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## He Ever Liveth to Make Intercession

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*Transcribed from a message given in February 1955. The spoken form has been retained verbatim.*

Fragments of scripture in the gospel by Luke, chapter 2, at verse 34:

*"And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which is spoken against, yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul that thoughts out of many hearts shall be revealed."*

And in the 22nd chapter of the same gospel, at verse 31:

*"Simon, Simon, behold satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat. But I made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not."*

The gospel by Matthew, chapter 26, verse 31:

*"Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night, for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."*

And the gospel by John, chapter 17, verse 9:

*"I pray for them, for those who thou hast given me, for they are thine"*

Verse 14:

*"I have given them thy word and the world hateth them because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one."*

There are a number of other passages that I would like to lay alongside of those, but just one more, in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 7, verse 25:

*"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."*

I do want this word this morning to be an establishing word, a word by which we shall be strengthened in our life in the Lord and there are two sides to this word, one which may seem to be the dark side, the other the bright side.

These passages which we have read which, as I have said, are but a selection from a number of others of like kind, bring before us the tremendous ordeal of the Cross. What a lot was going on in the unseen during those hours from the arrest of the Lord to His death; I mean in the hearts of people, with all the movement and the activity and the excitement and everything else on the outside, there was a corresponding activity going on within lives. That prophecy of Simeon to Mary was verily being fulfilled. The hour when the sword pierced her heart, the thoughts out of many hearts were being revealed. The heart of Judas was revealed, the heart of Simon Peter in the judgment hall was being revealed. One by one they were passing into this terrible ordeal until they were all included, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night". "The sheep will be scattered abroad when the Shepherd is smitten." And I have not read these other passages about Judas and about their all forsaking Him and fleeing or following afar off. It was all a revelation of the heart in the hour of the Cross.

It does seem, dear friends, that that was not only true on that occasion, but whenever the Lord is moving toward something new – some spiritual enlargement, something fuller of Himself, in resurrection life, in service – very often there's an ordeal that has to be gone through in preparation. An ordeal of the Cross – that is, those concerned pass through a time when all sorts of unsuspected things in their own hearts are dragged out into the light; ugly things. Things they would never have believed to be there any more than Peter would have believed if he'd been told and as he was told what he would do and what he would say in that hour. Not one of them would have believed for a moment that they would have been offended or shaken and flee, or do whatever it was that they respectively did; they wouldn't have believed it! Peter himself very, very strongly reacted to the suggestion that he would do anything of the kind.

And so it is from time to time on the move with God towards something more, experiences, something like this, take place – we have a bad time. It seems the worst time than ever we've had before when things come to light about ourselves and to ourselves that we would never either have suspected or believed had they been told us.

I don't know about Judas, whether he really *did* know his motive, the thoughts of his heart, whether if he had been told that he would perpetrate such a crime as to deny and betray the Lord Jesus because, because he'd altogether failed to set a right and sufficient estimate upon Jesus. I think that was really behind it all, thirty pieces of silver seemed to be of greater value than the Lord; an altogether inadequate evaluation of the Lord. Surely there was something wrong with *that* heart. He might not have believed it if he'd been told.

Peter? Well he was told what he would do but he wouldn't have it. He wouldn't have it, because he never suspected the secret cowardice of his own heart. A man who can face storms upon the sea with a good deal of physical courage very often breaks down when it's a matter of spiritual courage or moral courage, and he perhaps was mistaking his physical courage for moral courage and never suspected that cowardice in his own heart and never would have believed that a situation could arise where with all his might he would seek to preserve himself. Self-preservation... deep in his heart... he wouldn't believe it. It was all being brought out into the light.

And then as for the rest, the other ten, they all forsook, fled... they would never have believed. The

infinite perils of unbelief! The Lord had told them, told them again and again what was going to happen and what would eventuate from His suffering: death. No, no, deeply rooted was this unbelief; this could never happen, this would never happen! They neither believed in His death nor His resurrection. But they wouldn't have said they didn't believe in it. It was something there, unsuspected. Was it the strength of unsanctified ambition? A kingdom in this world and a place in it? Was that covering up so much more, that they could not believe in His death? Their kingdom went if that happened.

Well, it was a tremendous night, a terrific ordeal and really it's a wonder that anybody survived. Only one man did not survive: Judas. Judas did not survive and the Lord Jesus said, "them have I kept, them that thou gavest Me, none of them, none of them is lost except the son of perdition". Now, I'm not going into the story of Judas but let it be said here, lest anybody ever should, and sometimes Christians do get into a state where they do take hold of Judas and arrange themselves alongside of him as absolutely hopeless and having committed the unpardonable sin, there is no forgiveness. Remember that Judas's was a lifelong, calculated, *coldly calculated* course. The word in Hebrews which so many people do take up in their dark time, about it is impossible to restore such a one again to repentance, has connected with it this: remember this, seeing that they willfully, they willfully! It is a matter of willfulness and it was willfulness with Judas. It was willfulness. Well you can decide whether you are a willful, deliberate, calculating betrayer of the Lord Jesus with no estimate upon His worth and value above thirty pieces of silver. If that's your state, well, it is pretty hopeless isn't it? But leave Judas aside, leave him aside.

Take these others. We are surprised, we are amazed, are we not, that any of them survived and came out! And the wonderful story is written about them afterwards. What a story! Why? Why did they survive? *Why* did they have such a glorious "afterward"? Why, with all this terrible self-disclosure, enough to shatter anyone and anyone's hope about himself or herself, why? "*I have prayed,*" said the Lord Jesus, "I pray for them, I pray for them." So He said in that matchless prayer of John 17: "*I pray for them*". To Simon, "*But I prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*" and then for us all "*seeing He ever liveth to make intercession*".

Well that's the bright side, you see, there may be the day of the dark ordeal when the Lord is having to make us, in the first place, realize more than ever what a need of His salvation and His grace there is in our own lives. Oh, how much we need the grace of God, for everything depends upon how much we realize the need of the grace of God. To Him that's a *tremendously* important thing, that you and I are just wrecked upon the grace of God. So that really, really out of the depth we say, "but for the grace of God where should I be?" You know, we don't realize that *all* at once when we first come to the Lord, some do come out of the depths and are able to say at once "Oh the grace of God is unspeakably wonderful!" but there are a large number who do not have that deep consciousness to begin with. But we've got to have it sooner or later, that our *whole* position, our *whole* future, our *whole* hope rests upon the *grace* of God. That has to be not words, not doctrine, but something that is wrung out of a deep experience and consciousness. And to bring that about, these times of self-disclosure seem to be necessary, that we might learn more the meaning of His Grace. But oh, when we are going through... well, Peter, how shattering it all was for him, to realize what was there all the time, what *had* been there all along. How shattering. And no doubt that was true of the others who would never have believed or suspected... now it's all so true, they are just like that after all, just like that. No one would have believed it about themselves.

Yes, a shattering thing is this self-discovery. How shall we get through? Well dear friends, the establishing word is that He who prayed for them, the eleven, and He who prayed for Simon Peter, the one, and *got them through* by prayer, ever liveth to make intercession for *us* and will

get *us* through! Solid ground under our feet is the intercession of our Lord which is going on now! What is our hope? Where is our hope? What is our confidence? Just that. When we cannot pray ourselves, sometimes that's for ourselves, and when we seem to be at the end of being able to pray for someone else, He ever liveth to make intercession. Thank God for the prayer life of the Lord Jesus! It does not relieve us of responsibility or exonerate us from carelessness in this matter, but friends, we have reached the end and can do no more – He ever lives TO... *TO make intercession*. He lives TO make intercession. Why does He live? Why is He alive? To make intercession until He has got us.

You read that prayer in John 17 and look at that. He says "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night for it is written I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered – I pray that they all may be one..." Yes, scattered hither and thither like a broken vessel, its pieces and fragments all over the place and then after His resurrection He collects the pieces from every place and brings them together and the prayer is answered, that they may be one. And Peter, standing up with them, the day of Pentecost, the prayer is answered – they are one. They are one.

Well, there's virtue and efficacy in the prayer of the Lord Jesus. The Cross reveals much which disheartens and disconcerts and would bring us to despair but for *His* faithfulness in prayer for us. "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps", He *ever* liveth... Let us draw more upon what He is doing now for us, *rely* more upon it, and if you feel, any one of you feel you can do no more, that you've prayed yourself to a standstill about yourself or someone else or something, don't give up, don't pass away your confidence. Remember: He is going on, *He ever liveth to make intercession*.