In other words, it means to crucify them. God help us.

God help us. The cross is suffering love. And when the cross really comes in, it brings suffering.

And so I'm going to say here now, right away, there will be no increase and enlargement of spiritual capacity without suffering. Without suffering. I know plenty of people who embrace the message of the cross and preach it, but my word, they know nothing about suffering.

They've never been broken. Now, from, they preach the cross. Uncrucified men.

Unbroken men. The cross is suffering love. And if that is not how we are, we really, after all, do not know anything about it.

You know, David, whom we've been speaking, and I shall be speaking much this week. David lost his throne and his city, and a large part of his people, for a time, in a terrible tragedy, the eclipse of everything for him, as he escaped and went off, weeping, weeping, all because of sentimentality in his family. Absalom.

Absalom had committed murder. David had brought the murderer back without any confession, without any repentance, without any adjustment, brought him back home. And then you know the story.

What that son did, driving his father out, taking the throne, and then being slain, in divine retribution. But then, even then, David, Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee. And a very unspiritual man, a very carnal man, thought through it and came to David, look here, if your son's life had been spared and the whole nation had been slaughtered, you would assume they had it that way, would you? Sentiment.

Sentiment. In the place of principle. The cross, the cross stands strongly by principle.

Even if it goes against our sentimentalism. Well, you must think about that. Well, here we are, you see, adjustableness is a tremendous thing.

I would like to say other things that result from the cross, but I didn't intend to talk so long, and you are here to ask questions. I just am opening the way, supposed to be, for you. It's inevitable that in a conference like this, this matter will arise, the matter of the cross.

Inevitable. Sometime or other it will come up. And we'll have to face it anew, and we can test whether after all, our doctrine, teaching, of the cross is real.

Oh, it's a wonderful thing when this begins really to take place in us. I look at those eleven disciples who became eleven apostles. I see in the earlier days with Christ the dome, the brass dome over their minds.

He could talk, he could speak, and they couldn't understand for the life of it. They didn't know what he was talking about, what he was meaning. That was his trouble with them all the time.

It was a dome. He gave all his teachings, but they couldn't, couldn't, couldn't. The cross.

The cross. And they, the rulers, took knowledge of them, but they were unlearned and ignorant men. All right.

All right. But the dome's gone. Heaven is cleft asunder.

They are seeing the meaning of the Scriptures all the way back. Listen to Peter on the day of Pentecost. How he's quoting the Scriptures.

Quoting the Scriptures. This is that, this is that. I never saw that before.

Just heaping Scripture upon Scripture with its interpretation, its meaning. They've got a new knowledge. Entirely new knowledge, or a new capacity for understanding what never before they could grow.

That will prove whether we, the cross has really begun to work in us. A new capacity for grasping the spiritual meaning of divine things. I tell you it's wonderful when you get this dome removed.

You get this open heaven. It's only a beginning. We can go on forever that way, but it's a wonderful thing when it begins.

Oh, I never saw that before. The word was closed to me before, but now it's open. It's alive.

It's alive. And we, I think I can say, we who are ministering to you this week, are ministering simply because God has given us that open heaven in a little way, small way, to see his meanings. Not what he says, but what he means.

A lot of difference. What he means. Now, forgive me, for going so long, and my intention is not to prolong this meeting beyond the point of topic.

Anything you want to ask, say, just fire away. This cross has to be enacted and utilized by the Lord himself. He cannot crucify it.

Exactly. And he chooses many ways in which to do this. Yes.

Right. Suffering, adversity, sickness, sorrow. Exactly.

And your reaction? All things are part of God's enacting the cross in our lives. That's right. That's right.

I would suggest this to you, dear friends, as basic and fundamental, that knowing the truth, knowing the message, knowing the word, you only take Romans 6, knowing it, you take it to the Lord. You take your knowledge to the Lord, and you say, Now, Lord, I believe this is what you want. This is what you mean.

I definitely have a transaction with you that you, in your own way, in your own time, will make that good in my history. Ah, but dare you do that? Dare you? May not be long before something happens and you say, Oh, I didn't mean this. No, Lord, I didn't think it meant that.

Now, now, will you? It is suffering, love, and it isn't love for yourself, for your Lord. All right, have a definite transaction with the Lord. I had to do that, shut myself out from my room, and face everything, ministry, position, everything, and get through, a big battle.

Thank God, He meant it, and He saw through. But, there it is, there it is. In the old days, you know, of the Keswick Convention, in the early years, that was the sort of thing that was happening.

Dr. F.B. Meyer, who I knew very well, told me once, he said, You know, the Spirit of God came down on the Keswick Convention, when the message of the cross had been preached in such a way that people went to their rooms straight away, silently and solemnly, and you could see the lights in their room all night. They were on their knees, getting through with it. Men went off to the lake and dropped their tobacco and their pipes in the lake.

Others went off to the post office to get postal orders to pay their debts. He said, That's how things were when the Holy Spirit took hold of the cross as it was then preached. It's very practical.

He said that the post office is sold out of all their postal orders for debt paying. Very practical. We've got to have a transaction with God over this, very definitely, and hold Him to it, if we really mean business with God.

Perhaps it's better to talk to the Lord than to one another. I hope all my speaking hasn't quenched you. If you have anything, say now.

If not, shall we now talk to the Lord? Even those of us who know most about it, there's still something more to be done. But in heart, in thy presence, we do want to know the power of thy resurrection ever more and more, and all that comes with it. But it involves the fellowship of thy suffering being made conformable to thy death.

We do pray that every heart that is having a silent but sincere transaction, committal to thee just now, may find thee encamping upon that ground, taking responsibility for all the consequences, and leading through, not only into resurrection in a new way, but into liberty from all grave clothes of tradition, prejudice, what belonged to that past. O Lord, who readest every heart, take note and get out of this hour something eternally precious for thyself, and thy grace will be sufficient for us, whatever it means. So help us.

Lord, do safeguard from all dissipation, distraction, O do hold without any kind of intenseness that is solical, hold into a solemn joy in being found, one with the Lord Jesus, his fellow, in life, in death, in reproach, in rejection and despising, but in the joy set before. So help. We ask in his name.

Amen.

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