

The Governing Law of Divine Love

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes that true transformation and divine love begin at a point of complete helplessness, where only God's intervention can bring about resurrection and glory.

Scripture: John 1:4, John 3:3, John 4:13

Topics: "Divine Love", "Spiritual Bankruptcy"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes that the foundation of divine love is rooted in the concept of starting from zero, where human effort is insufficient and only God's intervention can bring about true transformation. He illustrates this through various biblical accounts, such as Nicodemus' need to be born again and the healing of the man at Bethesda, highlighting that God's love operates under the law of His glory, which is revealed through resurrection. The sermon stresses that we must recognize our spiritual bankruptcy and rely solely on Christ for life and sustenance, as true glory comes from God alone. Sparks concludes that our understanding of life and glory is contingent upon our faith in Christ, who is the source of all resurrection and life.

Transcript

Reading: John 1:4; 2:3; 3:3; 4:13-14; 5:5-9; 6:33-35; 9:1-7; 11:1-6, 17,21,23,25-26.

A ZERO POINT

ALL these passages which we have read are really a sequence. They are the outflow of the first. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." And you will notice that they all represent a zero point. The mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine: there is nothing to draw upon! The next chapter is only another way of saying the same thing. Nicodemus came to Jesus and sought to commence at a point which he considered to be a good point from which to begin negotiations with the Lord Jesus, but it was a point far in advance of that which the Lord Jesus could accept: so He took him right back to zero, and said: Ye must be born again. We cannot start at any point beyond that. If you and I are going to come into any kind of living relationship, we must get right back there: we must come to zero and start from zero. "Ye must be born again." For except a man be born anew, he cannot see. It is no use our starting at some point where, after all, we are incapacitated from seeing. Chapter 4 is but another way of setting forth the same truth. The woman after all is found to be bankrupt, at zero. Jesus gradually draws her out and the final expression from her side is, in effect, Well, I don't know anything about that, I have not anything of that; I have been coming here every day, day after day, but I know nothing about what you are talking of!

She is down to zero: and then He says, That is where we begin. The water that I shall give is not the drawing upon your own resources at all, not bringing something out of your well, it is not something that you can produce and I improve upon and make better. No, it is something which comes solely and only from Myself; it is a new act altogether apart from you; it is the water that I shall give. We begin all over again in this matter.

Then in chapter 5 the Holy Spirit is careful to make perfectly clear that this poor fellow was in a hopeless state, that every effort was abortive, every hope was disappointed. For thirty and eight years, a lifetime, the man had been in that state, and there is the note of despair in the man. The Lord Jesus does not say to him, Look here, you are a poor cripple; I am going to take you in hand, and after a course of treatment I will have you on your feet, I will make those old limbs over anew, I will improve on your condition. Not at all. In an instant, in a moment, it is a start again. The effect of what He does is as though the man were born again. This is not curing the old man, this is making a new man, in principle. This is something that comes in that was not there before, and could not be produced before, the ground of which was not there, something which was uniquely and solely Christ's doing. It was zero, and He began at zero.

Chapter 6--a great multitude. Whence shall we buy bread enough for this multitude? Well, the situation is quite a hopeless one, but by His own act He meets the situation, and then follows on with His great teaching to interpret what He has done in feeding the multitude. He says, I am the Bread which came down from heaven. There is nothing here on this earth that can meet this need; it has to come out of heaven, Bread out of heaven for the life of the world: otherwise the world is dead. We begin at zero. (The loaves and fishes may represent our small measure of Christ which can be increased.)

Chapter 9--the man born blind. Not a man who has lost his sight and is having his sight recovered. That is not the point at all. The glory of God is not found in improving, the glory of God is found in resurrection. That is what is coming out here. The glory of God is not found in our being able to produce something or put something into God's hands, something of ours, that He can take up and make use of. The glory of God is something solely out from God Himself, and we can contribute nothing. The glory of God comes out of zero. The man was born blind. The Lord Jesus gives him sight; he never had sight before.

Then chapter 11 gathers it all up. If you like to sit down and look at Lazarus, you will find that Lazarus is the embodiment of "They have no wine". He is the embodiment of "Ye must be born again". He is the embodiment of "the water that I shall give shall be in him . . ." He is the embodiment of a bankrupt state; in the grave four days; but the Lord is coming to that. Lazarus is the embodiment of chapter 6: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven . . . for the life of the world". Lazarus is the embodiment of chapter 9, a man who is without sight, who is given sight by the Lord Jesus. Lazarus gathers it all up. But if you notice, in gathering up everything, the Holy Spirit is very careful to stress and emphasize one thing, namely, that the Lord Jesus will not touch the thing until it is far, far removed from any human remedy. He will not come on to the scene, or into association with it, until from all human standpoints it is bankrupt, it is at zero. And this is not a question of lack of interest, lack of sympathy, or lack of love, for here the Spirit again points out that love was there. But love is bound by a law.

THE GOVERNING LAW--THE GLORY OF GOD

Divine love is bound by a law. Love has a law where God is concerned. God's love is under a law. God's love is under the law of the glory of God, and He can show His love only in so far as showing His love is going to be to His glory. He is governed by that. In all the showings of His love, His object is that He may

be glorified, and the glory of God is bound up with resurrection. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" "Thy brother shall rise again." The glory of God is in resurrection, and therefore love demands that everything shall come to the place where only resurrection will meet the situation; no curing of things, no remedying of the old man.

Oh, let me start right back at the beginning if it is necessary. There are still a lot of people in this world who think that there is something in man that can contribute to the glory of God and that Christianity is only the bringing up out of man of something that is for the glory of God. That is a long-, long-standing fallacy and lie. It is not true. Call it what you like; it goes by various names, such as 'the inner light' or 'the vital spark'. The Word of God all the way through is coming down tremendously on this thing. I start at zero, and zero for me means that I can contribute nothing. Everything has to come from God. The very fact that the gift of God is eternal life means that you have not got it until it is given to you. You are blind until God gives you the faculty of sight. You are dead until God gives you life. You are a hopeless cripple until God does something for you and in you which you can never do. Unless God does this thing, unless this act takes place, well, there you lie. Spiritually, that is how you are. You can contribute nothing. Nicodemus, you have nothing to give, you must be born again; I cannot take you at the point at which you come to Me! Woman of Samaria, you have nothing, and you know it and confess it: that is where I begin! Man of Bethesda, you can do nothing, and you know it: then it all rests with Me! If ever there is to be anything, it rests with Me! Lazarus, what can you do now, and what can anybody make of you? If I do not come right in as out from heaven and do this thing, then there is nothing but corruption!

This is one of the great lessons that you and I have to learn in the School of Christ, that God begins for His glory at zero, and God will take pains through the Holy Spirit to make us to know that it is zero; that is, to bring us consciously to zero, and make us realize it is all with Him. You see, the end is always governing God, and the end is His glory. Take that word through this Gospel again--the glory of God in relation to Christ. We were saying in a previous meditation that God's great end for us in Christ is glory, fullness of glory. Yes, but then there is this--that no flesh should glory before Him. And where does that come? --"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:29-31). And what is that connected with?--He "was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord". It is a question of what He is made to be. No flesh is to glory before Him. "My glory will I not give to another" (Isa 42:8; 48:11). Therefore it is all the Lord's matter and He will retain it in His own hands. "And when he had heard . . . he abode two days . . . where he was" (John 11:6). In love, governed by love, that the glory of God might be revealed, He kept away.

Have we got settled on this? We take so long to learn these basic elementary lessons. We do still cling to some sort of idea that we can produce something, and all our miserable days are simply the result of still hoping that we can in some way provide the Lord with something. Not being able to find it, but breaking down all the time, we get miserable, perfectly miserable. It takes us so long to come to the place where we do fully and finally settle this matter, that if we lived as long as ever man lived on this earth, we shall not be able to contribute one iota which can be acceptable to God, and which He can take and use for our salvation, for our sanctification, for our glorification, not a bit. All that He can use is His Son, and the measure of our ultimate glory will be the measure of Christ in us, just that. There will be differences in glory, as one thing differs from another. One glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars. There will be differences in degree of glory, and the difference in degree of glory ultimately will be according to the measure of Christ that each one of us severally has. That in turn depends upon how much you and I by faith are really making Christ the basis of our life, the very basis of our living, of our

being, how much the principle of these familiar words has its application in our case, 'Not what I am, but what Thou art'. Christ is all the glory, 'the Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land'.

Beloved friends, whatever you go away with, go away with this, that from God's standpoint, the glory of life depends entirely upon our faith apprehension, appropriation and appreciation of Christ, and there is no glory at all for us now or in the time to come but on that ground and on that line. I know how simple that is, how elementary, but oh, it is such a governing thing. Glory--that the Lord shall be glorified in us. What greater thing could happen than that the Lord should be glorified in us? The glory of God is bound up with the resurrection, and resurrection is God's unique and sole prerogative. So that if God is to be glorified in us, you and I have to live on Him as the resurrection and the life from day to day, and know Him as that as we go through life.

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