

God's Ways Are Different From Our Ways

by T. Austin-Sparks

God's ways are different from our ways, and we must learn to wait on the Lord and follow His ways in order to fulfill His purpose.

Scripture: Psalm 25:14, Psalm 103:7, Isaiah 52:12, Isaiah 55:8-9, Acts 16:7

Topics: "God's Timing", "Understanding God's Ways"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the importance of understanding that God's ways are different from our own, sharing his personal experiences of waiting on the Lord's timing. He reflects on the Apostle Paul's journey, illustrating that even good intentions must align with God's timing and methods. Sparks encourages the audience to seek not just knowledge of God's purpose but also the ways in which He fulfills that purpose, highlighting that this understanding is a lifelong journey. He stresses the significance of being in tune with God's leading rather than relying solely on human reasoning or urgency. Ultimately, he invites the listeners to desire a deeper relationship with God, where they can learn His ways.

Transcript

Well, I can only repeat the words of my wife by saying, how glad I am to be with you again! The very precious times that we had together on my last two visits have remained fresh as a very joyous remembrance. But I want to thank you, dear friends, for the very warm welcome that you have given us. Manila always gives us a very warm welcome. And I tell you that only two days ago, we left the freezing cold in London; and we got on the airplane with all our winter clothes on. When we arrived in Manila, we arrived with a very warm welcome, in more ways than one. I do not think the heat of the weather here is greater than the warmth of your welcome, when we looked out of the plane at the airport yesterday and saw that crowd of happy faces, and heard those happy voices, and felt those happy hands. You would need to be in our place to understand what I mean when I thank you for the warm welcome. And that is the first thing that I want to say to you. I hope that when we go away, you will not have grown cold towards us.

Now let me say a little word about how it is that we have come and why it is that we have come. I have received quite a number of pressing invitations to come to Manila for nearly two years past. During that time, the invitations have become stronger and stronger. Perhaps you wonder why I have waited for nearly two years. The explanation is a very important one, and it is going to be one of those very vital matters in our time together. We have not delayed so long because we did not want to see you, nor was it because we did not want to come and try and help you. But you know, dear friends, we are the prisoners of Jesus

Christ. We cannot go where we would like to go. And we cannot move when we would like to move. When we made Jesus "Lord," we made Him "Lord" of all our movements and all our time. Remember that the Apostle Paul on two occasions did try to go in certain directions. He thought it would be a good thing to go into Bithynia. There was great need in Bithynia, and no doubt the people there were pressing him to come to them, but he said, The Spirit of Jesus would not allow us to go (Acts 16:7). He felt the same about Asia. He began to move in the direction of Asia; and Asia was a very needy part of the world. The churches in Asia were going to be the seven churches to which we have the Letters in the Book of the Revelation. But at that time, he was forbidden to preach the word in Asia. You see, it is not need that governs. It is not when we feel we ought to do something that that is the time to do it. It is not when we think it would be a good thing to do this.

The Lord's time is a very important thing. If you get out of the Lord's time, you may spoil the whole thing. The Lord knows all about the need. The Lord knows all about the people's invitations. But the Lord says, "Not now. I have My time for that." He did not tell Paul why he could not go into Bithynia and Asia. He just told him not to go then. He simply said, "No, not now." And Paul, being the prisoner of Jesus Christ, knew that he could not move until the Lord moves. I hope you recognize that that is a very important principle in all the things of the Lord. It may be quite a good thing, it may be quite a right thing, and it may be a thing that the Lord is going to do, but it must be in the Lord's time. Now, if I had come a year ago or two years ago, something very important might have been lost for two years. And I would have gone away, saying, "No, we have not got there yet." Evidently the time has not come. But that is not the end of our story.

We are here. At last, we are here. And that is not because of the pressing invitation, that is because as we continually waited on the Lord, we had the sense that the Lord was saying, "Now is the time." You know, a very great many things are necessary when it is a matter of going from one side of the world to the other, especially when you get to be so very, very old. We are not young any longer. We used to travel about the world quite a lot. It did not mean so much in our younger days. But it is not so easy nowadays. We are getting old. However, that only makes it more important to go with the Lord. And as soon as we felt that the Lord's time had come, we began to get those various tokens from the Lord which confirmed that. I will not trouble you with all the details, but I think this evening I have learned for the first time what the Lord said to my wife. If she told me about that word from the Lord, I do not remember her telling me. But I went to the Lord and asked Him for a word for me. I said, now Lord, it is very important that you give me a word to go on. One morning I was reading my Bible, I was reading a chapter that I know very well, I was reading chapter fifty-two of the prophecies of Isaiah. I did not know that I was going to get the Lord's answer to my prayer in that chapter. But as I read on, I came to this verse, and it was as though the Lord said, 'That is My word for you over Manila.' And the words are these: "The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your reward" (Isa. 52:12).

So, the Lord said that as we went, we should find that He was always ahead of us. We should find that He had gone before. And then there were a lot of things to leave behind. Quite a lot of responsibilities, and we had to have those taken care of. But the Word said, "the God of Israel will be your reward." The Lord will be before you and the Lord will be behind you. Do you think you could want anything better than that? Well, we have come on the strength of that word; and we are expecting to find the Lord before us every day.

Now, what is it that is in my heart as to this time which we shall be here? I do want you to understand this that I am going to say now. I hope that it will not disappoint you. I do not feel that the Lord has brought me here to give you a lot more teaching as teaching. I mean, I do not feel that I have come to give you

something that I have studied from the Word of God, to give you a number of addresses on some subjects. It is not something that I have got from someone else, neither from books nor men. I feel that the Lord wants me to speak out of experience. Experience is a very valuable thing. There are plenty of people who can give us wonderful Bible addresses. But experience is far more important than that. And, as you understand, we have had a long experience with the Lord.

Personally I have been in the Lord's work for a good bit over fifty years. There has been FIFTY years of very wide and very deep spiritual experience in the school of the Lord. He has sought to teach me things in my own life. And the main thing that He is teaching me are the principles upon which He works. I shall have much to say to you about that. But I do want to put the emphasis here. It is not theory that I am going to give you. It is not something studied up for meetings. It is that which comes out of practical experience under the hand of the Lord. Therefore, it is going to be very practical.

I am sure you have got plenty of theory. You have a great deal of teaching. Perhaps I could not teach you much more than you know. But perhaps these gray hairs speak for themselves. They speak of deep experience in the school of God. What I have to say to you, is what God has done in me. You are not going to have an easy time, dear friends. You are going to be faced up with very practical issues. Now if you do not mean business with the Lord, do not come to these meetings. I shall take it that all who come, really do mean business with God.

You have been taught a great deal about God's purpose. I expect if you were asked, every one of you could put down on a piece of paper what you know to be the purpose of God. But there is one thing more important than the purpose of God. It is how God realizes His purpose. It is almost more important to know how God fulfills His purpose than it is to know what His purpose is. God has a way, not only an end; and it is very important to know the ways of God as well as the end of God. If there is one thing that we have learned more than another thing in God's school, it is this. God's ways are very different from our ways. So often we would do a thing in a certain way, and the Lord would say, "That is not My way. Your ways are not My ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. I have My own ways of doing what I want done." You just cannot say, "I know the Lord wants such and such a thing done, and therefore, I am going to do it!" The Lord says, "Wait a minute, I have a way of doing that, and My way is just as important as My object." And I think the Lord wants us to learn something of His ways in these days together - to learn those spiritual laws which govern the purpose of God.

Only one last word, especially to the young people, and to everybody else. This learning of God's ways is a life-long business. I do not know it all. I have not yet learned it all. I have still to learn a great deal of God's way. The Lord is constantly having to say to me, 'No, not that way.' 'No, not at this time.' This is a life-long education. But the Lord is very faithful with us. If we are really in His hands, He will teach us His ways. You know the word to Israel was this: "that to Israel the Lord showed His works, but to Moses and Aaron, He showed His ways." And the ways are very much more important than the works. Moses and Aaron were honored servants of the Lord, and the Lord showed them His ways. To all the people, He could only just show His works. Will you be satisfied with just seeing the works of the Lord? Or would you rather be in the secret of the Lord? The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His ways (Psa. 25:14; 103:7). The other people will only see His works.

May I ask that in these days, you will set your hearts upon knowing the ways of the Lord. For that is really the most important thing. Now, I only intended to give you a word of greeting, to thank you for your welcome, and to tell you that a lot of people in London said, 'Give the friends over there our greetings.'

And as you can see, I have gone a long way beyond that. But I hope that I have not wearied you.

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