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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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## Glory at the End

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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Reading: Haggai 2:1-9; Ephesians 3:20,21; Revelation 21:10-11.

*"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."*

*"Unto him be the glory in the church... for ever and ever."*

*"The holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God."*

It is something of which we should remind ourselves continually, that the end is going to be in glory, with glory - the end will be glory. Sometimes our answer to an interrogation might very well be that of the people in the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai: The present glory is nothing! but "the latter glory... shall be greater than the former". The end will be with glory. We must tell ourselves that, when things look anything but glorious, when the glory seems to be entirely hidden, when there seems to be no glory at all in our experience and we are passing through a deep and terrible time of trial and affliction, this is not the end; it just cannot be the end. Though we think the end has come, it cannot be identified as the end, because the Word of God says that the end is glory. This is not glory; therefore it cannot be the end and we have not arrived at the end yet. We are not going down in shame, in dishonour, in reproach, in despair. We are going up in glory, for the end *is* glory.

### **The Glory of Grace**

What is this glory? Well, quite clearly, according to these passages which we have read, and others, it is the glory of grace. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former", and in that very connection the prophet says: "He shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it" (Zechariah 4:7). The words from the letter to the Ephesians - "unto him be the glory in the church" - are set in a whole encompassment of grace. The incomparable words concerning grace are found

in that letter: "That we should be... to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (1:6); "According to the riches of his grace" (1:7); "(By grace have ye been saved) ... that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace" (2:5,7); "Unto me", says the Writer, "was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8). The last words concerning grace are in connection with the glory. So it is quite obviously the glory of grace. The Lord, in order to get the glory, will see that everything is kept on a basis of grace, that is, that everything that is not grace will be smitten hip and thigh by Him. In the end there will be no other element whatever in the situation. We shall just have to say it is His grace - the glory of His grace.

### **The Battleground of Grace**

The enemy is always trying to get us off the ground of grace. If he cannot do so by accusation, he will do so by false grace, which is presumption. In this way he makes grace a way of living as you like. It does not matter what you do, how you behave, grace will cover anything. "Once in grace, always in grace", so do not be troubled with responsibility. So grace is subverted. In many ways grace is a battleground, not a playground.

### **Grace a Power in the Life**

The only answer to these things is this: That while grace is that favour of God which asks for no merit, no earning, and is freely bestowed on us, as Paul says, *in the Beloved*, grace is also a power in the life. It is a vital force to make us live according to the good pleasure of God, the grace of God not only manifested in our acceptance, but in our lives, the acceptance begetting a response to the pleasure of God. Grace is a character, a nature, as well as a standing; grace unto glory, His glory, primarily the glory of what grace has done in our acceptance, in our standing, in our position, but also what grace has done in conforming us to the image of His Son, what grace is doing in us. It is a working thing. The glory of His grace at the end will be the manifestation of what grace has done.

### **The Glory of His Sovereign Wisdom and Power**

It will be the glory of His sovereign wisdom and power. You go back to these books of Ezra and Nehemiah and you find a people very much in need of the grace of God by reason of their own helplessness, the remnant being stripped and shorn of everything, unable to provide anything at all, so that it must all be of the Lord. And then you see the enemies, all the enemies. No sooner does God's purpose come into view, and a people in it, than, as from nowhere, enemies spring up. You have never heard their names until now, you never knew anything about them and you did not know of their existence until now. How these people were beset on every hand by opposing forces who would make the work to cease by every means! You know the many forms of opposition in the book of Nehemiah - the enemy comes in from the deepest subterfuge to the most open and violent persecution. But there is a wonderful revelation of the sovereign wisdom and power of God; wisdom in outwitting the cunning of men and devils; wisdom in finding ways for the accomplishment of the purpose which men could never find; yes, and wisdom in turning the very work of their enemies to be complementary, spiritually complementary. Sovereign wisdom and sovereign power - and the house filled with glory at the end. The glory is the glory of that wisdom and power of God. "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think", which goes beyond our ability to imagine how it can be done, or that it can be done at all, "according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church". The story of the people of God is just that story of the power and wisdom of God, finding ways where there are no ways, finding means where there are no means, outwitting all the cunning of the enemy and turning the enemy's very work to

advantage.... "I would have you know... that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12). The wisdom of God, the power of God, the glory of that is manifested in the end.

### **The Glory of Life**

And then it is the glory of life, the inherent qualities of Divine life being fully manifested at the end; life with its inherent power of transcendence, for the supreme and inclusive enemy is death, for death, while destroyed and defeated in the Cross, is still allowed to work against the Lord's people. The destroyer is always on the track of one who has the life of God within. It is a part of the Divine order and economy to put the Divine life within and then allow it to be assailed by death and the powers of death in order to bring out what is inherent in that life. You and I would never know what we have got until it is drawn out and forced out by adverse conditions. We will never know what a Lord we have until we have to prove Him as the Lord of hosts. Notice that this whole matter of glory and grace is kept closely in touch with that very phrase, which is almost monotonously repeated: "The Lord of hosts", "Thus saith the Lord of hosts". You have to know Him in that absolutely supreme sense as the Lord of *hosts*, which means that you have to come up against other hosts to know Him in that way. Death is allowed to assail the possessors of Divine life just with this object of showing what that life really is, and in the end the glory will be the glory of the absolute ascendancy of that life in nullifying all the power of death. When it says: "The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26), it is a very significant statement, because there are other statements which say that the Lord did destroy death in His death. He tasted death on the behalf of every man, and destroyed death in order that there should be no more fear of death, and yet the last enemy still, yet, to be destroyed is death. What was done in the Head is going to be done in the whole Body. The Church is to come into its inheritance, and it is an inheritance of life. We have within us, in the gift of Divine life, such a wealthy inheritance, and we know little about it. The Lord is trying to teach us what we have in hand, what we can trade with, and in the end it will simply be the blazing forth of that which has been there all the time.

### **Progressive Glory Now**

I have said these things, but my object lies at the end of this. It is the glory of grace - "Grace all the work shall crown" - the glory of His sovereign power and wisdom, and the glory of His triumphant life, but do not let us think of glory as something detached and given, placed upon, at some future time. We are always using the phraseology about going to glory, which is imperfect at least. We are looking forward to the day of glory; we are putting glory on there. Somewhere in the future, in some realm, it is going to be glory.

My point is just this: that, while there is a future somewhere, sometime, when the glory will be manifested, the Lord's whole object is to bring about that glory in His people progressively now. That is why He is so careful to undercut everything that would take from the glory of grace, for, you see, grace is the great antidote to that terrible poison called pride. Pride was the ruin of the creation and it is an abomination with God: "God beholdeth the proud afar off". The strongest things that can be found in the Word of God are said against pride in all its forms, under all its names - arrogance, conceit, and all the rest. God hates pride, and that is why He will make everything a matter of grace. You and I can produce nothing and never will produce anything, and while we try to produce something as a merit in our favour to give ourselves a standing, God stands afar off and will reduce us to pulp to bring in the glory of His grace. He will break, shatter and empty us; and remember that our spiritual progress, our spiritual growth and our spiritual gain will always be in the measure in which we are aware that it is only by the grace of God that we have any place of recognition, or

anything else by Him. God is very near to the humble and to the broken in spirit, but to the proud He is afar off. We will make progress as long as it is a matter of grace, and that is altogether contrary to this human nature in its fallen state. We can even be proud of our humility. Somehow or other this accursed thing will come up, seep in, to bring about self-congratulation. It is horrible to God, so He will have it all of grace.

So remember that the measure of glory at the end will be the measure of grace now. God will bring us into many perplexing, bewildering situations where there is no way through at all for human wisdom and human strength and power fail us, in order that by His sovereign wisdom, doing what could not be imagined, and exercising power so great as to remove the greatest difficulties with the greatest ease, we wonder that we ever thought the thing so difficult. It has so easily disappeared. God's power is so overwhelmingly great, and what we think requires the very moving of heaven and earth to accomplish is done so quietly that we hardly recognize it when it is done, and afterward we wonder that we were in such a state of distraction over that thing. Then we worship and give glory to God. The glory of His wisdom and His power.

And He brings us into situations of death - be they physical or be they spiritual; be they positions that we have to occupy in this world where it is all spiritual death - in order to show us that there is a life which is more than sufficient for these conditions. There is another life which is not dependent at all upon our physical fitness or upon the situation in which we are placed being helpful. There is another life which overcomes death, and it will be the glory of that life in fullness that breaks out. The thing is going on now, and the glory is already inherent. God is only preparing in us the glory which shall be manifested in the end. In the end we shall have to say: 'Well, I was learning all the way along the grace of God, the wisdom of God, the power of His life; I see now that that was the pathway of glory and that has issued in the effulgence; it is that that has led to this glory at the end.' It is inevitable; it must be because God has placed our lives upon this basis of the need of grace so utter, the need of wisdom, the need of strength, the need of life, in order that His glory should be manifested in meeting that need out from Himself.