

What Is True in the Lord Jesus Has Got to Be True in Us

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of personal experience and the test of experience in knowing what is true and what is a lie.

Scripture: 1 John 1:1

Topics: "The Importance of Truth", "Personal Experience with Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the necessity of personal experience with Christ as the foundation of true faith, urging believers to move beyond mere doctrine to a genuine relationship with God. He highlights that John's message in his letter is to confirm believers amidst uncertainty, asserting that true knowledge of God comes from firsthand experience rather than hearsay. Sparks illustrates the importance of truth in the believer's life, stating that what is true in Christ must also be true in us, as falsehood can lead to spiritual ruin. He encourages Christians to rely on the Holy Spirit for discernment of truth and to ensure their faith is rooted in reality rather than theory. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deep, personal engagement with the truth of Christ, which transforms lives and sustains faith.

Transcript

Read: 1 John 1:1-5

We are continuing with our meditation in the First Letter of John. I hope you are not tired of reading the first verses of this letter. It is important for us to notice how John begins what he has to say. So will you please look at these verses again. Well, we have been seeing that John wrote this letter to confirm the people of God in Christ. I am not so much concerned with giving you a lot more teaching as I am that you should really get hold of what John is really saying. John was trying to save the Lord's people in a difficult day from uncertainty. When everything was in a state of uncertainty, John was seeking to confirm believers in Christ, and that is the object of this whole letter.

Now that helps us to understand how he begins. You see, John gathers up everything into one matter. He bases everything upon a practical, personal experience of Christ. In these first verses, John repeats himself again and again, he says, 'That which we have seen and heard and beheld and handled, THAT is what we declare unto you.' If you can say, I have seen, I have heard, I have handled, that means you have got a personal experience. That is not mere theory, that is not just doctrine, that is not something that you

heard from someone else. That is something which has come into your own hand and you can say, 'I have handled that.' That is as real to me as any thing that I can take hold of with my hands. John says, "THAT which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." You notice he uses that word "declare" twice. John does not say, "I am going to argue about this. I am going to enter into some debate on this matter. No, this is something that I declare unto you." The apostles never went out into the world to argue about something. They never went out to try and influence people to a teaching. They never tried to influence people to a way of doing things. Their method was not argument at all. It was a declaration of the facts. It was what they called, "testimony." It was what they called, "evidence."

Now in the Letters of John, we have seen that John uses the phrase "this is" ten times, and he links that "this is" with ten things. And the word "evidence" is one of these ten things: "THIS IS the evidence." What is evidence? What is testimony? What is a declaration? I wonder if you have ever been in a court of law as a witness. You have been called to be a witness about some case, and there is the magistrate, and here are all the other people who are going to listen to what you have got to say. If you began by saying, Well, somebody told me this, I heard it said by other people, I have an idea that it was like this. What would the magistrate say? He would simply say, My good man, or my good woman, we are not here to listen to what other people told you, we are here in order that you might give us first hand personal evidence. We want to know what you have seen. If you cannot tell us what you have seen, please stand down, we do not want to listen to you. We want evidence, not theory. We want first hand proof, not what you have got second hand.

So John says, "This is the evidence. This is the witness." He brings everything back to practical experience. And he says to these people who are not quite sure about their position, we have heard, we have seen, we do know, and we declare that unto you. In this letter, John brings everything to the test of personal experience. That is what John means by light. We have got to walk in the Light. We have not to write a treatise on illumination. We have not to write books about the wonderful thing called light. We have not to study the science of light. We have got to walk in the Light. That is something very practical. That is bringing light into experience. That is coming ourselves into the experience of light.

So John begins by saying that this is the message, "That God is Light." What is your idea of God? Some great wonderful Being far away Who cannot be known, some great object somewhere Who must be worshipped. Is that your idea of God? Why does John put God right at the very first sentence of his letter? Because God is a Great Present reality. God is right here to experience. John had had a great experience of God. And he says, 'The only way to escape from uncertainty is to have a real experience of God.' I think we Christians have lost a good deal of the sense of the greatness and the reality of God. We ask the Lord to be Present with us when we gather together. Who are we asking to be Present? If we realized Who God is, we might behave very differently when we are together.

Let me try to help you to understand this by telling you a story. There was a great American preacher. He was really a great servant and saint of the Lord. He was the minister of a very large church in the city of Boston. It was a wonderful building, very beautifully decorated, it had a wonderful organ, and a wonderful choir, and a very large congregation, and he was the minister of that church. And he wrote this story -

He said: One Saturday, as I was sitting at my desk, preparing my sermon for the Lord's Day, I got tired and I fell asleep, and I had a dream. I dreamed that I was in my pulpit in my church. The choir was in its place. The congregation filled all the seats. And I was preaching. As I began to preach, the door at the back of the church opened, and a stranger came in. He looked everywhere to find a seat. And then the

man at the door just led him to one empty seat. Something drew my attention to that stranger. He had in his face the marks of a great sorrow. It seemed that he had been through some great suffering, and yet, there was something very beautiful about his face.

And I found that all the time I was preaching, my eyes continually went in the direction of that stranger. There was something about him that I could not take my eyes away from. And I decided that when the service was over, I would find out who that stranger was. I would get down to the door and I would shake his hand. Well, I preached my sermon, the choir sang, the congregation sang the closing hymn, and then I pronounced the blessing, and the people began to go out, and I hurried down to get to the door to speak to that stranger, but before I could get there, he was gone. I said to the man at the door, 'Do you know who that stranger was?' The man at the door said, 'Oh, yes, don't you know who that was? That was Jesus of Nazareth.' I said, 'Oh, why did you let Him go, I would like to have spoken to Him.' The man at the door said, 'Oh, don't worry. He has been here once, He will come again.'

And the preacher said, I went home, I sat down in my room, and I said to myself, 'Jesus of Nazareth has been in my church today. What did He think of our wonderful building? What did He think of the congregation? What did He think about the way our ladies were dressed? What did He think about the way in which they sang those wonderful hymns about Himself? What did He think about our choir and our organ? What did He think about our worship when we used His name so often? But most of all, what did He think about my preaching? I was preaching about Him. What did He think about what I was saying of Him? And then he said, I woke up. It was a dream. But he said, "It made all the difference to my ministry for the rest of my life."

Now it is true, that every time we gather together in His name, He is there. He has promised to be there. But oh, that my people would always realize Who is Present. How differently they would behave! How punctual they would be in coming to the service. They would say, Jesus is going to be there this morning, we must not be late. And every time we use His name, we should know that He is hearing us! What was it the man at the door said? He has been here once. He will come again.

Dr. A. J. Gordon, who was the man of whom I am speaking, wrote two books. One was about the Lord Jesus coming into this world and being here, the other one was about His coming again. Those two books were born of his dream. Well, you may say that was only a dream; but is there not some truth in it? Why do we ask the Lord to be with us when we gather together, if we do not believe that He is truly Present, although unseen, as ever He was when He was on this earth. Can it be true that Jesus of Nazareth - crucified, risen, glorified - is here in this place tonight? Is that possible? That ought to make a very big difference to us in every way.

It all comes to this, that our Christianity has got to be something very real. It is not to be just something that is a theory, a doctrine, something we have got from someone else. It has got to be something real to us personally. And I have made a mistake. I have used the wrong word. I have said, "It" has got to be real. I ought to have said, "HE" OUGHT TO BE REAL. To Dr. Gordon, the Presence of Jesus that morning was not the Presence of an "It," it was a "HE."

So John brings everything to that test, the test of experience, the test of that which we have seen, that which we have heard, and that which our hands have handled. There is a way, dear friends, in which that can be as true as it was with John. It is possible. It ought to be actual. That you and I can say, I have seen the Lord Jesus. Not with these natural eyes, but nevertheless, truly I have seen the Lord. The Lord has

revealed Himself to me. I have heard Him speaking. He has become as real to me as anything that I can handle. Everything is tested by experience.

Well, there were all these theories abroad, all these different teachings, all these interpretations, but John says, "Bring them all back to this test." The proof of everything is: Is Christ a personal experience in your life. That is what John meant by light. Really walking in the Light of a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Then if you look at this letter again, you will see that John passes very quickly from light to truth. Truth is one of the major things in this letter. Five times He speaks of that which is true, he says, "This which is true in Him and in you. This is the true God." Five times he uses the word "TRUE." But then, eight times he uses the word "TRUTH." I think in my arithmetic, eight and five make thirteen. Thirteen times in a short letter, the apostle speaks about that which is true. Then he put something over against that. Eight times he uses the word "LIE" and "LIAR." So he sets that which is true over against that which is a lie. I leave you to look at the various references. You will find a great deal of instruction if you just follow the word "Truth" through. Truth is set over against everything that is untrue.

What is truth? Truth is that which is real. Truth is reality. Truth is honesty. Truth is openness and clearness. What is the opposite of truth? It is that which is false. That which is unreal, that which is an imitation, that which is pretending, that which is hypocrisy, that which is deception, that which is not single but double. That is the opposite to truth.

Now he comes back and says, "God is true, this is the true God." Christ is true and not false. There is no deception about Him. There is no unreality about Christ. There is no hypocrisy about Christ. There is no lie in Christ. Satan is the liar. He is the untrue one. He tore this creation into pieces by a lie. He told Adam a lie, and Adam believed that lie. And the whole creation was ruined. Everything was destroyed by an untruth. Everything went to pieces because of untruth.

Now John is saying, in order to destroy the works of the devil, we must have our feet firmly based on truth. What is true in the Lord Jesus has got to be true in us. Dear friends, you and I have got to be absolutely true. There must be no falsehood about us, no pretending to be something that we are not, no trying to make other people believe something about us that is not true. There must be nothing of Satan's lie about us. In every way, we must be true. There must be nothing unreal about us. And again John says, "This is the proof that Christ is in us." If we are a lie, then we are a contradiction to Christ. If ours is only a profession and not a reality, that is a contradiction to Christ. Christ is the truth. And if He dwells in us, He will make us true. And we shall hate everything that is false and a lie.

Now you must be very patient with me and forgive me for being so strong on this matter, because we are dealing with something that is very vital. I have just said that it was by a lie that this whole creation was torn to pieces. Everything was ruined because of untruth. Even God Almighty will not hold anything together if there is a lie in it. If there is any falsehood anywhere in us, or in our company, sooner or later we are going to pieces.

Have you seen a big building that has become out of the straight? It has sunk down a bit. And there are cracks in the building and cracks in the wall. What are you going to do about it? If that is your property, you will do something about it. Perhaps you will fill up the cracks in the walls and in the ceiling. And then you will paint it over, and you think it is all right. That is hypocrisy. What is the cause of the cracks? There is something false in the foundation. And in the course of time, the lie that is in the foundation is manifested

in the building.

In the country where I have spent much of my life, the country of Scotland, we have a great many big trees. And we have some big storms in that country. And after one of these storms, you can go along the road and see many of these great trees lying on the ground with their roots in the air. How do you explain that? Do you begin to blame the tree? You say, that is a silly tree to have tumbled down like that. No, what you really say is, there was something wrong with the roots. The roots had not gone deep enough, the roots had not got a tight enough hold. And when the wind blows, the weakness in the roots became manifested.

You see, it is the foundation or the roots that are the truth. If there is anything false there, someday it will be manifested. The building will not be able to stand. The tree will not be able to endure the storm. And that is only what John is saying in another way. You Christians are just being knocked all over the place. There are these winds of doctrine, there are these storms of opposition, there are all these difficulties arising, and many of you are just going to pieces. The reason is that there is somewhere in the foundation an untruth; somewhere behind your life there is something false. And if that is true, even God will not keep it going. When the lie came in through Adam, God did not stop the break up of the creation. God wanted to show mankind for all time that a lie is a disastrous thing. Anything false can ruin everything. The world just declares that truth. That where there is not the truth, things cannot stand.

But there is the other side to this, they that are in the truth in Christ will endure forever. Their life will not be broken. Their work will not be destroyed. The values of their testimony will last for all eternity. How important, then, it is that at every point in every detail, we should be true. There should be nothing false about it. We shall only hold together in the truth.

Now I just want to finish in these last few minutes by pointing you to something that John brings up in this connection. Indeed, he brings up two things. One of them I will mention now, and perhaps the other one we will deal with tomorrow night, if the Lord wills. In chapter two of this letter, verse twenty, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And verse twenty-seven, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." Now you see there, the connection between the anointing and the truth. The anointing is far too big a matter for us to begin to consider tonight, but I can say this in a very few words. How shall we know what is true? How shall we know that we are in the truth and the truth is in us? How shall we know what is true and what is a lie?

John says the answer to that is, "The Anointing which is in you." In other words, the Holy Spirit in you will make you know. He will make you know what is true and what is false. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, Jesus called Him that. If He is in us, then He is in us as the Spirit of truth. The Bible says: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." It is by the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we know we are children of God. The true children of God know by the witness of the Holy Spirit in them that they are children of God. If the Holy Spirit is in us, and if we are not grieving the Spirit, if we are not putting something in the way of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will bear witness with our spirit as to what is true and what is not true. This is the Word of God. Oh, then, how important it is that we know the meaning of the anointing within.

Do you know that word "ANOINTING" is only an enlargement of the word "CHRIST?" The name "Christ" means: "The Anointed One." The anointing means the extension of Christ. The same Holy Spirit as was in Jesus Christ is in all His born again children. Paul says, we are anointed in Him. That means that the "Anointed One" is in us, and we share His anointing. Now in Him is no lie. He is the truth. If He is in us, He will bear witness to the truth. We ought to be so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that when we say something that is not true, we know we have said something not true. When we meet something that is false, we know inwardly that is not true. What a different situation there would be amongst Christians, if it was always this way. Well, John says, 'The anointing in you teacheth you all things, and He is true and no lie.'

So then, to be established in Christ, we must know what it means really to have the Holy Spirit in us. That brings us back to where we began. The test of everything is experience. It is not the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is not books on the Holy Spirit. It is the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Oh, what a lot I would like to say about that to you. But how very careful our leaders ought to be to make sure that every young Christian knows that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within, that every child of God really knows what it means to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within. That is a solemn responsibility resting upon all teachers of the Lord's people. But even if our teachers fail, that does not excuse us. John is not talking about the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he is talking about the experience of the Holy Spirit. He says, 'The anointing which is in you teacheth you all things, and He is true and no lie.' I can only trust that He, the Holy Spirit, will make us understand what has been said tonight.

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