

The Cross and the Satanic Kingdom

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the profound implications of the Cross in establishing the Church's authority against the satanic kingdom and the necessity of spiritual alignment with Christ for true power.

Topics: "Spiritual Authority", "The Cross"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the Cross in the spiritual battle against the satanic kingdom, asserting that the Church's authority is rooted in Christ's Headship and the moral implications of the Cross. He explains that the Cross not only addresses atonement but also serves as a moral battle-axe against evil forces, highlighting the necessity for the Church to maintain its spiritual position to effectively combat corruption and darkness. The sermon underscores that true power comes from being united with Christ in His death and resurrection, and that the Church must operate from this position of authority to exercise dominion over the enemy. Sparks warns against individualism in church leadership, advocating for a corporate understanding of authority under Christ. Ultimately, he calls for the Church to recognize its role in the cosmic struggle for creation, standing firm in the power of the Cross.

Transcript

Following closely upon what we said at the end of our last chapter, we come to the place and meaning of the Cross in the realm of principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, and hosts of evil spirits in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12).

Again, we must bear in mind that it is in and by the Church that the Cross has its registration in that realm. It is always a dangerous thing for units of the Church, i.e., individuals, to assail that kingdom, or enter it with intent to upset it. Christ alone can meet that, or to Him only as its conqueror will it yield, and, we repeat, Christ is implied by the corporate means. There is much spiritual history, both glorious and tragic, bound up with this principle, its observance or its neglect or violation. The whole matter of Headship is involved in this. Headship has never been relegated or delegated by the Lord to any individual. Autocracy or individual domination in the Church is a positive violation of the Church's major principle - the Sovereign Headship of Christ. Hence 'the oversight' in the New Testament was always plural, never singular; elders, not an elder. In so far as authority was concerned it was corporate, not individual.

This does not mean that New Testament technique rigidly adhered to will result in a mighty impact of Christ's Headship of all principalities and powers. History proves otherwise. But this failure does not prove the principle to be false, it only shows that it is more technique than SPIRITUAL position.

But to come to our main subject of which such points are but the outworking, the inclusive thing about which we must be quite clear is that the ultimate place of the Cross is in that realm from which the Cross takes its original rise. The Cross is set at the very heart of

A Cosmic Struggle For The Mastery Of The Creation

We use the word Cosmic in the sense of super-earthly. It embraces the earth, the heavenlies around the earth, and beyond. Here we find ourselves outside of time in eternity, outside of the local in the universal. There is an aspect of the Cross which is beyond atonement. Atonement has to do firstly with time and this world. It relates to man's sin and reprobation. But atonement is not for Satan and "the angels that kept not their own principality" (Jude 6). The last thing that the Bible says about the former is that he is cast into the lake of fire "unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. 20:10). (The same phrase is used of the glory of God in the Church [Eph. 3:21]. The one is the counterpart of the other, and must be of the same duration.) Of the fallen angels it is said that they are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6) and "cast down to hell... to pits (or chains) of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (not salvation) (2 Pet. 2:4).

When we speak of a cosmic struggle for the mastery of creation, some might find it difficult to contemplate the infinite, almighty, eternal God involved in a struggle, as though He could not, with a word, a stroke of His hand, wipe out of existence everything that gets in His way. To overcome this mental difficulty, we must remember that the creation rests upon a moral foundation. In creation God has bound Himself to moral conditions, and has therefore brought Himself to the place where His authority operates only on moral grounds. He intervenes FOR SALVATION only when He has the ground which is in accord with His own moral nature. If the ground is positively and incorrigibly antagonistic to His moral nature, His interventions have been, and will be, unto judgment and destruction. Justification by faith has its place here in that God has provided or secured the ground of His own moral perfection in His Son, Jesus Christ, and that ground is provided for faith in Him. Persistent and final rejection of Christ and God's righteousness in Him puts those concerned into another realm, to which the Apostle Paul referred when he said "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11). (This word "fear" is strong; really - 'to terrify.') Just as God must have suitable ground for the beneficent exercise of His authority and power, so must Satan have ground suitable to his nature to exercise his authority. Take God's ground from Him and He cannot work for you. Give Him His ground, and He moves. All the meaning of POWER THROUGH SANCTIFICATION lies here. "He did not many mighty works... because of their unbelief." Likewise, give Satan HIS ground and his authority is established. Take his ground away and he is helpless. Hence his one object, in order to establish his kingdom, is to corrupt, for then he knows that God cannot save; it is a moral issue. So the battle is waged, not between two potentates on official and personal grounds, but between two moral orders represented by two lords, of righteousness and unrighteousness respectively.

It is in this direction that the Cross goes beyond atonement and puts the Church in the strong position of moral and spiritual authority in the realm where the evil forces have their seat. 'By the Cross He conquered.' That was because the Cross took Satan's moral ground from him.

The Church is a heavenly Body; which means that it is out of Satan's domain spiritually and morally. "Delivered... out of the AUTHORITY of darkness, and translated... into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13). For its spiritual authority the Church MUST stand in all the good of the Cross as a separating and sanctifying power. Satan's one aim is to corrupt the Church. The wrestling against principalities and

powers (Eph. 6:12) is not physical, it is not to OBTAIN a position of ascendancy, it is against the "WILES of the devil." These wiles are twofold; to obtain a lodgment for darts of accusation - that is a denial of our justification and righteousness by faith: and, or, to corrupt and seduce on to earthly, carnal, and unholy ground. This explains the spiritual and moral nature of the armour provided.

The Church does not carry the Gospel of salvation and atonement to the kingdom of Satan itself, but only to those who are his prisoners, to give them the option of deliverance or remaining with him. To the evil powers the Church stands to express the moral Lordship of Jesus Christ in virtue of His Cross, and to exercise that authority in virtue of its own standing in Him.

The position is this. Before the world was, God purposed to gather under one Head all the creation. That Head was His Son. It was irrevocably and unalterably settled in the eternal counsels. Knowing that it could never be its best by mere compulsion or as a mechanical order and that faith, love, and positive holiness (not passive innocence) were essential to that best, and foreseeing the advent of evil, a working of a subversive system, He provided against the ultimate triumph of the system in "the Lamb slain from the foundation (literally the laying down) of the world." All that was foreseen, and the Lamb came out of eternity into time, was literally - not potentially - slain, the ground of evil power was taken in that slaying, and the link-up renewed with the original purpose - "all things in Christ." The Church - the elect Body - was brought into being on the ground of the Cross. He was given to be "Head over ALL THINGS TO (not merely OF) the Church which is His Body, the fullness of Him That filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). The Church moved out and registered His rights behind the temporal and sentient world, in the spiritual kingdom of Satan, and it worked! - until the Church declined from its spiritual and heavenly position. The Cross is still the moral battle-axe of the Church, and the evil system can still feel its overthrowing power. It rests with the Church to adjust to

1. The meaning of the Cross;
2. The place into which the Cross puts the Church;
3. Positive aggression in its whole armour.

Our object has not been to deal at any length with the connected matters. Each one of them could easily fill a book to itself. We have aimed at indicating the place which the Cross has in all things related to God's eternal and universal purpose in Christ.

There remains but one realm indicated on our diagram. But before we pass to consider that, we would add something to this chapter with the object of doubly emphasizing that power is a matter of position.

Position And Power

Undoubtedly the word which occurs most often in religious - and especially evangelical - circles today is the word "power." In addresses and prayers it is the keynote from which and to which there is constant movement. All the world over it is the same.

Listening to speakers and prayers in languages with which one is not conversant, a certain word occurs with almost monotonous reiteration, and on inquiry one is not surprised to learn that it is this word. The absence of power and the necessity for it is betrayed or confessed in many ways; not only directly and humbly by the more spiritually minded among God's people, but by the loud display of ingenious resourcefulness in advertisement, "stunts," organization, drives, etc., which are a more sad giving-away of

the case than what is meant to be implied by them, viz.: - that there is no life.

We do not intend to embark upon a consideration of this subject in general from all of its angles, but to deal with one basic thing, more basic even than the reception of the Holy Spirit. The matter is very rarely dealt with in relation to the Holy Spirit, and certainly no treatise can be anything like complete otherwise. The Master made it very clear that before there could be a Pentecost there were certain very deep and vital things to transpire. Pentecost was to be very truly an effect, and not only a cause; the end of much as well as a beginning; a seal and not only a pledge. Before there could be the counterpart of Christ's Jordan anointing upon the members of His Body, the Church, there must of necessity have been a baptism into His death, a union with Him in the entombment of the "body of sin." His death had meant the closing of the door upon the old creation; the first Adam had been dealt with and effectually relegated to the place where he would no longer have any consideration or acceptance from God, being reckoned as dead, and only the inclusive "last Adam" would receive the fullness of God. In the day of the anointing of the servants of God of old, very definite and explicit instructions were given in relation to the anointing oil. This holy oil was in no wise to come upon man's flesh and there was to be no attempt to make anything like it.

The oil is always a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the "flesh" a type of the old fallen nature of "Adam." God strictly refuses that the Holy Spirit should come upon uncrucified men and women. "Becoming conformed unto His death" is the only path to power. All our motives in seeking power will be tested by fire. Are we seeking personal influence, popularity, reputation, prestige, acceptableness, success, demonstrations, something of a kingdom of this world? We may think our motive to be perfectly pure; but not until we pass into death, death to any or all of the above, and find ourselves "despised and rejected of men," our names cast out as evil, and a real hold-up (seemingly) of our work, do we really come to face the real purpose and motive of our having any place in the work of God. The death or eclipse of everything within and without is a good test. Many of the men of God who have been TRULY used by Him have gone this way. Not upon our flesh - whether it be the gross flesh or the refined, soulish, educated flesh - will God allow His Spirit to come. Before there can be a Pentecost there must have been a Calvary. Before there can be the fire of God there must be an altar and a sacrifice; and it must be the BURNT offering, in which everything is consumed. Undoubtedly the disciples of our Lord went through the death of everything of ambition, expectation, vision, self-confidence, etc., when their Master was crucified, and then they tasted deeply of that death which was to govern them all the days which were to be. Their views, ideas, "convictions," methods, scales of values, standards of judgment, dispositions, temperaments, personal influence and every part of their life, came under this government, and in every deeper baptism into death they were raised more fully into His life - not their own. Each experience was more critical and crucial and devastating than the last, and doubtless they sometimes wondered if there would be anything at all left; but so the life was becoming more abundant. See for example Acts 10, and 2 Cor. 1:8-10, etc.

This was and is the initial position which alone means power, and any seeming power which is not resultant from the deep death of the natural life of the individual or community is a making of oil like unto the true but which is not the true, and therefore in the deepest sense is not the anointing of God. But there is a further element in this matter of position. In the world and the flesh Satan had judicial rights. These judicial rights and the ground of Satan's claim Christ came to deal with; to destroy the ground and to possess Himself of the rights. In the light and the power of His Cross - which He had accepted at His baptism - and on the ground of His predestined position as the God-chosen "Prince of this world," Christ possessed a mystic authority which was recognized in every sphere and always set over against another authority. The Greek word *exousia*, translated in the A.V. "power" and in the R.V. "authority," would be

more accurately translated "jurisdiction." See the recognition of this superior jurisdiction, for instance, in Matthew 7:29, where it is set over against that of the scribes; in Matthew 8:9, where it is above that of the Roman Empire behind the Centurion; in Matthew 21:23, where the Pharisees betray their recognition of this mystic thing. The ninety-four occurrences of this word in the New Testament are very illuminating. Satan claimed the jurisdiction of the world, (Luke 4:6). Christ did not deny his claim then, but went to the Cross crying, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; and having dealt with Satan and all the ground of his claim, Christ rose triumphant saying, "All jurisdiction has just been given to Me in the heavens and on earth; for this reason go YE into the whole world and proclaim the good news" (Matt. 28:18-19, Literal Translation).

In the light of this triumph and because He held this position in Himself He had said to His disciples, "Behold I have given you jurisdiction... over all the power (dunamis - driving force) of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). After His having possessed Himself of this jurisdiction on behalf of the race as He possessed it in Himself as the Son of God - He promises them that they shall receive power (dunamis - driving force) when the Holy Spirit is come upon them (Acts. 1:8). There can never be "dunamis" until there is "exousia," that is, there can never be driving force until there is POSITION.

God will only put His power behind those who are in the authoritative position, and none are there who have not been incorporated into Christ in death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and reign, and this as a present SPIRITUAL experience. The jurisdiction of Christ through His Cross has to function through the members of His Body in concert. Christ has the jurisdiction, we are incorporated into Him if we have on all points accepted and claimed our identification with Him, and thus we have become the instruments of that authority over the driving-power of the enemy in every sphere where His victory is not recognized. By a life in the Spirit we are able to receive by discernment those indications from above - the "Head" - and then command the situation and put the enemy's work out of action. The word "destroy" in the New Testament means "put out of action," and this is related to "the works of the devil," and progressively wrought out on the ground of Calvary by "the Church, which is His Body." This is not vulgar exorcism, for it can only be effectual as the Holy Spirit takes the initiative in us and through us, and we must know His "energizing." Undoubtedly it was their absolute union with their victorious Lord, and the recognition of their judicial authority - not over men but over Satan and his kingdom - which was the ground of the Holy Spirit's seal and anointing of the Apostles and first believers. Galatians 2:20 is forever the key to the situation.

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