



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

---

Published as a PDF by Austin-Sparks.net  
Email: info@austin-sparks.net

*In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge (except necessary distribution costs) and with this statement included.*

---

## The Altar and the Name

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Sep-Oct 1953, Vol. 31-5.*

***A precis of the August Conference at Honor Oak.***

*Key Scripture: Genesis 26:25. "And he builded an altar... and called upon the name of the Lord."*

### **Introductory**

How often these two things - the Altar and the Name - are linked together in the Bible. For instance:-

Gen. 22 Abraham's altar and the name Jehovah-Jireh.

The Lord the Provider for His own demands. God's satisfaction in sacrifice.

Exodus 17 Moses' altar and the name Jehovah-Nissi.

The Lord triumphant in His own wars. God's help in warfare.

Judges 6 Gideon's altar and the name Jehovah-Shalom.

The Lord - Peace, for His own glory and testimony.

There are many more instances.

How all the above and the rest are taken up in the Cross of Christ and carried forward into the Name of the Lord.

*The inclusive and transcendent factor is the honour of the Name of the Lord, and the centre of that issue is the Cross.*

We take up Gideon's altar and the Name.

### **1. There is a tremendous work to be done.**

It is no less than the extrication of the Name of the Lord from a desperate and grievous situation with His people.

The people of the Name are:-

- a. At the mercy of their enemies. There is a state of weakness, defeat, and impotency.
- b. In poverty, starvation, fear, confusion, and lack of cohesion.
- c. Without leaders who can speak with authority and unify the people unto ascendancy.

All this right in the land of promise and covenant. Christ is spiritually all that that land was typically, and yet so many of the people of His Name - Christ-ians = Christ-ones - are in a state largely corresponding to the above.

### **2. Gideon sets forth God's mind to do something for His Name's sake.**

Gideon is an outstanding example of the kind of instrument that God would use for the honour of His Name.

The focal-point of Gideon's whole story is his altar (Judges 6:24). Everything moved up to it and then from it.

The altar was the climax of a battle between Gideon and the Lord.

The battle with Midian and her allies had to be pre-fought in the soul of Gideon.

God had *sovereignly* chosen an instrument. The difficulty with Gideon was -

The greatness of the task.

The weakness of the instrument.

The problem of the people's condition - was God *really* concerned? Was this *really* the Lord? Did He *really* mean this deliverance seeing He had allowed the condition?

*Could God really be trusted?*

The fleece-tests had nothing to do with proving the *fact* of God. God never submits Himself to such tests. They had to do with God's choice of the instrument.

Moses and Jeremiah had the same problem and battle.

"I cannot speak. I am not eloquent" - *Moses*.

"I cannot speak, I am but a child" - *Jeremiah*.

God's answer was dew, not thunder and lightning. Thunder and lightning in the Bible have to do with judgment.

How often we have demanded or expected confirmation by some mighty demonstration, and God has answered like the dew - 'I am just going quietly on in spite of everything'.

The Lord defeated Gideon and subdued him.

The altar - "Jehovah-Shalom" = "The Lord-Peace" - saw the ground secured for all else by peace through conquest in Gideon's own soul.

Victory or defeat rests upon our relationship with the Lord in subjection or controversy.

Gideon's faith (see Hebrews 11) was the issue of a battle of minds. "By faith (they) subdued kingdoms" because they - the instruments - were first subdued.

*The Name of the Lord has to be honoured in our own hearts before it can be vindicated on the field of battle without.*

*The enemy must have no ground within!*

### **3. The recovery and continuance of God's testimony to His Name.**

While Gideon, on one side, sets forth the absolute sovereignty of God, on the other side he indicates the ground on which that sovereignty works.

1) Gideon was a young man.

In this he embodied a spiritual principle - the great factor and principle of *spiritual* youth.

The law of nature is ever-fresh reproduction. God having *once* created proceeds, not by more creations of each species, but by reproduction.

Every new generation is not meant to be a special creation, but the taking up of past values in freshness. The 'old' or past is kept fresh by fresh generations.

This has two sides:-

a. We who are of a passing generation will find our freshness and life in doing everything to equip the young.

If we hold things to ourselves, they will die with us; they will become old.

This is the law and blessing of families.

Childless people grow old too soon.

A mark that God means to go on is in His giving young people. This must be true spiritually as well as naturally, and more so.

b. The new generation must succeed in an inward and spiritual way to the passing.

A rigid law of the Bible is the penalty of death for dishonouring parents. Repudiate your parents and you die; that is the old law.

This contains a spiritual principle.

The new generation is not *created* a new humanity, but *generated*, a *fresh expression* of the original humanity.

The values of the former have to be taken up, carried on, increased, and given new life.

In the spiritual, years are not necessarily the criterion; spiritual life *is*. You have measure according to your walk with God.

2) Gideon was a humble man.

Humility is a mark of true maturity. Pride so often goes with youth and inexperience - humility with age.

A proud *old* man is a shame. Humility is true spirituality. With Gideon there was no pride of person, family, achievement, or ambitiousness; no spiritual superiority. His father's house was evidently quite distinguished. Gideon took ten of his servants (Judges 6:27). His brothers all resembled the children of a king (Judges 8:18). Yet his spirit was one of very real meekness.

Meekness is one of the most powerful factors with God.

3) Gideon was an industrious man.

There was not much that could be done, but he did what was possible.

God silently and - at first - imperceptibly took account of Gideon's industriousness. Gideon did not know that, while working hiddenly, he was being watched, and was producing a verdict of very great approval.

4) Gideon had a great concern for others.

His secret activity was to secure bread for others, to defeat the food-destroying and stealing work of the enemy. This is something of which the Lord takes account.

5) Gideon was a man of soul distress over the condition of the Lord's people. This thought and concern produced the heart-cry "Why?" (6:13).

6) Gideon destroyed the enemy's foothold in his father's house.

The enemy cannot be defeated on the field if there is a private background alliance with him.

#### **4. The ground of the presence and power of God.**

Some years ago, in a time of spiritual difficulty, I came across the following lines in *The Life of Lilius Trotter* of North Africa:-

*'So many questions lie ahead concerning the work, and a great comforting came this morning in the 38th chapter of Job about "the way" of wisdom, and "the place thereof". It tells how God finds the way for the wind and the water and the lightning, and it came with a blessed power what those ways are. The way for the wind is the way of the greatest emptiness: the place of the water is the place of the lowest depths: and the way of the lightning - as science proves - is along the line of the greatest weakness. "If any man lack." There is God's condition for the inflow of spiritual understanding.'*

Gideon's story is that of the strength of weakness. The ground is the Name, and jealousy for it: but the way of the glory of the Name is the way of the Cross.

This is set forth pre-eminently in Philippians 2:9-10.

The Name is the issue, the Cross is the way. Here we see:-

1) The Cross means a reckoning. "He counted it not..." Paul here reads the motive of the Incarnation and the Cross. Another had sought to grasp the Name above every name. It was not enough to the Divine Son to sit in equality with God in heaven when the Name was usurped on earth.

Jealousy for God's rights in His Name weighed against all other interests.

Every servant of God must face this and make a reckoning, if he is *really* a servant of God.

*This is the essence of service.*

Moses "counted not": Paul said "I reckon".

We can make Christian work serve our own interests and honour. Jealousies, rivalries, factions, frictions, usually relate to personal interests.

The Lord always demands a basic reckoning, so that we will "count all things to be loss for... Christ Jesus" our Lord.

2) An emptying.

Although there is such a difference both in kind and degree between Christ's emptying and ours, the principle is the same.

Emptying of all personal glory.

The whole story of Gideon is a declaration that the vessel must have no glory, but serve the glory of God.

The glory of the Name is exclusive.

There is a tremendous challenge in this statement!

In the final summing-up the weight of glory will be with those who were least in personal glory.

3) The form and the function.

a. Man-likeness.

Not a superior being. Not an angel or archangel. Not a 'missionary', minister, dignitary; with titles, degrees, and worldly honours. No advertisement as someone great and important. But *a Man!*

b. Slave-function.

Not an autocrat, dictator, 'Master', 'Superior', 'Overseer', 'Superintendent', 'Manager', 'Director', etc., but a 'Bondslave'.

"I am among you as he that serveth."

4) "Obedient".

The word "unto" contains the thought of both 'unto' and 'until' - extent and finality.

The Cross is the utterness of God's will.

Not a Commander and an issuer of orders; but obedient - taking orders; able to be told what to do, and willing to do it.

All this is gathered into the mighty

"*WHEREFORE*"

"Wherefore... the name."

The Name is the sum and crown of all that the Cross meant.

These things constitute the ground of the presence and power of God, and there is no other for glory.

### **5. "Called according to... purpose." Romans 8:28.**

Gideon was a real example of this.

1) The purpose is comprehensive and clearly defined.

It is the ultimate of all

(a.) the initial apprehending,

(b.) the progressive preparation.

2) The purpose - because of digressions and declensions on the part of the called - demands specific callings to recover.

The Lord calls particular vessels to meet particular needs of any time and state.

The Bible is full of particular callings in relation to one end.

3) Divine presence, support, resource, go with calling. If these are withheld something is *wrong!* It is of supreme value to know and be in a specific calling; but it is as important to know that it is not an end in itself, but related to something much more. Hence any vision or work must not be an end in itself; but there must be openness to adjustment, Divine innovations, new things and ways hitherto unknown and untrodden.

The one thing that must govern everything is - not the propagation of any 'teaching' or particular truth; not the success of any movement or enterprise; not the creation or enlargement of any community, 'fellowship', or institution, but the honour and glory of

THE NAME

by a deep work of

THE CROSS.