

T. Austin-Sparks:

I am going to continue this evening where we left off last night. We will read again the first five verses of the First Letter of John:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Now as we broke off before we had finished this particular word, we must just look back a little in order to get the connection. You will remember that we said that John wrote his Gospel, his three Letters and the Revelation at a time when everything was in confusion; especially was that true in relation to believers. Believers were turning aside to something either different from Christ or less than Christ. They were becoming occupied with certain interpretations of Christian truth, and so there were separate groups of believers all circling round some particular aspect of truth. And these various aspects of truth divided the Lord's people, so that certainty had almost disappeared. Many of the Lord's people did not know just where they were. They were full of doubts and questions, and the testimony of Jesus was losing its power because of these divisions.

So John wrote because of that situation, and his Gospel and his Letters are his answer to that situation. John's great purpose was to bring the Lord's people back to certainty. So over against all the questions John said in this First Letter thirteen times, "We know," by which he meant there is a ground of absolute assurance for the Lord's people. Then as we mentioned last night, ten times he said, "This is." Ten things he said, "This is" the foundation. This is the ground of assurance.

Now we take it up there this evening, and we include all that John has to say in one thing. The Lord's people had gone off in all different directions on some teaching. So they were divided by many teachings. You will see that John employed one solution to the whole problem, and John said that this solution is a sure and certain one. Sometimes you will see an advertisement for a certain medicine, and the advertiser will tell you that this medicine will cure all troubles. You can suffer from any malady, but this will cure it. Of course, nobody believes that, WE are very suspicious about advertisements of that kind. But John is right. He says, I have got the cure for all your troubles; and he says it with great emphasis. He says, 'That which we have seen, and heard and handled, that which was from the beginning, this is the cure for all Christian troubles.' John has no doubt about it, because he himself had proved it. John had lived a long life. He was older than anybody in this gathering tonight when he wrote this. He was the last of the apostles. Paul spoke of himself as "Paul the aged" (Philemon 9). But John was much older than Paul. He had lived a long life. He had seen many troubles. He had met many difficulties amongst the Lord's people. He knew about all those conditions of which he wrote in the first, second and third chapters of the Revelation. He himself had suffered great persecution for Christ's sake. But after all, John says, "We know." - And this is the solution to all our troubles.

We ought to be prepared to listen to a man like that. We ought to say at once, 'Well then, John, what is the solution? We have a lot of trouble. The Lord's people are divided. Many groups of the Lord's people are even fighting against each other. There are many contrary teachings. John, you say that you have got the solution, what is it?' Well, come again to this letter and he gives it to us. It is very simple in words. It may not be so simple in practice. But what John says in effect is this: You come right back to the Lord Jesus Himself. Leave all those things which are just things in themselves, all those things which are occupying your time and your energy, all those things which are causing so much trouble to you, all those things which make you ask questions as to whether we are right or whether we are wrong. Are we right or are the other people right? Are we wrong or are they wrong? All such questions, just leave them, and come back to Christ Himself. John seeks to bring the Lord's people right back to the Lord Jesus Himself. That is, he seeks to show them what came in with the Lord Jesus.

What was it that was bound up with the Person of the Lord Jesus when He came into this world? What is it that comes wherever the Lord Jesus comes? What is the effect of Jesus coming into touch with any person or any situation? Because everything is bound up with the Lord Jesus Himself personally, and the test of the Presence of the Lord Jesus is the effect that He has. The Presence of the Lord Jesus always does have some effect. The Lord Jesus can never come anywhere without something happening. That is the difference between the

Presence of the Lord and teaching about the Lord. You may have all the teaching about Christ, and you may have some special teaching about Christ, and it may have no result whatever. There may be no effect. It is just some teaching. It may be some teaching on the Church. It may be some teaching on the local churches. It may be the teaching of holiness. Oh! there are a thousand different teachings connected with Christ. You may have one of them or you may have the whole thousand, and it had no effect in your life, and it may make no difference amongst you as a company of the Lord's people.

If the teaching has any effect at all, it makes you tired of teaching. Sooner or later you come to the place where you say, 'Oh, we have heard that all before. There is nothing new about that. We know it all.' And you are not very interested to hear any more of it. Perhaps you would say, 'Well, give us something new.' Then the new thing gets old. You would say, 'Give us something new again.' You are wearing out everything, until you get to such a place that you cannot take any more. And that is the effect of teaching. It does not transform the life. It does not make a difference in the situation. That means that you have separated the teaching about Christ from the Presence of Christ Himself. **THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD ALWAYS MAKES A DIFFERENCE.**

We saw last night that wherever Jesus went, something happened. Now have you noticed the difference between John's Gospel and John's Letter? At the end of the Gospel by John, John sums up the whole of that Gospel in one statement. John says, 'Many other signs did Jesus, if they were all written, I suppose the world would not contain the books; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing, you may have life in His name' (John 21:25). So, the whole of John's Gospel is gathered into this, that you may believe.

That is very good, but look how John sums up his Letter. He sums up his Letter in another way: "That you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). The Gospel is, that you may believe and believing you may have eternal life. The Letter is saying, "That you may know that you have eternal life." And John says: What is true in Him in the Gospel, is to be true in you, in the Letter. He says, What I have said about the Lord Jesus in the Gospel has got to be true in you - true in Him and true in you.

Now in the Gospel, John told us of what Jesus said about the day when the Holy Spirit would come. He said, "If I go away, I will send the Comforter. He will abide with you forever, and He will be in you." These people to whom John wrote his letter were living in the day when that was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit has actually come, John fourteen has been fulfilled. The Spirit has come. You are living in the day of the Spirit. And the Spirit is supposed to be in you. What was true of Christ, must be true of you, and it can be true of you. The truth as it is in Jesus has got to be the same in us.

I think we need to recapture the realization of the day in which we are living. John the Baptist came preaching, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus came preaching, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And everybody was looking forward to the day when the Kingdom would come. They were waiting for the Kingdom to come. Are you waiting for the Kingdom to come? Are you still looking forward to a day when the Kingdom will come? The Kingdom has come. The Kingdom is here now. If you are born again, you are in the Kingdom. We are living in the day when the Kingdom is here. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. We are not looking for the Kingdom to come. We are only looking for the Kingdom to be consummated. But it is here now, and that ought to mean something to us.

While all the prophets prophesied to the day in which we live, John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, also prophesied toward this day. Jesus said that day is coming; but He said, there are some standing here who shall not see that until they see the Kingdom - and that was fulfilled. The day of Pentecost, the Kingdom came; and that Kingdom has never yet been taken away. We are living in the day toward which all the prophets prophesied. What a wonderful day we must be living in. The Kingdom came in with Jesus Christ. You cannot have a Kingdom without a King. If Jesus is King, you have got the Kingdom.

Now what did come in with Him, that is, what is the nature of this Kingdom? We come back to where we were last night. We saw that the first thing that comes in with Jesus Christ is Light. He brought in this Light from heaven. He said, "I am the Light of the world, He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." So John says here, **THIS IS THE MESSAGE, THAT GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL.** Then immediately John points to Jesus Christ. And through his Gospel and through his Letters, he says, This is the Light of God come in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

We referred to three effects of the light. It makes people able to say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). I was blind. You remember the man who said that? He was a man who was born blind. He never had seen. He did not know in his own experience what anything looked like. Any knowledge that he had, he received from

other people. He could never say, "I see." He was born blind. He never did see. When Jesus touched him and gave him sight, he was able to say, "I was blind, but now I see."

Now I want you to note that there is a principle there. Perhaps there is no one in this gathering, I hope there is no one, who is physically blind. Perhaps everybody here tonight has their natural sight. If I came to any one of you and said, "Look here, you are blind. You cannot see anything." What would you say? "Well, you are not speaking the truth. I know I can see. I can see you. I can see the other people. I can see all that is here." Well, that is all right naturally.

But the fact is this, it is not until Jesus touches you and me that we really do see. Not until we get a personal touch of the Lord Jesus upon our lives, do we realize that we have been blind. Not until we get that touch of the Lord Jesus are we really able to say, "I was blind, I thought I could see, I imagined I could see, I believed I could see, but now I know I was quite blind. The way in which I now see, I never could see before." That is the effect of a living touch with the Lord Jesus. Of course, all the people of this world will not believe you if you tell them they are blind. They think you are mad. But let them get a touch of the Lord Jesus, and the first thing they will say, "I can see now, and therefore I must have been blind before."

That is the effect of Jesus, that is not the teaching of Jesus. You see, the teaching does not always open people's eyes. The teaching may be very useful and very important, but if the Spirit of Jesus does not touch our spiritual eyes, we are still blind.

Now I must go back over something that we said last night. The three things that came to light when Jesus came into the situation. First of all, His Presence revealed the true nature of the human heart. At once, people began to show their true natures when Jesus came into the situation. And it is very interesting and significant to note that this started at the highest level. Here is Nicodemus. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Art thou the teacher in Israel?" He did not say, "Art thou a teacher in Israel," but "Art thou the teacher in Israel?" Which put Nicodemus very high up in the saddle. Here is a man of great intelligence and natural enlightenment. There was nothing that Nicodemus could not talk about in the realm of religion. He was a Pharisee. That means he represented the top level of people in Israel.

If you had met Nicodemus before he met Jesus, he would have told you quite frankly that he knew everything. He had been to college. He had sat under the greatest teachers. He was a man of great education, he himself occupied a very high place in the academic world. If you had then said to Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, it will not be very long before you will be saying that you do not understand anything at all." Nicodemus would have said, "That is quite impossible. I do understand. The day will never come when I will have to say that I do not know." Very well then, let us see what happens.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. He comes into the Presence of the One Who is the Light - and Jesus begins to speak to him. And it is not long before Nicodemus is saying, "How can these things be? I do not understand what You are talking about. I do not understand what You mean?" He is constantly saying, "Oh, how?" One great big question! Jesus says to him, "Art thou the teacher in Israel, and understandest not these things?" This great scholar is a poor little ignoramus. He has come into the Presence of the Light, and he has discovered his own darkness.

But look at all these other Pharisees, they are like Nicodemus, educated men, proud religious men; when Jesus came among them, it stirred up in them all their hatred for Jesus, and they will seek by enemies to put Jesus to death. Why is that? Because Jesus is bringing to light their true nature. He is making them feel how bad they are with all their religion. And Jesus says, "This is the condemnation. The Light has come, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." So the first effect of the Light is to show up the evil in our own hearts, and to make us feel what poor creatures we are, after all. The Light brings conviction of sin. There is no hope of salvation without the Light that brings conviction of sin.

What is true of the beginning of salvation is true of the whole course of salvation. If the Lord Jesus is really with us, we ought always to be aware of how sinful we are in ourselves. Let me put that in another way. If the Lord Jesus is with us, the one thing about us will be - oh, our greatest need is the grace of God. That will be the greatest word in our vocabulary. Grace, Grace, marvelous Grace! You do not understand the meaning of Grace unless you know your own heart. The deepest note in Christian worship is the note of thanks for the grace of God. That is the first effect of Jesus coming into touch with us as the Light.

Then I remind you of the Life of Jesus as He went up and down the country. Everywhere that Jesus went, He found trouble. He found sickness of every kind - the blind, and the deaf, and the dumb, the lepers and the palsy,

they were everywhere. But Jesus put His finger upon the cause of all this. One day, the scribes and the Pharisees were gathered together, and there came in a man who was sick of the palsy, and it says, "And they watched Him to see what He would do because it was the Sabbath Day." Jesus looked at this poor man. He had compassion upon him, and He said to him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The scribes and the Pharisees said, "Who is this that forgives sins, only God can forgive sin." Jesus said unto them, "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" Of course, they did not answer that one. So Jesus said, "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," (He saith to the sick of the palsy) "I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." And the man arose, and went to his house.

You see the point? This man is an example. He represents all the sick. And Jesus says about all the sicknesses, that behind all these conditions, the thing that is responsible is sin. If sin had never come into the world, none of these things would have come in. All the suffering and the misery in this world can be traced back to sin. Adam let sin into the human race, and with sin came all human suffering. When all sin has been removed from believers in the end, there will be no more suffering. The time is coming, as it is written in the Revelation, when there shall be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more pain. God shall wipe away all tears from all faces. That is how it is going to be. A little girl heard that read, God shall wipe away all tears from all faces, and she turned to her mother and said, 'God must have a very big handkerchief.' Well, of course, that is how a little child will think of it. How does God wipe away all tears? Not by taking a literal handkerchief, but by removing the cause of tears. And the cause of all tears is sin.

So that when Jesus came into this world, all these conditions were shown to be something wrong. The Light made it manifest that all this is wrong. And Jesus had come to remove the cause of all this. And He bore our sin in His Own body on the tree.

Then the third thing that the Light revealed. It went back behind the suffering, it went back behind the sin, and it went right back to the cause of the sin and the suffering, and He showed that all this was the work of the devil. In the First Letter of John, he actually uses this phrase, referring to the darkness, referring to the divisions, referring to all the confusions, he says, "The works of the devil." "And the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." So, confusion is a work of the devil. Division amongst the Lord's people is a work of the devil. Make no mistake about it, the devil is behind that sort of thing.

What is it that the devil is wanting to do all the time? He is wanting to bring dishonor upon the Name of the Lord. Division brings dishonor upon the Lord, confusion amongst the Lord's people brings dishonor upon the Lord, teachings that divide the Lord's people bring dishonor upon the Lord. And that is the supreme work of Satan - to bring dishonor upon the Name of the Lord. So that when Jesus came and met all these conditions, and knew that Satan was behind them, that Satan was the cause of them, it was His jealousy for the honor of His Father that calls Him to deal with these situations. Jesus, as the Light, brings to light the works of the devil in order that He may destroy them.

Now John says, "If we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another." The cure of those difficulties is to come into the Light, and to walk in the Light. Dear friends, if you and I are walking in the Light, we shall hate every work of Satan. We shall turn violently against anything that brings dishonor on the Name of our Lord. So, Light is power, Light does something in us, Light sets up a reaction to darkness. The Light is good, and therefore, the Light sets up a reaction against all that is evil and bad. So it will be if the Lord is in us, because HE IS THE LIGHT.

You see, I want to put the emphasis on this, that light is not just some abstract thing. You can call it by the other name, if you like, Truth. Truth is not just some abstract thing. Truth is not just a theory. Truth, like Light, is power. It has an effect, And we can test our idea of light by this - what is it doing? How is it reacting to the works of the devil? I am afraid that quite a lot of the Lord's dear people are encouraging the devil rather than discouraging him. They are making divisions. And the devil is rubbing his hands, very pleased. He says, that will bring dishonor on God. Do not help the devil. Do not help him in any of his work. Walk in the Light, and react against all the works of darkness. And still, we have not finished this matter, but we have got two more evenings, if the Lord wills.

Now may the Lord make all this talking more than words. We are going away with a lot more words. Ideas, which may be new or they may not be new to you, if it just remains there, we have come here tonight in vain. It would have been better if we never came; because we are only going to be responsible for what we hear. But do lay up these words in your hearts, and just tell yourself that the Presence of Jesus Christ in my life is going to have real effect. Jesus cannot be Present without something happening. And if He is Present all the time,

Jesus, as the Light, Brings to Light the Works of the Devil in Order to Destroy Them

something ought to be happening all the time. May He make it like that for His Own glory. Amen.