

Intelligence and Diversity in Unity and Unity in Diversity

by T. Austin-Sparks

Spiritual intelligence is a crucial factor in spiritual warfare, and it must be followed by action to achieve victory.

Scripture: Acts 26:17, 2 Corinthians 2:11

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Unity in Diversity"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the critical role of spiritual intelligence in overcoming the tactics of Satan, who seeks to keep humanity in ignorance and blindness. He illustrates that just as military intelligence is vital for victory in warfare, spiritual enlightenment is essential for believers to recognize and counter the enemy's schemes. Sparks also discusses the importance of diversity within the body of Christ, where each member has a unique role that contributes to the overall mission, highlighting that the Holy Spirit equips every believer for their specific function. He concludes that a sense of vocation and service is crucial for spiritual growth and fulfillment, urging believers to actively engage in their calling.

Transcript

"That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

A. Intelligence

The next of the vital factors in our spiritual warfare that we are to consider is the matter of Intelligence. The above fragment of Scripture is quoted, not as a peg upon which to hang something, but as a key to very much more than its own context from which we may seem to be separating it. We refer again to the book from which many extracts have already been cited, the great record of the campaign that was conducted in South East Asia during the last war. Under the heading of 'Defeat'--to which subject, half of that long account is devoted, a sad and tragic part--there occur these words:

'Our Intelligence was extremely bad. We were like a blind boxer trying to strike an unseen opponent and to parry blows we did not know were coming until they hit us. The extreme inefficiency of our whole Intelligence system was probably our greatest single handicap.'

You will weigh all this, because it is most significant in the spiritual realm. The writer continues:

'The first thing to get right was the Intelligence organization. Until we could rely upon a reasonable degree of information we could not hope successfully to hold the enemy. We never made up for the absence of methodically collected Intelligence, which should have been available to us when the war began.'

Now these few extracts, if we carry them over into our warfare, are most enlightening, instructive and important. Spiritual intelligence for spiritual warfare: that covers a very great deal of ground. As is so emphatically pointed out here, it is fundamental to the whole campaign. If we are lacking in spiritual intelligence, we shall be lacking in one of the vital requirements for victory. That is a well informed and considered judgment in the earthly realm; and, as we have repeatedly said, if it is true, as it has been proved to be, in the natural, how much more true it is in the spiritual--how much more is involved in this matter of intelligence in spiritual warfare!

Spiritual Intelligence Counters The Blinding Work Of The Enemy

And so we pass from the natural warfare to the spiritual, the warfare in which you and I are, or should be, engaged.

We note, firstly, that God's whole scheme for our deliverance from Satan is based upon, or made effective by, spiritual intelligence, or spiritual enlightenment. We are told that, at the conversion of the Apostle Paul, in indicating his life work, his commission, the Lord said: "I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from... the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:17-18). Here it is clearly assumed that, by nature, all men are in the power of Satan; and it is implied that they are there by reason of blindness. The nature of their bondage, of their captivity to Satan, and of his sway over them, that which gives it its power, its strength, is spiritual blindness. The way out, therefore, is not by means of an objective, external drive upon their captor, by trying to deal smashing blows at some imaginary spiritual force called 'Satan'. It is by means of an inward operation whereby spiritually blind eyes are opened, made to see. I repeat, therefore, that the whole scheme of man's deliverance from the enemy is based upon, and made effective by, spiritual enlightenment--that is, by spiritual intelligence.

(a) His Concealment Of Himself And Of Man's Condition

The enemy's supreme tactic in maintaining his power and his sway over mankind is along this line of keeping them in ignorance. One of his most successful devices is that of concealing himself--keeping man in ignorance of himself and of his work--and also of concealing from man his own condition. Man, of course, will not credit himself with blindness. It is a very difficult thing to make man believe that he is blind. Has he not intelligence, has he not common sense, has he not education, has he not many things, all of which he regards as enlightenment? The most difficult thing is to make him believe that he is blind; and that is a sure and certain proof that Satan has marvelously triumphed. He has hidden from man his own real condition, and has made him blind to his own blindness.

(b) His Interception Of Knowledge

Another of the enemy's great tactics is to intercept all knowledge. There is a great deal in this book about reconnaissance, and the interception of reconnaissance: of how the enemy gained the upper hand, and secured his tremendous victory in the first campaign, very largely by completely crippling the reconnaissance arm of the opposing forces. The writer makes constant complaint and remonstrance about the absence or the failure of reconnaissance, and what it cost. In this matter of interception, of cutting off every agent and instrumentality that would bring intelligence to the opposing side, the enemy

was in the unquestioned ascendant.

I do not propose to say much on the subject of our knowledge of the enemy, our information concerning him and his ways; I want to get on to something more profitable, more positive, than that. But this concern of the enemy to intercept intelligence, to cut it off, to make it impossible, to keep the Forces in ignorance, is an important factor, and we shall have to underline it as we go on.

The Apostle Paul, who, as we have already said, was a great fighter, a great warrior, was very much alive to this matter. He himself was up against this problem all the time. It would be a profitable line of study to collect all that Paul has written on the matter of enlightenment, of revelation, of intelligence, of spiritual understanding. For instance, it is impressive to realize that six times over, in different places and in different connections, Paul uses the phrase: "I would not have you ignorant..." (Rom. 1:13, 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1, 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). If you take up the context of each of those six occasions, you will find that there is something of great significance bound up with each. "Brethren, I would not have you ignorant...", he says; and then follows something of vital importance.

Spiritual intelligence, then, is related in the first place to man's deliverance from the blinding and befogging activity of Satan.

The Inheritance Secured Through Intelligence

In the second place, the whole basis of securing the inheritance of the people of God is that of spiritual intelligence. It is something more than being just saved. Salvation begins with spiritual enlightenment, the opening of the inward eyes. But thereafter, the pursuit of salvation to its ultimate objective, the fulness of Christ, is along the line of spiritual intelligence, illumination, understanding, knowledge. It matters not whether those words mean different things, or are inflections of the same thing; the issue is the same.

We know, for instance, that the Book of Joshua is the book of the inheritance. The people are going in to possess, to occupy, to exploit, to inherit. But what was the very first move, when Israel had come to the borders of the land, forty years previously? The setting up of Intelligence. Spies were sent to spy out the land. Joshua sent over intelligence officers, his Intelligence Corps. Intelligence was a tremendously important thing here. We might say that Joshua and Caleb were themselves the very embodiment of the principle of Intelligence. It was they who brought the report which, in the long run, resulted in a people going in and possessing. But note at this point an interesting and impressive and significant thing. The people thought to stone them! (Num. 14:10). You see, the enemy is not only over there in the land--he is entrenched in the very hearts of the people themselves, he has got a footing there. How true that is to principle and to history! Let any of the people of God begin to get some new light, and, as the Lord's instrument, they will become the object of Satan's hatred: he will stir up forces to stone that instrument. He hates instruments of spiritual enlightenment.

We pointed out, in chapter 2, that the Letter to the Ephesians is all of a piece: that, although there are progressive movements, it is nevertheless concerned with one thing--it concerns the Church coming into her inheritance. For the realization of that there is tremendous conflict. 'Principalities and powers and hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies' are arrayed against that, so it says. But what is it that precipitates the conflict, that makes it active, that brings us up against the evil forces? Paul is praying 'that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that you may know... that you may know... that you may know...' Therein is the explanation of the conflict. It all circles round this--'that the people of God may know'. We do well to ask ourselves if we have really grasped that--if we are sufficiently alive to that.

Conclusions

(1) Progressive Intelligence Essential To Victory

What are the conclusions, then? Firstly, that intelligence, spiritual knowledge and understanding, are a very great factor for victory in this whole spiritual warfare. Do let us lay that to heart. We shall find it out and prove it sooner or later. The 'sooner' or 'later' depends upon whether we really grasp this fact. We shall not come through into full victory without spiritual understanding: we shall not get there willy nilly, just anyhow: we shall not drift into it: we shall not just find ourselves there. All along the way we shall find ourselves up against situations with which we shall be unable to cope, demanding a spiritual understanding and knowledge from the Lord without which we shall be unable to get through. The key to every further advance is more spiritual knowledge, more spiritual understanding. Without it, we shall be held up indefinitely.

Is that not true to experience? We come to an impasse, and have to go to the Lord; and, until the Lord gives light, we are locked up in that impasse. Once the light flashes; once we see; once we are able to say, 'Now I understand the meaning of this thing!'--the Devil's hold is broken, and we are released. If only we realized the background of situations, being quick on the scent to get the significance of happenings and not just taking them at their face value; if we were to say, 'Well, it all looks so natural, it all seems to have a very natural explanation of human fault and circumstance and what not, but there may be something else behind this'; if only we were more on the alert, it might be that we should not ourselves be knocked out of the fight, and other people who sadly needed our help would not be deprived of it. Satan lays his schemes very deeply, and covers them up so cunningly, does he not? He argues, 'Well, you see, it was this and that and some other thing.' Oh, no, it was not!--and even if it was, it should not have had this effect upon us.

Spiritual intelligence, then, is a tremendous factor in spiritual warfare and in spiritual growth and progress. 'That we may know... that we may know...'--and therein is a great battle!

(2) Intelligence Must Lead To Action

The second thing in our conclusions is that our intelligence, our knowledge, must be followed by action. It must be practical knowledge, not merely theory. We have all the theory of spiritual warfare in the Bible, have we not? We have the whole scheme from Genesis to Revelation! But are we applying it? Is it applied knowledge, or is it only theoretical? Is it followed by action? Or, when a situation arises, does all the theory we possess fail to serve any useful purpose? Does it fail to come to our rescue? Our knowledge must be applied and practical knowledge. It must lead to action.

(3) The Need For Watchfulness Against Enemy Induced Inertia

Thirdly, the enemy's special concern is to keep God's people from increased spiritual knowledge: and that statement covers a great deal of ground. So often, when the Lord is purposing to impart to His children some particular spiritual knowledge, there comes over them a strange inertia: and that kind of inertia can sometimes be sinister. It is something more than mere tiredness or weariness; it seems to come over us suddenly, for no apparent reason. I have often, during a long experience, seen the children of God robbed of something vital through succumbing to that feeling of inertia and staying at home at such a time.

We need to weigh up our inclinations to stay at home, and judge them. There are times when it may be of the Lord that we remain quiet and alone at home, but let us be careful that we are not just being smothered by the enemy, in order that we may be robbed of something. Oh, the unwatchfulness of God's people! What loss it leads to! Yes, the Devil will create an inertia, or raise up some difficulty, some impediment, some circumstance, just to intercept--just to make sure that you are not there on some occasion; and then, like Thomas, when the Lord comes in you are absent. You know, that is a loss which is not easily recovered, and it may lead to some very real defeat in coming days. The very thing that you needed for a coming situation may have been there, provided by the Lord. Because you were not alive to the meaning of what was happening, and accepted the circumstance or the event at its face value, you missed some spiritual gain. How important this is! How very much alive we must be, 'intelligent unto intelligence'! As Paul says, "with all prayer and supplication praying... and watching thereunto..." (Eph. 6:18).

(4) The Enemy's Opposition To An Enlightening Ministry

Finally, opposition to a ministry which would make God's people spiritually strong is one of Satan's very definite activities. There is much history behind that statement. If there is a ministry--I am not thinking only of personal ministry--or any other instrumentality which can minister to a fuller knowledge of the Lord and to an understanding of His purposes concerning His Church, then not only the ministry itself, but the instrument of that ministry, the vehicle and the vessel of that ministry, and the place of that ministry, will all be an object against which Satan will be determinedly set--for its undoing, for its breaking down, for its disintegration, for its paralysis; somehow--anyhow--to destroy that instrument of ministry. Would that we might be fully alive to this!

B. Diversity In Unity And Unity In Diversity

What an immense variety of functions go to make up an efficient and effective fighting force! Almost endless are the auxiliaries and the complementaries, both of activities and of means. In an army, you have a large number of definite 'sub- forces', or contributing forces. Think of some of the main branches known to us: the Army Service Corps, for supplies; the Engineers, electrical and mechanical, for all installations and repairs and construction; the Ordnance Corps, for a large variety of things such as surveying, mapping, routing, and so on; the Pay Corps, which is quite an important one, to see that men get their due and their rights (and it is strategic to do that: if there is a grumble in that realm you may upset the whole organization!); the Intelligence Corps, of which we have just spoken; and the Medical Corps, dealing with the whole matter of health and healing and care, and numerous other duties. Here are many, many functions; and yet, both within these main branches and without, there are almost countless details, committed to different people, all of which are essential.

And here is a really magnificent little paragraph from the book. What it says is good, but that it should be said by a Field Marshal is almost better, for it indicates that right at the top, notwithstanding all the great responsibilities and the important position and the name, the smallest detail was not overlooked. He has been speaking about the man right up in the battle front, who is aware of his responsibility, aware of the effect and influence of his behaviour and his demeanour; and he goes on:

'But it is harder for the man working on the road, far behind, the clerk checking stores in a dump, the telephone operator monotonously plugging through his calls, the sweeper carrying out his menial tasks, the quartermaster's orderly issuing boot laces. I say it is harder for these and a thousand others to see that

they, too, matter. You may be one of the half million in the Army, but you have to be made to see where your menial task fits into the whole scheme of things, and to realize what depends on it and on you, and, moreover, to feel pride and satisfaction in doing it.'

You see what I mean? Diversity in unity--unity in diversity. Many Scriptures will come to mind: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit... all these worketh the one and the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4,11). Paul has a great deal to say about this matter of diversity in unity and unity in diversity. And the Lord would have it to be found in the Church.

The Holy Spirit: Sufficient, Indispensable, Sovereign

Now, let us seek to realize, first of all, that the Holy Spirit is comprehensive of all needs for this great campaign; that is, He covers the whole ground of what is required. He Himself is the supply and the dynamic, the ability for every section and every department and every function. He comprehends the whole and leaves out nothing that is essential. He covers everything. To put that round the other way: in the Holy Spirit there is everything that is required of ability, of faculty, of gift, of enablement, for this whole campaign, in all its departments and details. He is given to the Church to be all that.

But the next step is to realize that the Holy Spirit is given to each one, personally, with the object of making each one a functioning factor in the great campaign. There ought not to be a single individual in Christ who is not counting in this battle, who is not a vital factor in it, who is not really telling, who is not in some way making a contribution. If such 'non-functioning members' should exist, there is something wrong, because the manifestations of the Spirit are given to us "to profit withal", says the Word (1 Cor. 12:7). "Given to each for the profit of all", is Conybeare's rendering: that is, to make us a part of the inclusive profit and gain. And if we are not a vital factor in this warfare, it means that the Holy Spirit is somehow being hindered, checked, thwarted, frustrated in us. There is something wrong in our relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit gives gifts as He will: that is, He is sovereign. It is not for you or for me to say what we are going to do in the Army, what place we are going to hold, what work we are going to do. That is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit. We have only to recall Paul's words, at the conclusion of the passage we have already quoted (1 Cor. 12:11), about the gifts of the Holy Spirit being distributed as He wills. You and I, therefore, should claim, as our very birthright, that the Holy Spirit should qualify us in some way to be a functioning member of this great Army--whether it be as 'the quartermaster's orderly distributing bootlaces', or whether it be something that we might think far more important: although it would certainly be a serious matter if a fighting soldier had not got his bootlaces!

What I mean, of course, is this. All these things are necessary; they are essential to the whole. It is not for us to say that ours is too little a job--that it does not matter. It does matter: yes, right down to a 'bootlace' it matters in this whole. And it is not just the nature of the job that you and I may be doing, or be given to do, that makes it important. Its importance lies in its relationship to the whole. Nor is it a question of personal importance--it is not that you or I are so important; any importance we may have comes from our relationship to the whole. And so we need to seek adjustment in this matter.

It is my firm belief that the Holy Spirit would in some way qualify, for quite definite functioning in this warfare, every member, every individual. For, in this 'unity in diversity', where everything is so related, every member is significant.

The Incentive Of A Sense Of Vocation And A Spirit Of Service

I close with a word about the saving value of a sense of vocation, of service. If only we had this awareness of the greatness of the thing that we are in! If only we had a new sense that, as recipients of the Holy Spirit, we are those who should count, should signify: for that is why we have received the Holy Spirit--to make us count. And it matters about us. It does not matter to us about ourselves, but it does matter to the whole order of things. If only we had a due sense of that, what a great deal we should be saved! If our attitude is: 'I don't matter, I don't count', what is the result before long? A miserable life!

I recently read an article about self pity, in which the story was told of how the help of a psychiatrist was sought by a woman who said that she had a nervous breakdown coming on. She evidently expected him to take a lot of trouble and analyze her history and give her some comforting words of advice. But he said: 'My dear woman, go home, turn the key in your front door, make your way to that poor district down there across the railway, find somebody who is in need of help, and get busy, and your nervous breakdown will never come off!'

There is much good, Divine common sense in that. We are enlarged by giving. We lose nothing by giving; our increase comes along the line of giving, of turning outward. Yes, "always abounding in the work of the Lord", always turned outward; animated by a spirit of service, seeking to be useful or helpful wherever we can; not just with a Bible under our arm, ready to go and speak at a meeting, but in all sorts of practical ways being a spiritual and physical help to the Lord's children. That is the way, not only of saving us from a miserable existence, but of bringing ourselves enlargement.

That is very practical, but it is very true. The Spirit is given to us "to profit withal"! The Holy Spirit can enable us to be of value in ways that we cannot be naturally. Where would most of us be if we were left to ourselves, to our own natural resources, gifts and abilities--or lack of them? We should be of no use at all, for we have nothing. But the Spirit makes up wonderfully for our deficiencies; He really does make good our short comings. By the Spirit's aid, every one of us can and should and must be counting in the battle.

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