

# The Mighty Presence of God - Part 1 (Cd Quality)

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's purpose to have His dwelling among men, and how this purpose is bound up with the spiritual state of God's people.*

**Duration:** 17:30

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:27, Nehemiah 8:8, Psalm 46:10, Matthew 18:20, John 1:14, Acts 17:28, Revelation 21:3

**Topics:** "Presence of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need to look beyond the physical representation of the Bible and seek the deeper spiritual reality it represents. The central figure in the Bible is identified as God's Son, Jesus Christ. The speaker highlights the importance of God's purpose being fulfilled through His people, who are called to be in a close relationship with Him. The sermon also emphasizes the consequences of straying from God's will and the need for discipline and instruction to bring believers back into alignment with Him.

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## Transcript

We have been, we believe, by the Lord, directed in this time back to the Book of Nehemiah. And so we continue in our consideration of this message, which is an all-time message, and, as we feel, with a special underlining and emphasis for the time in which we are. We have been in this moment a microcosm of the purpose and the coming of all time.

This book which goes under the name of this man, Nehemiah, is but a historical representation of the one all-governing purpose of God in creation, in redemption, and in glory. Nehemiah is a very useful and helpful means of understanding not just a phase of history, but the whole Bible, and all that the Bible is about. I'm quite sure you would all agree, if it could be stated in just a sentence or two, part of this mighty volume, with its very, very many sides and parts, he's all about.

That would be helpful. If we could read our Bible in such a way that every part of it falls into line with just one thing, that would help us with our Bible quite a lot. And I can give you that key, or I can show you that in this little book we have the key, not only to the whole Bible, but to that before the Bible, and if there is an after the Bible, to that also.

The one all-governing intention of God is to have his dwelling among men. That God would have a place where he can, in pleasure, dwell in his creation amongst men. That is the purpose for which he created this world, for which he created man, and it is in relation to that one purpose.

All the history that is recorded in this great book is a part. We have come to regard the Bible, and especially Christianity, as a matter of quite a number of things. And because this one supreme thing has either not been seen or has been lost to view, we have all the confusion, all the complications, all the difficulties that there are in Christianity and in the Christian life, to really see and to be able to grasp just one thing alone.

For it to get possession of our hearts is in itself a redeeming thing, a saving thing, a delivering thing. We, dear friends, must make it our very deliberate, applied business to reconsider and reconstitute our whole mentality as to God. And his will, in the light of this one thing, it will come right back upon us individually, will come right back upon all our Christian relationships, such as the whole matter of Christian fellowship, and all the other aspects of the Christian life.

One thing, God may be there. God may be present. God may delight to be present.

Finding the conditions which satisfy his heart so that it can be said, the Lord is there. Because that is one of his names, you know, the Lord is there. Well, as I have said, this little book of Nehemiah gathers up the whole Bible itself on that one thing, and is a microcosm on the one hand, in the first instance, of that age-long or timeless purpose of God.

I bid you reread your Bible in the light of that one thing. On the other side, of course, there is that tough system and determined effort and purpose of country powers in this universe to frustrate and nullify that divine purpose. So this book is a book of conflict, a book of assailing in many ways and many directions.

It's a book of striving for God's purpose on one side and against it on the other. I repeat, that also is the conflict, not of Nehemiah and his people and his day, but of all times. You want to understand the meaning of all spiritual conflict, all spiritual antagonism, all spiritual opposing forces in this universe? The meaning of evil and evil pastime? One explanation? Just to see to it that God does not get the place for himself, that he has set his path on heaven, in conditions suitable to himself, the frustration of God's purpose in your life and in mine.

God shall not be seen of. That's the battle. That's the battle every day, every day to counter and nullify a presence, a manifestation of the presence of the Lord.

That's the history of the Church's conflict. Because of this divine calling, that is the history of the agents. A purpose being countered.

Far as all those myriads of evil forces are concerned, it's our adventure that things can be made nil and void. You can see then, those who have any acquaintance with this little book, that that is what is gathered into its few pages. Now the realization of God's purpose is shown in this book, the truth principle, to be bound up with the spiritual state of God's own people.

A people taken out of the nation in relation to this purpose, to be the people where God is, amongst whom the Lord is, where he may be found and known. In the historical, temporal, earthly representation, of course, that was Israel. But you look through Israel to the very much larger, the people taken out of the nations for the name of Christ.

And, as I have said, the realization of this great purpose of God, to have an abiding place, a dwelling in satisfaction and pleasure, from which he need never depart, which he can give himself without reserve, wholly, completely. That is bound up with the spiritual condition of that people chosen for this purpose, in the first instance. There is the sovereignty of God.

He acts sovereignly and he will sovereignly reach his end. But strangely, and this is one of those paradoxes of which the Bible is full, even the sovereignty of God is linked with spiritual conditions. And this purpose of God is clearly seen in this book and everywhere, to be just tied in with the spiritual state of the people chosen in the first instance for this purpose.

Yes, it's a strange thing to say, and yet it is quite true, that even the infinite God, wisdom and power, has limited himself to the spiritual condition of his people. God is limited to and by the people of his purpose, as to their spiritual state. And that, of course, raises a very, very big issue for us.

We are called according to his purpose, as we are, chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundations of the world. In relation to this great end, God may come and never depart, find his eternal dwelling place in glory, in pleasure, if we are called according to that purpose. And then the realization of it does so much depend upon our spiritual condition.

And that, of course, is revealed so much, so fully in the history of Israel, in the way of type and representation. Then it brings this whole matter of spiritual condition very much to the fore, doesn't it? You and I may limit the Lord. Individually we may limit the Lord's purpose.

We may, in that measure, hold up his purpose, put it back. Our assemblies may do that, limit the Lord, and postpone his purpose so far as they are concerned. And as it is true of the individual and of the companies here and there, it is, of course, fully true as to the whole judge.

The Lord waits for a condition for the satisfying of his heart and providing him with his place. Well, we have seen how again and again, as in this book of Nehemiah, there was a condition which made it necessary for the Lord, for the time being, to suspend his operations. But then again and again how he would turn for the recovery of that which would provide him with his means.

And this book of Nehemiah is just one of those activities of God in recovery. I'm very glad of that word. I'm glad of that word because it does embody all the grace of God, all the mercy of God, all the patience of God, the long-suffering forbearance of God, all the determination of God not to lose anything if by any means.

He can conserve it, salvage it, hold it. The story of God's movements again and again for recovery is the long, long story of the grace of God. What I have said just now about individual and local companies and the Church, through in this connection, God is not going to lose anything he can possibly by any means of grace, save it, you or me.

We lapse, dear friends, we lapse. We put back the purpose of God in our lives. We lose a lot of time, a lot of our lives, because of those lapses, those departures, because of other conditions.

We allow, come into our lives, and the interest and the dividedness of heart and what not, we lose a lot of our life, keeping God waiting. And yet he's not waiting. Even in those times he's doing something, as with this people, deep work of discipline, of instruction, teaching how unprofitable it is to be out of the will of God.

How little we really gain in the end when, having been called, we do not follow on to know the Lord. Working, yes, in the dark days, deeply, painfully, but working, and at length moving again to bring us back, to recover. That's true of many a life, many a life once given to the Lord.

That's true of many a company. The Lord does not just likely, because of some faults or weaknesses or failures, wash his hands of the whole thing and say, I've done with it. He will return to his purpose.

If there is any prospect at all through grace and mercy of furthering it. And so with his church it will be like this. I thank God for the word recovery.

Where would any of us be today if the Lord had let us go? Let us go. If he had not recovered us. Maybe some here this morning who have gone, who have let go.

May I say to you, the Lord is not giving up. You go through a dark and difficult time under his hand in which you will learn that there's no gain in that way. And he'll react again.

Come back and seek to draw you back, not only to himself, but to the purpose of your being called into fellowship with him. Here this little book is a monument of that recovering activity of the grace and mercy of God. And now my difficulty, and that clock is always a difficulty.

There's so much to which Dan introduces us, it's quite impossible to say it all. But I want us to say, if possible this morning, a little about the identifying of the two main factors in this great matter. Firstly, the purpose, and then the power.

I think probably we have to leave the second until the afternoon. But I feel to be very vital, if I may say so here, the power by which God recovers his purpose. But just to identify the purpose itself.

I have spoken in general terms of the purpose of God. I have just brought into view the fact of a purpose, and I have said something as to what it is, but we really haven't got to the heart of it. We just have to stand right back, both from this book, and from the Bible as a whole, from all the form, all the representation, all the figures, and all the things which are crowded into this volume, the Bible, and seek to see one all overshadowing reality.

For these, after all, are only representations, pictures, figures, symbols, ways of speaking, ways of teaching. Behind them, and over them all, is one inclusive all overshadowing figure, and that figure is God's Son. This is the end of Side 1. Please turn the tape over for Side 2.

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