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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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## "Gather My Saints Together"

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*"Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:5).*

*"Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him" (2 Thess. 2:1).*

*"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Hebrews 10:25).*

In all of the above passages there is this one common factor, that an end-time movement and feature is dominant. It must be remembered that the Psalms themselves represent what remains when a history of outward things as to the general instrumentality has ended in failure. The history of Israel in its first great phase closed with the book of "Kings" in a calamitous and shameful way. Weakness, paralysis, declension, reproach, characterized the instrument in general. But out of that history now so concluded the Psalms are carried forward, and they represent what has *spiritually* been gained and is permanent. This is pre-eminently a personal, inward, spiritual knowledge of the Lord gained through experience. That is why they always reach the heart and never fail to touch experience at every point. To them the saints have turned in times of deep experience. They are the ministry of experience to experience, the only ministry which is permanent. The end-time instrument will always be that which inwardly knows the Lord in a deep and living way through history fraught with much experience of the heights and depths. What David gave to the Chief Musician for the wind instruments and the stringed instruments touches the highest and deepest notes of a mortal's knowledge of God. Worship, Salvation, Sorrow, Appeal, Victory, Battle, Faith, Hope, Glory, Instruction, are all great themes interwoven with the mass of matters touched, but the point is that all came in *real life*; he passed through it all. It is this, and this alone, which can

serve the Lord when what He first raised up has failed Him as a public instrument. So the Lord would take pains to secure this, and this may explain much of the suffering and sorrow through which He takes His chosen vessels.

It does not need pointing out that, in the other two passages with which we commenced, the end-time is in view; they definitely state it.

There is a further common feature, however, which is more particularly the subject before us. They all definitely refer to gathering together as something related to the end-time. The Day is drawing nigh, therefore there is to be a "so much the more" assembling together. The Lord is coming, and there is a gathering to Him.

A history of a religious system which sprang out of something which the Lord raised up in the first place has ended in weakness, chaos and shame. Therefore, there is to be a re-gathering *to the Lord* of His saints.

Before we deal with the nature of this end-time gathering, we must get clearly in view those that are concerned in it. The passage in the Psalm would embrace and include those referred to in the other two passages.

### **"My Saints... Those That Have Made a Covenant with Me by Sacrifice"**

It need hardly be remarked that when all has been said and done through type, symbol and figure, the covenant means an entering into what the Lord Jesus has done by His shed Blood. It is an appreciation and apprehension of Him in His great work by the Cross. The Lord, by His Blood, has made a "New Covenant" by sacrifice, and we, His spiritual people, have entered into that covenant and set our hand to it. Christ as "the mediator of a new covenant" stands for both parties, for a covenant requires two parties. On one side He is God, "The Son of God": on the other side He is man, "Son of Man". In Christ we are made the humanity side of the covenant, and by taking our place by faith in Him we enter into the covenant. Just as, in Christ, God has come out to us in a great committal, so also - as in the case of Christ - we in Him go out to God in a like utter committal. The Blood seals the covenant, that is, makes us wholly the Lord's, and the Lord wholly ours.

If we see the meaning of "a covenant by sacrifice" then we shall see who it is that will be in this gathering together. It will certainly be only those to whom the Lord is everything, to whom He is all and in all; and those who are all for the Lord without a reservation, a personal interest, or anything that is less or other than Himself. Spiritual oneness is only possible on this basis.

The Lord's word to Abraham in the day of covenant was, "Now I know that thou fearest God". Malachi's end-time word was "Then they that feared the Lord..." The fear of the Lord is an utter abandonment to Him at any cost; His will being supreme, claiming and obtaining the measure of a whole burnt-offering.

### **The Nature of the Gathering Together**

Having then in view the kind who are concerned, which forms a test as well as a testimony, we are able to look at the nature of the gathering together.

We are well aware that there is a widespread doubt as to whether we are to expect anything in the way of a corporate movement or testimony at the end. Indeed, it is strongly held by some that

everything at the end is individual, and this conviction rests, for the most part, upon the phrase "If any man", in the message to Laodicea.

Let us hasten then to say that we here have nothing in mind in the nature of an organized movement, a sect, a society, a fraternity, or even a "fellowship" if, by that, any of the foregoing is meant.

Having said this, however, there are some things on the other side which need saying quite definitely.

The Church of the New Testament never was an organized movement. Neither was there any organized affiliation of the companies of believers in various places with one another. It was a purely spiritual thing, spontaneous in life and united only by the Holy Spirit and mutual love and spiritual solicitude. There were other factors which acted as spiritual links which we will mention presently. Further, and still more important, was the abiding fact that a "Body" had been brought into being. This is called "the body of Christ". You can divide a society and still it remains, but you cannot divide a body without destroying the entity.

Are we to understand from the exponents of the individualistic interpretation that all the teaching of the Lord, in nearly all the Scriptures concerning the House of God, and in nearly all the letters of Paul concerning the Body of Christ, is now set aside or is only an idea without any expression on the earth? Are we to blot out the mass of the New Testament and live our own individual Christian lives with no emphasis upon working fellowship with other believers? Surely not. This would be contrary to all the ways of God in history, and would certainly spell defeat, for if there is one thing against which the Adversary has set himself it is the fellowship of God's people.

Ultra-individualism is impossible if the truth of the "one body" still stands, and what is more, the Lord's people are becoming more and more conscious of their absolute need of fellowship, especially in prayer. The difficulty of 'getting through' alone is becoming greater as we approach the end.

What then is the nature of this gathering together?

It is a gathering to the Lord Himself. "*Gather my saints together unto me*"; "*our gathering unto Him*".

In times past there have been gatherings to men, great preachers, great teachers, great leaders; or to great institutions and movements, centres and teachings. At the end the Lord will be very much more than His vessels or instrumentalities.

God's end is Christ, and as we get nearer the end He must become almost immediately the object of appreciation.

Our oneness and fellowship is not in a teaching, a 'testimony', a community, a place, but in a Person, and in Him not merely doctrinally but livingly and experimentally.

Any movement truly of God must have this as its supreme and all-inclusive feature, that it is the Lord Jesus who is the object of heart adoration and worship.

The two great purposes of the 'gathering' are prayer and 'building up'; "supplication for all saints", and spiritual food. These two things have ever characterized Divine gatherings or convocations - representation before God, and feeding in His presence.

This, then, is the meaning of "call a solemn assembly" (Joel 1:14; 2:15). The need more than ever imperative as "the day" approaches is the gathering together *unto Him*.

May we see more of this as His Divinely inspired movement to meet the so great need!