



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 Inheritance - Gained or Forfeited

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Jul-Aug 1951, Vol. 29-4.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

"Wherefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

"For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you." (Phil. 3:3-15).

An Inheritance to be Possessed

In reading passages like these, we should be strangely dull and insensitive if we were not left with the impression of much more yet to be - that there is a great prospect for the people of God. The Bible all the way through is a book of prospect; it records movement forward and then failure to attain, but with the resultant sense that that cannot be all, that must not be all, there is something very much more to be entered into. In the first of the above passages of Scripture we are told that there is already secured unto us a tremendous inheritance. *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?"* In giving us His Son, He gives us all things; they are ours. The Apostle says, *"All things are yours"*; they are yours, they belong to you. And yet we find him in this state, caught up in this sense of tremendous prospect and possibility, of the greatness of what is yet for the Lord's people beyond all his own vast apprehension and attainment; giving him this sense, that, though he had come into such wealth and such fulness, it was nothing compared with what he knew was his in Christ, and which was yet to become his in experience. So we have already secured unto us a great inheritance.

We have inherited with and in Christ; not by earning, by working - it is the inheritance of faith in Christ Jesus and goes far, far beyond anything that we have yet imagined. We have only sensed that there is very much more, that it is a land of far distances. It is ours.

But there is a difference between having an inheritance and enjoying it; having wealth secured unto you as yours, and experiencing all that it can bring and all that it means. *"Know ye not that Ramoth-Gilead is ours, and we are still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?"* (1 Kings 22:3). That is an Old Testament word. The inheritance is ours, it belongs to us, but we sit still and take it not.

So we begin at this time by reminding ourselves that in our coming into the Lord Jesus and receiving Him, we have been introduced into an inheritance far, far beyond our present knowledge and experience; and it is not only to be entered into hereafter. Do not immediately mentally relate it to the hereafter. If our Christian lives are not characterized by a continuous apprehension of greater fulnesses in Christ, there is something very seriously wrong with us. The inheritance is to be known now. Its fulness will extend beyond all time - it must do, for life is far too short and limited for the apprehension of the 'all things' of God's fulness, in Christ. Nevertheless it is all ours now - for our discovering, for our knowing, for our experiencing progressively and continuously now.

But if that is to be so, if we are to make our inheritance an actual possession and experience, there is a certain spirit needed. There is no doubt about it. This part of the letter of Paul to the Philippians is just full of the spirit necessary for this purpose.

A Spirit of Renunciation and Devotion

Firstly, it is the spirit of renunciation. *"What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ"*. Yes, those which were gain - not bad things, not evil things to be put away, not wrong things to be given up, not things upon which the Divine veto rests to be let go, but good things to be renounced for the best. That spirit has to characterize us - that we will never be satisfied with good that is less than the best, a measure that is less than the fulness. Renunciation - yes, of good things and things which in their measure and in their way may have been gain to us; renunciation of these for the best. Devotion of heart is breathed here. Oh, how this man's heart is set upon all that has come to him in Christ! What a heart Paul had to exploit all the profound and unsearchable riches of Christ and to turn them to account! Devotion of heart.

Concentration of Purpose

And then concentration of purpose. *"This one thing I do"*. In all the ways, in all the aspects, in all the phases, in all the many-sided occupations - *"that I may know him"*; that I may know Him along this line, down this way, through this avenue, through all the avenues and ways of life, I am set to make one thing govern everything - to know Him; *"for the excellency (that does not mean only the splendour, but the transcendence) of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"*. Concentration of purpose - "this one thing", an undistracted life, an undivided interest, everything gathered and focused on one thing; whatever comes must in some way be made to serve this end - my fuller knowledge of the Lord. It is the only way to economize in life; otherwise you have a lot of waste things that count for nothing. Paul would look at everything and ask, 'What has this in it of potentiality to bring me into some further and fuller knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?' Through sufferings - *"the fellowship of his sufferings"* - through conformity to His death, but always the cry, *"that I may know him"*. This is concentration of purpose.

Unceasing Pursuit of the Goal

And then continuation. - *"I press on"*. 'I am not going to be brought to a standstill, I am going on'. Now this is exactly what the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ and that is in us will do. The operations of the Holy Spirit, and the providential ways of God - strange, mysterious providences - these are all designed to keep us on the stretch. Any life that is really under the government of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, will never be allowed to settle down, will always be kept on the move - oh, yes, by strange means. The Lord knows how to deal with you and me. He knows the tendencies of our makeup, our constitution, our natures. He knows us exactly, every one of us, and (oh that we could believe it, really believe it always!) the way in which we are going is the way that the infinite, inscrutable wisdom of God knows to be the only way by which we shall come to a greater measure of the Lord. He vetoes much in order to economize, to ensure that we shall not be spreading ourselves too widely but be directed into the essential channels. Yes, He deals with us because He knows us. His providential dealings with us and the Holy Spirit's operations in us are to keep us on the move, on the stretch, with a *holy* discontent, for there is a great enemy to spiritual fulness. Do believe this, that there is no time in the life of a true child of God or servant of God when they retire, with their work at an end. We ought always to be receiving so much from the Lord that we just cannot retire and keep it all to ourselves. We ought to be like David, who said, *"I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good... My heart was hot within me; While I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue"* (Psa. 39:2-4). No, the Spirit will keep us on the stretch, keep us in the way of the growing revelation of what is ours in Christ, so that we have more and more of Him, and cannot keep it to ourselves because it is too much.

Refusal of all Enticements

Well, I was saying there is a great enemy. John Bunyan can help us here. His pilgrims came to a place called the Enchanted Ground and the air in that country was so enervating and drowsy that they wanted to lie down and take a nap. It was all grown over with briars to slow up their progress and weary them so that they would succumb to the atmosphere. Mr. Feeble-mind has to be taken in hand very strongly by Greatheart, and Mr. Despondency has to be laid hold of by Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. In this Enchanted Ground there are many arbours in which you can turn aside and sleep, and some say that if you do, you may never wake up again in this life. There is one arbour which bears the name of The Slothful's Friend; in another two men are asleep - Mr. Heedless and Mr. Too-Bold - and the pilgrims do their utmost to wake these two from their sleep, but they cannot be wakened. And now note - for this is what I am getting at; Bunyan is here so full of wonderful insight and

suggestion. 'This Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage, for when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? And when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah and so near the end of their race. Wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it hath done to these that are fallen asleep and none can wake them'. I say again that a spirit of energy is needed if we are to prevail.

As they journeyed over the Enchanted Ground, they espied a man upon his knees, and as they drew up closely to him, he suddenly sprang from his knees with new vigour and energy. They interrogated him and found him to be Mr. Standfast. They asked him why he was on his knees, and, a little abashed that they had seen him, he explained that having come to this Enchanted Ground, he was met by Madame Bubble who came and offered him all her enticements not to go on, inviting him to turn aside, to take a rest, to receive premature prizes before he reached the City; and, lest he should weaken under her influence, he fell to prayer and so was saved, and could go on.

What need we say more? Oh, there is the fulness. It is there, it is ours, but we need a spirit to lay hold, to persist; this spirit - *"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." "I count not myself yet to have apprehended (laid hold)", "forgetting the things which are behind... I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling"*. That spirit alone will bring us into the experience of what is ours. It is a terrible thing to have been heir to a very great deal and yet never to have known what was ours. The Spirit of God would make us know. He would stir us to great earnestness in the quest that we may know, that we may possess the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.