

# Holy Spirit, Church and Nations - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the will of God and the role of the Holy Spirit in achieving this understanding, highlighting the significance of the book of Joshua as a spiritual and present-time counterpart of the New Testament.*

**Duration:** 45:39

**Scripture:** Joshua 1:1, Joshua 13:1, Joshua 18:3, Colossians 2:1-3

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Assurance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of standing fully assured in one's faith. He refers to the book of Joshua and connects it to the verses in Colossians 2:1-3. The speaker highlights the need for believers to be comforted and united in love, with a full assurance of understanding the mystery of God, which is Christ. He compares this to the hidden treasures in the land of Canaan that needed to be dug up, emphasizing the effort required in spiritual growth. The sermon also mentions the need for a solid spiritual foundation and the importance of instructing young Christians in order for them to continue growing in their faith.

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## Transcript

We have pointed out that the whole of the New Testament is the spiritual and present-time counterpart of the Book of Joshua, from the setting aside of one nation and its loss of the inheritance through unbelief to bringing into being by resurrection out from that nation a new people, a new nation, by way of the Jordan, that is, by way of the cross, and the absolute government of the Holy Spirit as represented by the man in Joshua 5 with his sword drawn in his hand, the captain of the host of the Lord, and the object of it all to bring the people of God into their full inheritance in Christ. The New Testament has to do with that in a spiritual way. Those are the various aspects of this one inclusive and comprehensive truth that God from eternity has had an elect people in mind to bring into the fullness of his Son, Jesus Christ.

But when we have said that, when we take up the first chapter of this Book of Joshua as we have read it, we can find that condensed into two or three verses in the New Testament. Those verses are in the letter to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 1 to 3. I would have you know, now let us give due emphasis to every part of this speech. I would have you know.

Everybody can see that that is a dominant feature in the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, leaving people in no doubt, no uncertain position. I would have you know how greatly I strive for you and for them

at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be comforted, that they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. Now if you take those three verses back to the beginning of the Book of Joshua, you know what it is all about.

Here the emphasis of the Apostle is upon standing fully assured, having absolute assurance, certainty, and confidence, and that as to what we are really called unto, as to that which the Lord really wants, and as to all that the Lord wants. To stand fully assured about that. You've read that first chapter of Joshua.

You stand back, you have to say, well, there's no doubt about what the Lord means there. You're left entirely without any questions on the matter. You are fully assured from the Lord's side as to his mind.

Unto all the riches of understanding, full assurance of understanding. Understanding is a great factor in assurance. You haven't got understanding, you have not got assurance.

Understanding what the will of the Lord is. Tremendous thing for assurance and confidence to really understand what the will of the Lord is. That is the first, the primary thing that we need to understand.

I do trust that every one of you is set wholly and strongly upon that understanding. There is no mere passive interest with you. See, when you begin this book of Joshua, you find yourself in the atmosphere of a tremendous energy.

There's nothing passive in this whole book. And the whole book is represented in the first chapter. Things are positive, definite, strong, nothing weak here.

It's all emphatic and imperative. That is a necessary state of heart and mind to come into the full inheritance. Make no mistake about it, we do not drift into all God's will.

We come there by a very definite concern to know what the will of the Lord is. Now I'm not speaking about your day-to-day affairs, either privately or in business. I'm not speaking about knowing the will of God about this and that in the makeup of life.

I'm speaking about that whole will of God are being called by his grace into fellowship with his Son. Everything else will fall into line when that settles, will be given its meaning and value by God, and all things will work together for good when we are in line with his purpose. What the will of the Lord is, I would have you know.

Understanding of that. And then, as we have already seen, in relation to that full and whole and entire will of God, there's a great warfare. The atmosphere becomes charged with conflict.

So the book of Joshua shows the book of warfare all along. And we therefore need to be fully assured and have clear understanding of why it is that the enemy contests this thing so bitterly. There's no doubt that he does.

It is perfectly clear, as we have already said, that immediately you go beyond a certain point in the spiritual life, in the Christian life, and seek to move on with God in the greater fullnesses of his purpose. Then you come into a new realm of spiritual opposition and antagonism arising from every quarter and coming along every line and by every means. Why is that so? And it is again important that we should be filled with

understanding on that matter.

Well, you've only got to read that letter to the Colossians throughout and its fellow or twin letter and you'll soon discover why the conflict. It is no less a conflict than that into which the Lord Jesus, under the anointing and government of the same Holy Spirit, immediately was launched in the wilderness, came out full and clear at last. The enemy had been trying to get at him in different ways.

But at last, at last, the whole thing is dragged out. The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof. Oh, it does not.

Now we know what it's all about. That's no small issue. God of this age, the prince of this world, prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world's darkness.

All these titles of the adversary indicate that he has a mighty kingdom and a mighty range of influence that he must preserve at all costs. But he knows that Christ and his church is destined to ooze him from his kingdom, to take it from him and to supplant him in it for the ages of the ages. To have understanding on that is to bring some assurance, some providence, some strength.

We need to realize that no less an issue than that lies behind the conflict. It so often focuses down upon fragmentary things that seem to be mere incidents. But oh, to put us out.

To put us out instead of our putting him out. That's it. Full assurance of understanding.

There is nothing so weakening and destructive as the lack of understanding. Let's ask the Lord to open our understanding. Now, this understanding rests upon several things.

First of all, it rests upon a vital union with the Lord himself. There is this constant repetition, re-emphasis and reiteration. I'm with you.

I'm with you. Indicating the union between the Lord and his people. That is the simple but fundamental beginning of this whole matter of the will of God.

Never know it until a real, a living union is established between you and the Lord himself. Don't understand what the will of the Lord is for your life and in your calling by his grace. Again, it is basic to an understanding of the whole conflict in which we are.

This union and this oneness with the Lord himself. It is only when that union is established that the conflict begins. Now note, while Jesus was the divine son of God, before birth and at birth and during thirty years of his life, there was something that happened after his baptism.

The age of baptism. And that something was that God the Holy Ghost came in a particular way and united himself with the Son of Man. And then the trouble began.

Then the enemy came up. Then the conflict stopped. It was to get in between those two in some way that the enemy was making his assaults.

Now I can't say with the theology of that and the doctrine of that, but there's no doubt about it that all along the enemy's object was to get between Christ and his Father. To drive a wedge in there and separate them. That would be his great triumph.

Capture it all. The whole battle is his. He can do that.

This union, this union was essential to all the purpose of God. And this union was essential as it was basic to the whole triumph in the conflict. Do remember this, that what the enemy is after is to get you away from the Lord.

Put it how you will. Make a breach. Create a gap.

And then to widen it as fully as he can until you find that you are here and the Lord's not here. The Lord's there somewhere else. The Lord's trying to do that a thousand ways.

He's doing that because he knows while you and the Lord are together and continuing together, his hopes fade and vanish. This assurance and this understanding rest upon our union with Christ made and preserved. And of course, as I have indicated, that means our having the Spirit.

Our having the Spirit. A Christianity without the Holy Spirit is something that very, very much gratifies and serves the enemy. An unspiritual Christianity.

A Christianity that is not really the Christianity of the Holy Ghost. The enemy loves that. He loves that.

And he will sponsor that. He will seek to build that up. He has a great deal of success.

Many, many who bear the name of Christians might well be challenged as Paul challenged those at Ephesus at the beginning. When you believe, did you receive the Holy Spirit? You received the Holy Spirit. Having the Spirit is the basis of understanding what the will of God is and of understanding the whole purpose of our salvation and of understanding all the vials of the devil and the fury of the oppressor.

But that is not enough. This full assurance of understanding can only become ours because it is a progressive thing and not all at once as we walk in the Spirit. But the Lord Jesus, because the day of the Spirit had not yet come, meant when he said so much about abiding.

Abiding in you and dying in you. Abide if you abide. That is explained later in the epistles as being the life of walking in the Spirit and by the Spirit.

Our growing understanding and therefore our growing assurance depends upon our abiding in and walking in and by the Spirit. This is all implicit in Joshua, if you look. And then one other thing.

It rests upon the knowing of the power of his resurrection. That could occupy all our time this afternoon and more. But what a large place this whole book of Joshua has as resting upon the power of resurrection.

This people was a resurrection people. They stood in the first place over against the generation that died in the wilderness. They lived while that died.

They went through Jordan, the figure of death, and came out of death triumphant on the other side. They are a resurrection people. And there is more than that in this book.

But what they came into was this, the constant experience of the power of his resurrection. We learn a lot, you know, along that line. We come to a great deal of understanding and a great deal of assurance in that way.

That in this battle with death and in our being allowed time to time, if not taken into being allowed to go into experiences where it seems more death than life. Where death seems to be more powerful than the life of God in us. Where we are really having an experience of death and the sentence of death seems to be passed.

We, like Paul, despair of life. Then we learn something, as Paul did. We learn something about the power of his resurrection.

And by that understanding we are made strong. We are brought to a greater measure of this full assurance of understanding. Something to learn in these death experiences.

So that we were more on the spot, if I may put it like that, where we are in the midst of something in this. We must bring out of this experience of death, which is going to be, may I use another phrase rather bogus, going to be stock in trade or ammunition against the enemy. To learn something, we're coming out of this with the power of his resurrection.

And it's going to count in the matter of the inheritance. And so the enemy would overwhelm us in those deep hours and swamp us and carry us, carry the whole thing too far. Blessed be God.

The Spirit is with us. And there are a thousand resurrections for that very reason. This is the fourfold basis of full assurance of understanding.

And the apostle calls that the riches. The riches. We are wringing them out of the land.

We're digging them out of these mines and these hills of the heavenly country. That's a great phrase, isn't it? In whom are all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge hidden. Remember the word, the word to the people was out of whose hills thou shalt dig iron and brass.

There were hidden resources. But they got to be dug out. And it's real paid work to get hold of the values of a deep and dark place in spiritual experience.

Now that sounds all very good and right and inspiring. But you notice if you look at chapter three of Joshua, something that is very often overlooked took place. Joshua rose up early in the morning.

They removed to sit him, came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel. And they lodged there before they passed over. Came to pass after three days.

But the officers went through the midst of the camp. They commanded the people saying, go on. They lodged before the Jordan three days.

Before going through it or as it is here over it. They lodged three days. This is not something to be rushed into.

This is not something to be just the result of an impulse. Oh, it's a great idea, this fullness of Christ, this inheritance, these treasures, wisdom and knowledge. Wonderful.

Wonderful. Most entrancing. But stay.

Stay. You're in for a big, big and long fight. Not going to come into this inheritance without real cost and real complex.

Stay. No, dear friends, many a Christian life would have been saved from wreckage if there had been a little deeper and fuller consideration of what it all meant at the beginning. What is it we're called to? We're called to a religious picnic? A life of spiritual joviality? What are we called to? Lord Jesus left no one, no one in the dark about the cost of discipleship.

But how different is the appeal today? You would think that it's just all going to be one unbroken joy ride. Just going to conform to the idea of the man who was very fond of sheathing. He said, my idea of heaven is one eternal swish downward and no walking back.

You would think that that's the Christian life from what a lot of things that you hear. The result is many don't go very far. They either stop too soon or they just lose out altogether.

So before taking the plan, may I put it that way, before committing themselves, before going into that Jordan, the three days pause. Wait up. You mean this.

Be faithful with one another. While we so strongly emphasize the will of God in all this. While we make the appeal to go on, to go on.

While we speak of the riches and the glories of the inheritance. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We must be faithful.

And we may say, take time to face the hurting. Lay a sound foundation to be able to say afterwards when the difficulty comes and the enemy comes in like a flood, yes, but I waited up. I waited up.

I faced what it would involve. I calculated I'm not where I am on a flimsy impulse. Mine is a soundly considerate position.

I know why I am where I am. Very important, dear friends, for the whole campaign to pause for three days before you make your advance. Now, of course, that need not be taken literally, but really it does represent a state of the heart, a facing of things with God, a reckoning in His presence.

There was another aspect of this, as you noticed. During the three days they prepared the vittles. They prepared the vittles.

Prepare ye vittles, said the ministers of Joshua to the people. It's only perhaps another aspect of the same thing. You've got to have something to move on.

You've got to have some support for this. You really have got to have resources for this movement. Presently, presently, when the manna ceases, the old corn of the land is fed upon, the situation may change.

But there's a crisis. Here's a crisis. Here's a turning point.

And to carry you through this crisis, you must have some real spiritual foundation, some substance. Here, of course, is that point at which there is that whole necessity of soundly instructing young Christians or young converts or those who are wanting to go on further with the Lord, that they should be instructed, provided with the word of the Lord on this matter. What a sorry and sad situation exists for those who are wanting to go on further with the Lord, that they should be instructed, provided with the word of the Lord on this matter.

What a sorry and sad situation exists of spiritual immaturity, weakness, and defeat, because just there at the crisis there was not an adequate basis of the word. But, oh, let us lay a foundation, truly and surely, for this whole matter, and see that we've got vittles, we've got resource, we've got substance to go on, something for our strengthening. Now, let us pass on this book for a minute.

We'll ride over to chapter 13, verse 1. Now, Joshua was old and well stricken in years. The Lord said unto him, Thou art old and well stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. Chapter 18, verse 3. Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go in to possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, hath given you? Now, 13.1 looks like a contradiction of what I was saying earlier about the young man, Joshua.

If you think like that, well, think a second time. Good deal of comfort for the old men here, not discouragement. The main part of Joshua's work began at that point.

Up to that point, it is true he had led them in battle. He had led them against the many enemies, and he had subdued the country. He had not yet brought them in to their full inheritance.

From this point, you notice, it's all settling in the inheritance. Settling in the inheritance. And Joshua does a great deal after this, a very great deal indeed, of consolidating it.

That's the point. Consolidating everything. Well, the message is twofold.

Firstly, that we must not stop until all that God intended has been done, entered into. The tragedy, of course, of these people, as I have said before, was that they stopped too soon. They stopped too soon.

And then you have the book of Judges for that very reason. The most tragic book in the Bible. The letter to the Hebrews is one strong argument against stopping too soon.

Having laid the foundation, let us not go over it again, but let us go on, let us go on. Let us fear that the promise being left us of entering into his rest. Any one of us should be deemed to have come short.

That's the great burden of that letter, isn't it? The object of it to go right on. There are two sides to that. There is, of course, the imperative.

You have the tenses, haven't you? The tenses in chapter 1. The imperative tense. We must. We must.

Because the Lord wills it, calls us to it. There is the perfect. I have given you.

I have. It's yours. There's the active.

Go in and push it. It must be. But that must may sound hard, may seem to put an onus and a burden, a strain on the Christian life.

But remember, when God says it must, he means it can. God's commandments are God's enabling. As he said, thou shalt.

He means thou canst. And because it must be and it can be, then it should be. It should be.

Those are the two sides. The imperative and God's provision for all that he wills. What he requires, he makes possible.

And he provides for us. Indeed, he commits himself. It is a wonderful thing, dear friends, that difficult, hard, painful, and costly, as may be this way, of the fullest purpose of God, all the conflict which is bound up and associated with it.

It's just marvelous that you do survive and more than survive. If there's any realm in which the miracle of his sovereign grace and sovereign power is manifested, it's in this realm of the fuller purposes of God. A life in such a realm is a life of the wonderful works of God.

And perhaps that is why he allows it to be such a contested and difficult way that he might show his wonderful works. That's how we must read the word of God. That is how we must read Abraham and Paul and others.

That is, men whose lives throughout were subjected to the most terrible testing, trials, sufferings, and adversities, sorrows, and disappointments in one realm. And yet, who at last triumphed so wonderfully. And we have on record their marvelous triumph.

You cannot read that 11th chapter of the letters of the Hebrews without marveling. I do. I marvel every time because I say to myself, I couldn't do it.

And we all know that we couldn't do it. Listen. These all died in faith, not having received.

What are you going to do about that? Promise, promise, promise, and died without receiving. Died without receiving. One after another died without receiving the promise.

And yet it says they died in faith. They did not die saying, God promised and he hasn't fulfilled. God is not faithful to his promise.

I give it all up. I can't believe God any longer. These all died in faith, not having received.

In faith, not having received. I say, I couldn't do this. But God can.

The grace of God can. And it's a long list, isn't it? A long list. And so, what God calls to, he enables for.

It can be. Because from God's standpoint, it must be. Now I think I'm going to leave it there for the present.

It's so easy to overload the vessel, although you're drawing it up. But I would sooner you were able to grasp and cope and comprehend and reduce this to some very practical issues than to go away just overwhelmed with a mass of details. You can see clearly, I trust, a clearly defined line of God's will, God's purpose for us in having called us into fellowship with his Son.

You can see what it involves us in. But you can see that God has committed himself to that. I'm with you.

Whithersoever thou doest, when you're on this line, shall we sing a hymn?

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