

God's Rights in His House

by T. Austin-Sparks

Recognizing God's rights in His house leads to wonderful experiences and the power of resurrection is manifest when we give God His rights.

Scripture: Genesis 3:1

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "The Church as God's House"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the challenge to God's rights in His house, tracing the origins of this conflict back to the Garden of Eden where the serpent questioned God's command. He illustrates how throughout history, from the prophets to the New Testament, God's rights have been disregarded, culminating in the rejection of His Son. Sparks highlights that true recognition of God's rights is essential for the church, which is not merely a gathering of believers but a spiritual entity where God is acknowledged as sovereign. He calls for a return to the understanding that God's house is where His authority is respected and His presence is manifested, urging believers to prioritize God's rights above their own. Ultimately, he reassures that despite challenges, the power of the Holy Spirit enables believers to uphold God's rights and experience His resurrection life.

Transcript

God's rights concerning His house have always been challenged. God had created this earth as a place where His rights would be recognized. That is why He gave man certain commandments. He gave them to man to bring him to the place where he would respect God's rights. Through the recognition of God's rights, obedience to God, man was to grow into all that which had been ordained for him from God.

However, it happened differently. The adversary appeared and the battle for God's rights started. This happened in the form of a simple question: "Hath God said?"

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, 'Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'" And the serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'" (Gen. 3:1-5).

There we have the questioning of God's rights. The will of man is to stand in the place of the will of God. What is religious modernism other than that? The authority of the Word of God is opposed. Human thoughts judge that which is of God.

One king of Israel dared to say: "Who is the Lord?" This is what things are like for God after the fall. This is what He has to take into account, but that which He is also strong enough to overcome.

In the New Testament we see the same fight over the rights of God in His house. The Lord says: "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer: but you have made it a den of robbers'" (Matt. 21:13). And in saying this, He explains the parable of the vineyard owner.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.' And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him" (Matt. 21:33-39).

God has planted a vineyard and has put a fence around it. This vineyard is His property. Nobody therefore has any rights in this vineyard except Him. Then He hired it out to husbandmen and sent His servants after a while, to fetch the fruit, His 'rights'. The husbandmen, however, beat them and killed them and murdered His Son in the end. This is robbing God. This is misuse of His rights to the extreme. The Pharisees recognized that this parable was meant for them. They gnashed their teeth. They did not consider repenting. Only a short while later, and the Lord has to say about Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:37,38). What was once God's house, is His house no longer. God has left it. His house is somewhere else. It is in the hearts of those that have opened themselves to Him. "WE are His house." And Christ is the Son over God's house (Heb. 3:6).

The connection, which the Lord Jesus Christ makes between Himself and the ministry of the prophets, shows us:

Firstly, that the prophets and the Son of God stand in a very specific relationship to each other as far as the will of God is concerned. They were sent in view of the rights of God; they were killed because of the rights of God.

Secondly: The church as the house of God is there where the rights of God are recognized and given to Him.

But is there something more disputed than His church? Where is she? Is she there, where people that call themselves Christians come together? Yes and no. Fellowship is one of the characteristics of His church. But not fellowship outwardly, but oneness in spirit. Spiritual fellowship cannot be made. It is foolish to think that one could join the church, because one agrees with the message or structure of an assembly. The church is more than the union of religious people. The church consists of those to whom the Lord has brought new life, in whose hearts He has become Lord, of those who have learned to worship Him in Spirit

and in truth. The church is not our house. It is His house. He, however, is the Lord of heaven, Who has judged this world and has done away with it for ever. How could we serve Him with that which He has rejected? How could we dare to bring Him that which has been judged through the Cross? How long will it take until the eyes of the children of God are opened to the fact that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ must be heavenly through and through, that the church has nothing at all in common with this world?

If we did not take into account the power of the Holy Spirit, we would despair. The natural man cannot understand that his role is finished, that the new birth is an absolutely new life, in which all our natural opinions will have ceased. The soulish and the spiritual are so mixed up even in advanced believers, that only the Holy Spirit is able to divide them. But a division must come. In God's house there is no room for anything of man. Any so-called goodness of man, his religious disposition and his seemingly unselfish efforts are all a big deception. If God's rights are to be of account, then all our rights, however skillfully covered, have to come to an end.

This takes us to Moses. He stands before us as a prophet. How zealous he was for the rights of God! God showed him His house on the mountain. But at the foot of the mountain he erected an altar and sacrificed. By doing so he respected the rights of God. His altar is nothing else but the explanation that the way to God's mountain (and therefore to God's house) is via the Cross of Calvary. Lightning and thunder surrounded the mountain. It was so terrible, that even Moses trembled. Why? Because no one can come close to God and serve Him except he whom God has called. God takes care that the mountain is fenced off, that nothing may come close to Him, that access to Him is only through the power of the Blood.

We say all of this in view of the rights of God. There is a burden on our hearts to make clear that God's house is only really God's house if it is filled by Him alone. We see this in the tabernacle. Because of the veil it is separated from everything outside. Inside, however, everything speaks through the large altar of the rights of God, the right God has over all life, of His sole and exclusive right.

When, after Solomon, the worship of God began to waiver, when other gods were worshipped, prophetic service amongst the people increased. Why? We have said before that the prophets stood for God's rights in a special way. When therefore a prophet raised his voice in the old covenant, we know that something was not in order, that God was working to win back that which was lost, to save the spiritual from being covered up by formalism and tradition. This stepping in for God marks Elijah in a special way. When he says: "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand," it means: The Lord and I are one; the Lord stands on my side because I stand on His side; your attitude towards me reflects your attitude towards the Lord. And all this happens in view of winning back the rights of God. Now Elijah was not an important personality. We judge him wrongly if we ascribe him a personality which he did not have. The Lord shows him to us when he was discouraged, sitting under the juniper tree:

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers'" (1 Kings 19:4).

And James confirms this, by saying: "Elijah was a man of like nature with us" (James 5:17). But the Lord has chosen him. His calling has to do with the rights of God. Because he stood on God's side, God stands with him. The Lord defends His honor in His prophet. He seeks to safeguard His rights in those that are His messengers. For example, consider Elijah and the widow of Zarephath.

"And the word of the Lord came unto him (Elijah), saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." And she said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said unto her, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Now when Elijah comes to the widow, she has just enough flour and oil for one cake, but Elijah tells her: "First make me something to eat." This looks like selfishness. But the Lord and he are one. Is the widow ready to recognize this? Is she willing to honour the Lord in His prophet? Should God have His right at the peril of herself possessing nothing any more? The woman obeys. What a victory! It is the recognition of the rights of God that leads to the jar of flour not becoming empty and the cruse of oil not drying up. The recognition of the rights of God has opened the door to wonderful experiences. Not that her faith did not have to go through depths. That happened when her son died. Then she could see life out of death, the power of resurrection, something which not everyone has the privilege to see. She had recognized God's rights and had given Him the first place. Then the Lord manifests the power of resurrection.

"And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" And he said unto her, "Give me thy son." And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, "O Lord my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, "O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again." And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, 'See, thy son liveth'" (1 Kings 17:17-23).

Let us see this in the light of the house of God. The house of God is the place where He is everything, where the Lord has been recognized in the power of His resurrection, where we come together as living stones, in whom heavenly life has become a reality.

Let us not think that we will be spared difficulties. How Moses suffered! How Elijah was persecuted! The presence of the Lord does not mean that we will be spared suffering. On the contrary. We will be slandered, denied and persecuted. We will be abandoned and hated. We will not be spared this. This does not mean that the presence of God is not with us. We find it in the life of the Lord in us. We find it in the ability to be calm. We find it in the peace and joy in the midst of all storms and tribulations. That is enough. That is worth more than all recognition and outward confirmation. But when the Lord comes, we will appear with Him, and because we have sought His rights and have given Him His rights, we will exult and

rejoice in the universal reign of our Lord, Who will be "The Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

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