



# 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.*

---

## "For Such a Time as This"

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*First published as an Editorial in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, May-June 1941, Vol. 19-3.*

Beloved of God, I have recently been going over writings which expressed the feelings of spiritual people of God at various times during many years. The thing which is characteristic of them all is that the time of writing - although long periods lay between - was felt to be the most critical, ominous, and spiritually difficult or almost unbearable time that ever was. In most cases the conclusion was that the Lord must have been on the very verge of coming. Undoubtedly this has been the feeling of at least some in every part of time since Apostolic times. This might give us pause in saying that the present time - difficult as it is for so many - is more of this nature and portent than ever. It might just be because now it is our turn. And yet there are certain factors which may well give a deeper shade to the darkness, and a more intense severity to this time. There is the general fact that, the nearer we get to the end of the age, the more terribly will the powers of darkness fight to make good all the possibilities of their shortening time. The Scripture is "...great wrath, knowing that his time is short". Then, the world has grown so much as the years have passed, and it is a much bigger place now than in Roman times or the Middle Ages. Satan has so much more ground in humanity to use. Further - and this is a special point to remember - the challenge to Satan's kingdom is become so much more extended, so that, in a new sense, the issue of "inhabited world" dominion is in view. It is this question of world dominion that lies behind everything, and it is this that determines the degree of spiritual pressure and conflict. Listen to me a moment on this matter, for it is most crucial at this time.

There have been many bids made for the domination of this whole world, and, like the ebb and flow of the tides, sometimes at the Neaps, and sometimes at the Spring, the later ones have been a considerable advance upon the earlier, extending to new territories. Thus was the Roman a great advance upon the Babylonian, for instance.

So the reign of Antichrist, which is the direct succession and consummation of all such bids and movements, will be more far-reaching than all that have been. We are actually living in an emphatic stage of this purpose which is more ambitious than anything yet. Upon the natural side we do not dwell, but we see by analogy some things which should head us straight to the present implication and demand for the Church.

There is the strategical factor. One of the outstanding features of the present campaign is the infiltration into the nations of agents, representatives, missionaries, and colonists. These communities are not only propagandists, but their very presence has been made the occasion of "rights" to be "protected". In every way they give the aggressor-power something of its own to which to come, and a "moral" right and claim is the (professed) strength of the invasion or possession. This has been the case in many instances, at least. For the rest, it is war because such claims and rights are disputed. Now passing from the earthly to the heavenly, this, on the higher level, is exactly the Lord's own strategy, and therefore the occasion of the bitter warfare waged by and with the powers of darkness.

Look again at those words of His in Matthew 24:14.

*"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." (R.V.)*

Let us examine this statement word by word.

*"Gospel" = "Glad tidings".*

*"Kingdom" = (a) The fact of royal reign or dominion.  
(b) The sphere of such.  
(c) The immediate and ultimate consequences of such.  
All these are inherent in the word "Kingdom".*

*"Preached" = Proclaimed, heralded. There are five Greek words translated "preach". The one used here means to announce that someone has taken the power, or ascended the throne.*

*"World" = Inhabited earth.*

*"Testimony" = "Marturion" (Gk) means both a testimony, the one who testifies, and a proof. "To set the evidence" (Weymouth).*

What then is the meaning of this statement? It has been used, of course, in general as the great incentive to missionary work and world-evangelisation, and rightly so. But for want of a recognition of the inner significance, something of real consequence has been lost. What the Lord is really meaning here is that He must have in every nation that which proclaims and gives evidence of His having taken the Throne and become Lord. "The earth is the Lord's." "God hath given him the name which is above every name." "Being at the right hand of God exalted." "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet," etc.

Before Christ can come into His own place as the rightful ruler of this world, taking the dominion thereof, He must have a testimony to His sovereign Lordship. When David was driven out of his kingdom by the usurping Absalom, he left the loyal Abiathar and his company in Jerusalem so as to have that which was of himself to which to return; and while Abiathar and his priestly company were

there, the reign of Absalom could never be universal, but would always be virtually disputed. The presence of the true Church in the nations is meant to act in exactly this same way in relation to the rejected Lord.

But note; and this is our special point; the "Testimony" is not something merely or only stated as a truth; it is "to set the evidence", as Weymouth puts it. Yes, to set the evidence. In the Old Testament the Tabernacle was called the Tabernacle of Testimony, or Witness (Num. 17:7; Acts 7:44). It was a tangible expression of a spiritual truth. The Lord said that His apostles should *be* witnesses unto Him. Satan and his powers are not very interested in doctrine or truth as such, but they are seriously concerned where there is representation and evidence. They will do all in their power to swamp, kill, drive out, break up, paralyze a vessel which really represents the Lordship of Christ as in the power of the Holy Spirit. If only the Lord's people will *always* keep immediately in mind the fact that it is not with flesh and blood that they are wrestling, but with principalities and powers, etc. and that the sole object of the enemy's assaults is to destroy or spoil the evidence of Christ's Lordship, then there would be an adequate motive for "standing and withstanding," and for dealing with everything that gives Satan ground to spoil the testimony.

Now then, let us note the first implication of our being here. The work of Apostles and their present counterpart was and is to bring into being those - twos and threes at least - in every nation who shall be there as a living evidence that Jesus is Lord. *We* are where *we* are in the will of God for this purpose, and no less than this. Satan will try to move us, to drive us, to overwhelm us but this only gives the opportunity for proving by the power of the Blood that Jesus *has* overcome him, and really *is* Lord. We hold the ground for the coming Lord, and although He will call us out for a time, we shall come with Him to reign, if we now suffer together with him.

But; and this is a sad but; is the Church setting the evidence? Is this really what the Church represents in the nations now? Alas for the testimony - the evidence! Truly the spiritual state in the light of the Lord's revealed mind as to His Body compels us to one of two positions. Either the Body of Christ is something distinct from the general multitude of those who confessed Christ and received eternal life; or else it is wholly a matter of the Church in general and "Overcomers" in particular as those who "press on toward the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling". Whichever it is, the issue is the same. The Lord *must* have His testimony here in fulness. The Church as a whole is far from "setting the evidence". The appeal therefore is for "Overcomers" and their testimony. This is *the* point of this letter.

The conviction deepens and grows that, since the loss of the Church's spiritual position in late Apostolic times, the Lord's chief concern has been with "Overcomers"; that is, with those who preserved or would recover the original position and testimony as to the absolute Lordship of Christ in every realm of life, and pre-eminently in the realm of the spiritual evil powers. The issue becomes clearer and stronger as the Antichrist forces show their hand more boldly and presumptuously toward the end. This is a time when this testimony needs to be brought out in strength and clearness as never before. If we were asked what we most truly believe to be *the* paramount need of our time we should say with considerable emphasis: A vessel represented in all the nations which serves the Lord in exactly the same way - only in the spiritual, not temporal, realm - as Esther served Him and His people, coming to the Kingdom "*for such a time as this*". It is that the Lord should have a people placed over the earth who know "Throne union" with Him now in intercession and testimony, with a background of deep chastening and travail: an instrument through the warring prayer of which He can bring evil counsels to nought and save the life of His people. Is it not clear that Christians today (to say nothing of the unsaved) are not going to get to know God's full thought for them, let alone enter into it, unless there is firstly a ministry released to them by prevailing prayer,

and then an overcoming of the blinding, binding, deadening spiritual forces which are working in a thousand different ways to keep the children of God from apprehending that for which they have been apprehended by Christ Jesus? The fact is that God's people do not see.

The present vocational purpose of "Overcomers" is a tremendous one, for it relates to the need of the whole Church. But their testimony is preeminently for the Lord Himself. He *must* have satisfaction in His Church! The "Cherubim" company of "Living Ones" in identification with "The Living One" are something very near to God for governmental purposes; spiritually now, and literally presently. What will such a vessel be? What is its nature? To put it simply and plainly, as the whole Bible shows, the Lord must have a company in the earth who, in every respect, are a heavenly people. Their spiritual resources of life, power, wisdom, knowledge, purpose must be heavenly and by mediation of the Holy Spirit alone. Their means and methods must be Divinely supplied and dictated. Their energy must be directly Divine energy; which means that they must have been separated from their own.

The spiritual relationships and associations must be heavenly. It was the resolving into an earthly institution and system which cost the Church its Throne power at the beginning, and there can be no recovery without a clear position as to traditional relationships. There will need to be a purely heavenly position as to the really heavenly nature of the Body of Christ - the Church, without any contradictions in earthly orders. We have heard it said that at a certain gathering of servants of the Lord "it was like a touch of heaven; everyone dropped - for the time being - their differences of denomination and earthly divisions". This speaks for itself. But why go back to them?

It will be fatal to essay to engage in heavenly warfare with anything but a heavenly position. We have seen terrible scattering, confusion, and havoc made by the enemy in directions where assaults were made upon the powers of darkness by companies which had mixture, earthly religious contradictory orders, and conflicting acceptances as to vital Scriptural matters.

It may be wondered how ever such a vessel or instrument can be brought into being. Well, it was once, at the beginning; and the secret then is the same now. The Cross did two things. It brought Christ into the place of absolute sovereignty, and made the establishment of that sovereignty possible and actual in the lives of a great company by ruling out all personal, natural, earthly traditional, and temporal interests and influences. The Holy Spirit made Calvary and the Exalted Christ a reality in each heart. "They were of one mind and one soul."

We can never arrange this, or decide to do this heavenly business to any consequence (except failure) unless each one concerned is in it by revelation of the Holy Spirit, and is *born* into it through spiritual travail. We shall be wasting our time if we expect, try, or even pray for anything really effective apart from this essentially heavenly and therefore anointed ground. There is no royal road or short cut to the Throne or to Throne power; it will cost us everything here. We have known more than one to be faced with this issue, and - in trying to keep something here - miss the Lord's highest and best, and later in life to know that it was so.

Will you go to the Lord and ask Him to do that deep work by His Cross in the hands of the Holy Spirit which will result in your being brought into the place where His authority is exercised through you, and His rule is registered in the realm where things matter most, through your heavenly union with Him? Will you pray for the securing of the prepared instrument to "come to the kingdom for such a time as this"? Will you seek grace to count all gains but refuse in the light of the prize of that "on high" calling? Finally, will you seek the Lord that there may be just where you are in the nations a vessel of this testimony and of this heavenly nature, which really does "set the evidence"? It will be a

battle to secure it, as it was in every case with the Apostles. It will be a battle to preserve it. But, given the co-operation, the Lord can do it, and He will.

From time to time God has sovereignly raised up a ministry or an instrument to serve Him in a special need which then existed. We have, as the result, the heartwarming stories of these mighty times and ministries. But they are now of the past, and while they inspire us, they only make us grieve that there is nothing like them now. Surely everyone is aware of the need of "a new thing" from above. Let us not bind ourselves to the same form which God has taken before, but realise that He may be moving *on*, and the need may be of something quite in advance of anything that has been, although its essential spiritual features will be in accord with the original pattern; that is - the Lordship of Christ will be the transcendent issue. If we are coming at the end *back* to that original issue, it will certainly mean more in *every way* than it has ever meant in the intervening centuries, because the consummation of that testimony is in view.

The Lord Himself give you the light and lead you into the prayer-travail for the bringing forth of His testimony in fulness.