

- 1 - Published as a PDF by Austin-Sparks.net Email: info@austin-sparks.net In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge (except necessary distribution costs) and with this statement included. The Centrality and Supremacy of Christ by T. Austin-Sparks Extract from a message given in 1933 in "The Centrality and Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ" - Chapter 1. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him" (Gal.1:15,16)

Since Paul's day so very much of Christian activity has been the furthering of a movement, the propagating of a teaching, the furthering of the interests of an institution. It is not a movement, nor to establish a movement in the earth and to get followers, adherents, members, support. It is not an institution, even though we might call that institution the Church. The Church has no existence in the thought of God apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ, and it is judged according to the measure in which Christ the Son of God's love is in evidence by its existence. It is not a testimony, if by that you mean a specific form of teaching, a systematized doctrine. No, it is not a testimony. Let us be careful what we mean when we speak about "the testimony". We may have in our minds some arrangement of truth, and that truth couched in certain phraseology, form of words, and thus speak about "the testimony"; it is not the testimony in that sense. It is not a denomination, and it is not an "un-denomination," and it is not an "interdenomination".

It is not Christianity. It is not "the work" - oh, we are always talking about "the work": "How is the work getting on?" - we are giving ourselves to the work, we are interested in the work, we are out in the work. It is not a mission. It is Christ. "... that I might preach Him." If that had remained central and pre-eminent all these horrible disintegrating jealousies would never have had a chance. All the wretched mess that exists in the organization of Christianity today would never have come about. It is because something specific in itself, either a movement, a mission, a teaching, a testimony, a fellowship, has taken the place of Christ. People have gone out to further that, to project that, to establish that.

- 2 - It would not be confessed, nevertheless it is true, that today it is not so much Christ as our work. It is true! Now beloved, an inward revelation is the cure of all that, and all that - am I saying too hard a thing, too sweeping a thing? - the existence of all that represents the absence of an adequate inward revelation of Christ. If Christ the Son of God's love is central and supreme in the heart of the believer so much else goes down, it must go down. Dividing things will go, insofar as they are things which are not controversies with the Lord. Controversies with God will divide, but those artificial things, those things resultant from man's activity and his projecting of himself,

insinuating of himself into the interests of God, those things cannot abide where there is an adequate inward revelation of the Lord Jesus; they cannot be. These two things are before us: one, because of the revelation of Jesus Christ in our heart we have a passion for Him; on the other hand, because of the absence of a sufficient revelation of Christ in our hearts we are out for other things which we would say were in His interests, and for Him, but which can never, never satisfy God's heart. It is the satisfaction of the heart of the Father which is in view.

From eternity God had a secret in His heart - a heart secret. I say a "heart secret" because this term, this designation, "the Son of his love" is linked with the mystery, the secret. It was not what God was doing to make His Son an official, in an official sense. It was not some activity (pardon me if it seems irreverent) of a great managing director of the universe seeking to promote someone in whom he had an interest. No, it was the Son of His love; His heart was in this thing, and there was a secret in His heart concerning His Son. He is beloved of the Father. Study the references to the Lord Jesus from the Divine side, the unveiling of God's heart as to Christ, and you will have a new appreciation of what we are saying.

The Lord Jesus, speaking that parable of the wicked husbandmen, at last arrived at the sending of the son, and do you remember how He put it? "But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." Why should they reverence His Son? Because He was the Son of the Father. Because of whose Son He was; because of the relationship. They had evil entreated all servants, but now surely they will change their attitude when the Son comes; surely they will reverence, respect, honour Him. And it was because they said: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance"; because of their utter denial, rejection of the rights of God as represented by His Son, that so great a judgment was pronounced upon them.

Well, it is the Son of God's love, and what is bound up with this whole thing is the satisfaction of the heart of God in relation to that eternal heart secret of His. That lies beneath what we are and all that we do. We are believers on the ground of "Christ in you." Yes, but Christ in you represents the realization of God's heart purposes, that is the way in which He is going to realize it, that is His manner of coming to the end that was in His heart in eternity past: "Christ in you." We can say that God can never realize that heart desire of His concerning His Son, save as there are believers who receive Christ into their hearts.

Therefore, it is not converting people to Christianity, or getting them to be followers of a movement; it is receiving Christ, God's satisfaction. Then when we have received Christ, everything with which we have to do in relation to Him, anything in which we have a voice or an influence, any part that we can take in the Lord's interests, must be wholly, utterly and always for the expression of Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the

bringing into view of Christ. No assembly, no church, no movement, no testimony, no fellowship, is justified in its existence from God's standpoint except insofar as Christ is expressed by it.

Beloved, we are speaking about the individual. I am not justified, and you are not justified, in claiming to be Christians except in the measure in which Christ is manifested in me, in you; and all the force and weight and ingenuity of hell is out against that. Believers have far more to provoke them to un-Christ-likeness than anyone else in this world. Believers have far more assaults to churn them up and to make them betray Christ than anyone else. Hell is dead set against the revelation of Jesus Christ. Everything begins with this, the revelation of Christ within.

- 3 - Now we must have this very much in our hearts in its double out-working, in life and service. "What am I here for?" "Why do I bear the Name of Christ?" "What is the meaning of my being related to the Lord?" "What is the point in my salvation?" The answer is: Not my satisfaction, not my gratification, not my salvation as the end in itself, but the revelation of Jesus Christ, the realization of His centrality and supremacy according to the Father's desire. And then in the second place the question is: "What am I going to work for?" "Am I going to work to try to establish some society, some denomination, or some 'undenomination,' to win a place for a teaching, or an interpretation, or a system of truth?" "Is it to some thing that I am devoted, or is it to secure for the Lord Jesus His absolute centrality and supremacy?" Whatever we may say, we shall never get past that, we begin and end there.

Christ is the beginning and Christ is the end, the A to Z, the Alpha and Omega. We must have dealings with the Lord very earnestly about a new inward apprehension and appreciation of the Lord Jesus. It is the only way of deliverance from all the unworthy things in ourselves, and in things with which we may be linked. It is: "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and the only hope of glory, and if it is not that it will certainly mean shame and not glory. The Lord just write this first fragment deeply in our hearts for His Name's sake.