

Recovery of the Lords Name - Part 5 of 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Lord desires for His people to be in a condition where His glory is expressed and realized, and to enjoy all that He has provided for them, but this requires a minority of people who are willing to put first things first and commit to the Lord's interest.

Duration: 50:16

Scripture: Judges 7:6, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Psalm 62:12, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Matthew 16:17-18, John 1:33, Galatians 1:16

Topics: "Recovery"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for expansion and enlargement in the spiritual lives of believers. God uses tests and trials to bring about this growth and to fulfill His specific purpose. The speaker also highlights how God has historically chosen individuals or groups who have a deep knowledge of Him to bring about spiritual renewal and revival among His people. The sermon emphasizes the importance of personal experience and knowledge of the Lord in effective service and ministry.

Transcript

In the seventh chapter of the Book of the Judges. Book of the Judges, chapter seven. Then Gerald Dale, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early and encamped beside the spring of Herod, and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Morah, in the valley.

The Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel gaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved thee. Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand.

The Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many. Bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there. And it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee.

And of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water. The Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself.

Likewise, every one that bows down upon his knees to drink, and the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men. But all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. The Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped, will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand.

Let all the people go away, every man unto his place. Turn to two other scriptures in the first book of the Chronicles. First book of the Chronicles, chapter twenty-eight and verse nine.

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. The other passage is in the prophecies of Jeremiah, chapter seventeen, verses nine and ten.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, the mind. I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

There are some of you present this evening who have not been with us before in this conference, and possibly some of you who do not know the Lord Jesus in a personal way. Let me say here that we are met as a company of God's people from many parts of the world, that we might receive from him some light and instruction concerning his will, where we are concerned at this present time. In saying this, you will all understand and appreciate the nature of the ministry that I believe that the word we shall have this evening may reach even to those who are not the Lord, and we certainly shall have such in mind as we go on.

There are two main things being brought before us just now. One is the desire of the Lord, indeed the purpose of the Lord, to have his people in such a condition and state that his glory is expressed and realized in them. His people really in the enjoyment of all that he has provided for them.

He has provided life, but he has provided life more abundantly. He has provided spiritual riches and wealth, treasures untold and inexhaustible. He has provided spiritual food, a store which has no end, can be drawn upon continually without failing.

He has provided strength, his own strength, that they should be a strong people indeed. The Lord has made a great and many-sided provision for his people, but history shows that his people have not always been in the enjoyment of his provision. And there are many today who bear his name, who carry his name, who are called by his name, Christians, Christ-ones, who are not in that enjoyment, not in that blessed state.

Some are, but not all. And insofar as that is not the case, the Lord is not glorified in them. Well, that is what the Lord wants.

It is not an impossible thing, not just a bit of fancy and idealism, a high standard, a lofty conception, but beyond possibility of attainment. In this very place tonight there are those who will very readily say that they know something of that, that Christ is to them a fountain of life, not just a trickling stream. He is a fountain of life.

Who will say that they know something of the depth of the riches, they know something of how wealthy it is possible to be in Christ, and they know something about the food matter, his wonderful provision of spiritual food, inexhaustible. Yes, some of us know something about that. Wonder to us is the

inexhaustibility of what is provided for us in the Lord Jesus.

That is the one thing that is in view. I'm quite sure that none of us are at the point where we feel we can't know anymore. That would be a contradiction to what I have said.

If it is inexhaustible, then we can never come to a place where we have got all that we can have. Not any of us here would say that we have really attained unto all that the Lord wishes and desires in these matters. Not at all.

But it may be that there are those here, perhaps many of this company, who are not in that enjoyment. They are just striving to eke out a spiritual existence, as we say, to make ends meet, to find something upon which to subsist and keep going. They are living on a very poor pair.

They are hungry, longing for more, and it may be that you do not feel that it is altogether helpful to be told about the things that there are for you. What you want to know is how you can get them and how you can come into that enjoyment. Well, we are saying some things about that.

But that is not our particular point tonight. We may be moving more in that direction later to see. But the other thing that is before us, the other main thing, is that the Lord is shown to have moved from time to time during the history of His people, when they have been in a state, a poor state spiritually, weakness and starvation and poverty and defeat, He has moved to bring into relationship with Himself in a peculiar way some instrument, sometimes an individual, sometimes a company, who have come into such a knowledge of Himself in this fuller way, in the greater fullness of Christ, that they could be instrumental in bringing more of the Lord's people into that good.

The Lord must have instruments with which to do His work and vessels through which to reveal Himself. He has moved like that, and shall we not say that He is seeking to have such an instrument in our time, seeing that the need is so great and that there is really so little real knowledge and experience of those greater fullnesses that are in Christ? Would He not bring a people near to Himself and work in them in a peculiar way that where they are He might make people envious? Envious. Looking on their food and coveting it.

Looking upon their wealth and longing for it. Yes, by expression, by example, by manifestation to bring His people into a better position and a better condition. For those are the things that are engaging us in these gatherings.

Now this evening in that setting I have a word which will be a very simple word indeed. But its simplicity does not mean that it is not very important. It springs out of the passages of Scripture which I read to you just now.

Particularly as illustrated in that incident with Gideon who was such an instrument laid hold of by God for the deliverance of God's people from their poor condition. The incident of securing a company, a band by which the Lord could accomplish that deliverance and secure unto His people their rights of inheritance in Himself. Remember, Gideon blew the trumpet and there gathered unto him a great host, over 30,000 men.

Of course, even at that it was a poor, poor thing compared to the Midianites and all the rest. Nevertheless, it was 30,000. The Lord said, Gideon, people that are with thee are too many.

Too many for me to deliver the Midianites into their hands. Let Israel bounce themselves against me. Terrible, terrible possibility.

Saying, mine own, mine own power, mine own power. Well, the first step was, whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him depart. We, I think, have to admire these people for one thing if we can't admire them for everything.

If they were at least honest, ready to admit that they were afraid of this thing. Well, they had good reason to be afraid, you know. It says that these enemies, these enemies were like locusts for numbers spreading themselves right over the whole land, killing it.

They had good reason to be fearful and afraid. And they honestly in act said, we are. And we are glad of the opportunity of going home.

Thank you. And away they went. 10,000 remained.

Still, the Lord had got his basic difficulty. And he had to say to Gideon, there are still too many. Still too many.

Bring them down to the water. And I will trial them for thee there. You know the rest of the story.

Just what happened. The 10,000 were brought down to the water, to the river. And then the Lord whispered in Gideon's ear, let the people know.

That would have given the whole thing away. And they kept the whole thing. He just quietly aside said to Gideon, Now then, tell them to have a drink.

Now you watch how they drink. Those that lack, like a dog, you just set them aside. Those that get down to it on their hands and knees and on their faces and wallow in it, you put them.

And so Gideon gave the order that the whole army could have a drink. And they did. And their drinking, all unbeknown to themselves, was a test.

The Lord said that it was a trying of them. I will trial them for thee there. The word trial here is a word which means tested under an ordeal.

The same word is used in another place. Thou hast tried us as timber is tried in the fire. An ordeal.

To discover something. To bring something to light. To bring something to the surface.

I will trial them for thee there. This water theme is said to be a trial. Of course, that gives some support to the interpretation that has been placed upon this.

It doesn't say so here. But the interpretation that has been given to this is that those who got down on their knees to drink, those who were thinking more of their own gratification than of the Lord's interest in the battle. Those who just left it in their hands, took it and left standing, were those who were not thinking so much of death as they were of the real business on hand.

I think that is a genuine interpretation. It certainly did indicate a disposition. And it's upon that that everything hangs.

A disposition. They were all thirsty and in need of refreshment and renewal. There was nothing wrong at all in their drinking of the water.

Nothing wrong with the water. Nothing wrong with their taking a drink of the water. Nothing wrong with them.

The difference was just this. That some regarded the water as a necessity, while the others, the majority, made it an indulgence. Some took it because it was absolutely necessary.

But getting the necessity attended to. They were already erect and ready for the real business. The others were having a good time and just giving themselves up to it, so to speak.

They were more occupied with, of course, of getting as much personal gratification out of this as they could and not wholly and completely concerned with the Lord's interest. The great thing which was at stake at that time. The honour and glory of the name of the Lord in His people.

Now that's the simple message. But it's a case of sifting unto vital service. Trying with a special vocation in view.

Most, of course, in the matter of salvation. The matter of salvation. The Lord does not always carry things so far, press issues so thoroughly.

It seems that in the matter of salvation all kinds of people get in. Every type that you can think of comes into the realm of being safe. Although I think in many, many instances they don't get there without some test.

However, I'm not talking about the whole mass of Christians and the matter of their being safe and the ground upon which they are safe. That may simply be, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be safe. But I am speaking about something more than that.

The great vocation into which we are called as God's saved ones. And the specific work that God needs to have done at a given time and a time such as this. Dear friends, we shall never be of any use to the Lord beyond the point where we ourselves know the Lord.

Real service, real service, listen, is limited to the point of the experience of the service. You cannot go beyond that. You cannot lead anyone beyond the point where you've gone yourself.

You cannot give anybody anything beyond what you've got yourself. That is of real food, of real value. You give a lot of teaching.

It doesn't get people anywhere. And if you and I are going to serve the Lord in His very, very serious and solemn need of bringing, leading people of His into the greater fullnesses of Christ. We've got to be a special kind of people.

The 32,000 type won't do. And the 10,000 type won't do. It's the 300 type alone.

The 300 type. The Lord said, by the 300 I will save Israel. This is sifting down, reduction in order to get to effectiveness.

This is a kind of limitation that means expansion, enlargement. But it has to take place. It has to take place.

And so God applies His presence and brings in His trials to get a peculiar vessel for a peculiar purpose. That, I feel, is His message at this time. It is not just a general kind of convention and conference or general teaching to Christian people.

It is something with a specific object relative to the tragic situation amongst the Lord's people today. Get something after the order and kind of these 300. Well, what are they like? What are they like? The Lord has very simple ways and means of trying and proving.

And they are often so simple that we don't recognize them as trying and proving. This was a very simple thing, wasn't it? For the whole 10,000. Very simple thing.

Bring them down to the water and let them drink. And the last thing, it seems, that occurred to any of them was that as they came down to the water and took their drink they were under a supreme test. The eye of God was upon them and that eye was moving from them to Gideon.

You see? You see? You see? You know that? And they didn't realize what was happening. This great sifting and selectiveness for this purpose was going on in some very ordinary and simple manner out of their consciousness. You know, you and I would rise to the occasion if an angel of God came to us and said, look here now, look here.

You are called to a great peace of breath of God and I want you to give some proof that you are ready for it. I would rise to it, wouldn't I? We would be very, very careful watching everything to see that we didn't default, that we didn't disappoint, that we weren't set aside, ruled out. We were right on our toes, as we say, about it.

The Lord doesn't do it like that, friends. He's never done it with any of you like that. He's never done it with me.

But He has applied just as serious a test in very simple ways. I said, I think it was last night, that a gesture is a very, very indicative and significant thing. Just a gesture.

Here's the gesture. There's one man, he drops down the river side and has a good go at it. The other man, he stands by the river and takes out his hand and lets it.

All alert. Well, why not? I guess that you see, wound up with that. That simple test is God.

Oh, it is not just a sign, not just a sign, that is, the Lord hasn't ordained that some laugh and some go down on their knees and so you separate them. It is a sign of the heart. It's a revelation of a disposition.

This larger crowd, they are the people who want a good time, even in the Lord's work, a good time. These others, they're not thinking it's a good time at all, they're putting first things first. The first thing is this battle, is this work of God.

It comes first and everything else takes the last place or the second place. This is the thing that's on hand. The revelation of a disposition.

And you know we are showing our disposition in all sorts of simple ways, just as simple as this. Just as simple as this. As we go about our daily life, our daily work, yes, the Lord's eye is upon us, there in the office, in the workshop, in the shop, in the study, wherever we are, the Lord's eye is upon us and our hearts are being revealed in just the way in which we go to work.

The ordinary things of life. We separate these things you see, the sacred and the secular. In the church it's one thing, of course in business it's another, but it isn't.

It isn't. Our qualification is in our disposition. Not in our consciousness of being under the eye of God, but when we are not conscious of that at all and the disposition we are showing, that's the test, that's the test.

And oh how many and how simple are the ways in which we show our disposition. Just our inclination. Now of course that does apply, it does apply to every stage of the Christian life.

I said that there are saved people of all kinds. But if you are going to have a really thorough going salvation, and not one of those poor things, those inadequate things, those experiences of Christ which are anything but what he would have you have, you are going to have that, you have got to show that you mean business. That you really do mean business.

That this thing is a very serious thing with you. You will get as much as your heart is set upon. And no more.

And no more. And the Lord is looking at your heart. We read those passages, David to his son Solomon, and God searched all her.

Serve the Lord with all your heart. The Lord searches all her. Those words of Jeremiah, the Lord tries the heart.

The heart. The heart. And what is true of your salvation is true of your usefulness to the Lord.

None of us will ever be used of the Lord in any very vital way unless our hearts are wholly set upon the Lord and his interest. Not to have a good time. Not to have a good time.

That is as men speak. Not to have a good time. That is as men speak.

Not to have every picnic that is going. Not to have every diversion from the strain that is available. Not to have every escape from responsibility and obligation that can be found.

Not a disposition like that at all. But the disposition that recognizes how great is the matter in which we are involved and we are people wholly committed to that and our own gratification and satisfaction is not allowed to affect or influence us at all. It is a heart wholly for the Lord.

Now I said that the Lord has many ways of finding that out. I couldn't encompass all the ways in which he does it. But what I want to say is this, that the Lord will present a test.

He will present a test. It will not always be as to whether the thing is right and wrong. But it may more often be as to whether it's the good or the bad.

If you are of the disposition of the great majority you will be always asking questions like this. Well may I not? Is there any harm in it? What's wrong with that? And there was nothing wrong with drinking the water.

It isn't a case of whether it's wrong or whether you may.

Whether you're obliged to. See that's a disposition. You'll just only go as far as you must if you're like that.

What the Lord is looking for is always a minority. Those people who never, never talk like that or think like this. May I? Must I? Is there any wrong in it? They're always saying, can I do more than I am doing? Can I go further than I am going? Is there not some fuller thing that the Lord would have than I know, than I am in, than I am doing? A question like that always in the heart.

Has the Lord not got something more than what I have known and what I'm in? And what I'm doing, has the Lord not got something more? My heart is set upon all that the Lord wants. And I'll never be satisfied with anything less, however good it is. However good it is.

Many, many good things. But is there not something more than this? Such are the people for whom the Lord is looking. And he who read it all heart knows our disposition in this matter.

Whether we will accept something less or never accept anything less than all that the Lord would have if he could have it. The Lord allows opportunities to come for personal gratification. He presents something that demands hard work.

And then he watches the disposition. Ready to jump at that which offers some personal gratification. To grasp at an opportunity to skirt the hard work.

That's your disposition. It rules you out. It rules you out.

He sometimes presents something in his word. Brings you up against something in his word. Now then, what's your disposition? Must I? Really must I? Is that a command? And if I don't do it I shall just be breaking a command.

Is that really necessary? And then we begin to go round to people who we think are authorities or know better than we do. Who know the Lord better than we do. And say do you think it's necessary for me to do so and so? Do you think that I must? And how often, how often even godly people have said Oh, no I don't think it's necessary for you to do that.

Making men so often our authority in the things of God when God has presented us with something. Going round, going round. I remember many years ago.

Give your notice of what I meant. I was visiting a certain home. I felt too strange to go to that home.

At that time, that particular evening. I didn't know why but it just seemed that I had to go. And I was asking my heart well why is it I feel so strongly urged to go there tonight? And I went with this question.

And I got there and well we were quietly talking together. Didn't see anything special. Then there was a knock on the door.

And a man was brought in. Brought in where I was and introduced to me. A man who had had a very remarkable conversion.

He was in the army. In the old days it was the barrack room. Converted, finally converted.

And knelt down at his bedside with all his vile, blaspheming, drunken soldiers around him and paid the price. He meant business with God. And he came into this home on this particular occasion.

And I got into conversation with him. First time I'd met him. Found him very earnest.

As we talked I was all the time asking this question. What's it all about? What am I here for? We talked on and on. Presently he said to me, Mr. Spock, what do you think about so-and-so? It was a water text.

What do you think about so-and-so? Immediately he asked a question I knew inside. That's the meaning of your being here and his being here. I said, why do you ask me? Does it matter what I think about it? Has the Lord said that to you? He said, yes, I think he has.

I think he has. I feel pretty sure he has, but I wanted some confirmation, and so I'm asking you. And I said, brother, if the Lord has said that to you, you just go and be obedient to the Lord.

Everything hangs upon your answering the Lord. It's a real test. We talked.

He went away. I went home. Some time later, I was at that home, and along came the same man without any arrangement.

And I noticed he was a little bit shy of me this time. A little bit awkward. We got talking.

He said, I remember, I remember our talk here last time. He said, after I'd left, I went to such-and-such a minister of such-and-such a denomination, who I know, who did not believe in this particular thing, you see, and asked him what he thought about it. He said, of course, no, that's not necessary.

I said, oh, Mr. So-and-so, the Lord. Well, we talked, and although I was not trying to press for this thing, I was taking the line of obedience to the Lord when he speaks, whatever it is, that line. And the man came right back.

He said, yes, I see, I see, I can't get away from it. The Lord, the Lord has brought me up against it. All right, brother, you know your way.

He went away. It was some time, some month before we met again, and we did meet again, and this time, it was a real arrest and death. We couldn't get anywhere at all.

He wasn't coming on to that again. See, he's afraid. Afraid even to mention it.

Because, well, it disturbs him. And we didn't get any fellowship at all. But before he went, I said, well, brother, are you, are you going on with the Lord? Are you going to obey the Lord? He said, I don't know.

Everybody I speak to says it's not necessary. All right, I said, the Lord has spoken to very serious things to you. And we went.

One year later, in another part of London, right the other side of London, I was going along, walking along the road, and I saw a man coming toward me on a bicycle. And as he got near, he recognized me. He wheeled round and whizzed for dear life in the opposite direction.

That was that man. What did I hear of him? He'd gone right away from the Lord, back into the world, right back into his old sin. A drunkard and a blasphemer.

Right back where he was before he came to the Lord. Now, that is a true story. The Lord presented a simple test.

He said, is it necessary? Rather, oh, anything, anything that the Lord wants, I'm for that. He did what the Apostle Paul said he did not do, confer with flesh and blood, instead of being obedient to the heavenly vision. And how much hangs upon it? How much hangs upon it? The Lord may present something.

Yes, it may not be this form or that form. It may be a water test. John the Baptist applied the water test, didn't he? At the Jordan.

Bring forth fruit, meat, for repentance, he said. And say not within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father. Here, here's the test.

You mean business with God. And so it comes. I cannot tell you all the ways.

God has such a variety of ways. But the point, the point is this, dear friends. God is always looking on the heart to see if we really do mean business.

He knows the disposition. And he is seeking for a company of people who are not going to be influenced by anything. Anything at all.

Associations, connections, or anything else which would in any way stand between them and all that the Lord wants. Oh, it is a test that is a very thorough going one. And how often people have come up face to face with an issue.

An issue which the Lord might not have pressed right through. He doesn't always do that. But don't you make that backdoor way out, will you? Sometimes he brings us face to face with something he's not going to press that right through.

He did it with Abraham and Isaac. Take thy son. Father him.

Pressed it right up to the last minute. The last instant. The split second of a raised knife.

And it's fallen. Right up to then. And then to allow him to go through with it.

He found his disposition. The young man who had great riches who came to the Lord Jesus professing that he, he wanted to know about eternal life. Lord Jesus said, well, go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.

Come, follow me. I'm not sure that the Lord would have required the carrying out of that, I believe, but he was testing disposition. We don't know how much time or space there is between the two things.

The actual demand and its fulfillment. But it's just in that narrow space that we come to the point. That split second, so to speak.

Where? If the Lord, if the Lord doesn't show otherwise, it's going through. It's going through. The Lord wants to know whether we mean business with him or not.

Now you see, it's one simple, very direct thing. But look how much did hang upon this. All that 300.

What a tremendous thing God did by that. How he committed himself to that. What a wonderful thing.

300 men against a multitude like locusts spread all over the land. And a whole lot of them thrown into confusion and disbelief. And the people of God delivered.

300 men, but what a 300. What kind of men they were. And it seems to me that the proof that they were of this kind was that they were prepared as 300 to go on with the business.

I mean, just think what it requires for 300 men to look at a great multitude like that and say, we're not going home, we're going on with this business. We've started and we're going through with it. That was the kind they were.

It proved that they were of that disposition, didn't it? That just being 300 up against tens of thousands they did not shrink. They said, we are going on with it. The Lord needs men and women like that.

And only people of that kind and that disposition and that heart can serve him in this great business of recovering his glory in the church.

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