



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.

On Knowing the Lord (1930)

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, Nov-Dec 1930, Vol. 8-6.

"That I may know Him..." - Phil. 3:10.

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known Me." - John 14:9; (A.S.V.).

Phil. 1:10; Heb. 8:11; 1 John 2:20, 27.

It is of the greatest importance that the Lord's children should fully recognise that, above all other things, His object is that they should know Him. This is the all-governing end of all His dealings with us. This is the greatest of all our needs.

It is the secret of strength, steadfastness, and service. It determines the measure of our usefulness to Him. It was the one passion of the life of the apostle Paul for himself. It was the cause of his unceasing striving for the saints. It is the heart and pivot of the whole letter to the Hebrews. It is the essential nature of the New Covenant. It was the secret of the life, service, endurance, confidence of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man.

All these facts need looking at more closely. We begin always with the Lord Jesus as God's representative of the Man after His own mind. In His life on earth there was no part or aspect which did not have its strength and ability rooted in and drawn from His inward knowledge of His Father, God. We must never forget that His was a life of utter dependence upon God, voluntarily accepted. He attributed everything to the Father: word, wisdom, and works. The miracles were made just as possible through His Apostles as through Himself. This does not put the apostles on the same

personal level as Himself. His Deity remains. He *is* God *manifest* in the flesh; but He has accepted from the human and manward side the limitations and dependence of man so that God might be God *manifested*. There is a man-side here which is able to do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, etc.). The principle of His entire life in every phase and detail was His knowledge of God. He knows the Father in the matter of the words He speaks, the works He does, the men and women with whom He has to do; with regard to the *times* of speaking, acting, going, staying, surrendering, refusing, silence; the motives, pretensions, professions, enquiries, suggestions, of men and of Satan. He knows when He may not and when He may give His life. Yes, everything here is governed by that inward knowledge of God. There are numerous evidences in the "Acts" as the practical, and in the Epistles as the doctrinal revelation of God's mind, that this principle is intended by God to be maintained as the basic law of the life of the Lord's people through this age. This knowledge in the case of the Lord Jesus was the secret of His complete ascendancy and of His absolute authority.

Masters in Israel will seek Him out and the issue which will precipitate their seeking will be that of knowing. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). Nicodemus has come to One Who knows. His authority is superior to that of the scribes, not merely in degree but in kind.

Toward the end of that Gospel which especially brings into view this very matter - John - ("to know" occurs some fifty-five times). Our Lord makes the statement that "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou didst send." (John 17:3). This does not mean merely that eternal life is given on the basis of this knowledge. There can be life with very limited knowledge. But life *in fulness* is closely related to that knowledge, and the knowledge of Him increasing manifests itself in increasing life. It works both ways; knowledge unto life and life unto knowledge.

Seeing, then, that the Lord Jesus Himself represents - as Man - man according to God, we are well prepared to see that

The Dominating Objective Of The Divine Dealings With Us

is that we may know the Lord.

This explains all our experiences, trials, sufferings, perplexities, weakness, predicaments, tight corners, bafflings, pressures etc.. While the refining of spirit, the development of the graces, the removing of the dross are all purposes of the fires, yet above and through all is the one object that we may know the Lord. There is only one way of really getting to know the Lord, and that is experimentally.

Our minds are so often occupied with service and work. We think that doing things for the Lord is the chief object of life.

We are concerned about our life-work, our ministry. We think of equipment for it in terms of study and knowledge of *things*. Soul-winning or teaching believers or setting people to work are so much in the foreground of our engrossment. Bible study and knowledge of the Scriptures with efficiency in the matter of leading in Christian service are matters of pressing importance with us. All well and good, for these ARE important matters; but, back of everything the Lord is more concerned about our knowing Him than about anything else. It is just possible to have a wonderful grasp of the

Scriptures, a comprehensive and intimate familiarity with all doctrine; to stand for cardinal verities of the faith; to be an unceasing worker in Christian service; to have a great devotion to the salvation of men, and yet, alas, to have a very inadequate and limited personal knowledge of God within. So often the Lord has to take away our work that we may discover Him. The ultimate value of everything is not the information which we give, not the soundness of our doctrine, not the amount of work that we do, not the measure of truth that we possess, but just the fact that we know the Lord in a deep and mighty way.

This is the one thing that will remain when all else passes. It is this that will make for the permanence of our ministry after we are gone. While our work *for* others may rest upon much other material and resource, our real service *to* them is based upon our knowledge of the Lord.

The greatest of the problems of the Christian life is

The Problem Of Guidance.

How much has been said and written upon this subject! The last word for so many is, "Pray about it, commit it to God, do the thing that seems right, and trust God to see that it turns out all right." This to us seems weak and inadequate. We make no claim to ability to lay down the comprehensive and conclusive basis of guidance, but we are strongly of the conviction that it is one thing to get direction for the events, incidents, and contingencies of life, and quite another thing to have an abiding, personal, inward knowledge of the Lord. It is one thing to call upon a friend in emergency or at special times to get advice as to a course to be taken; it is another thing to live with that friend so that there is a sense of his mind on things as a general matter.

We want instructions and commands, the Lord wants us to have a "mind." "Let this *mind* be in you," "We have the mind of Christ." Christ has a consciousness, and by the Holy Spirit He would give and develop in us that consciousness. The inspired statement is that "the anointing teacheth you concerning all things." We are not servants, we are sons. Commands - as such - are for servants, a mind is for sons.

There is an appalling state of things amongst the Lord's people today. So many of them have their life almost entirely in that which is external to themselves: their counsel and guidance, their sustenance and support, their knowledge, their means of grace. Personal inward spiritual intelligence is a very rare thing. No wonder that the enemy has such a successful line in delusions, counterfeits, and false representations. Our greatest safeguard against such will be a deep knowledge of the Lord through discipline.

Immediately it is *things* that we reach out for: e.g., experiences, sensations, "proofs," evidences, manifestations, etc.. We become exposed in a perilous realm where Satan can give a false conversion, a false "baptism of the Spirit" (?) a false evidence and guidance such as in spiritism. Then with the withdrawing of those he immediately suggests the unpardonable sin. When this suggestion is accepted, the ground is taken from the Scriptures, the Blood, and the assurances of those interested. And it may be all a lie, after all.

To really know the Lord means steadfastness when others are being carried away, and through times of fiery trial. Those who know the Lord do not put forth their own hand and bring things about. Such are full of love and patience, and do not lose their poise when everything seems to be going to pieces. Confidence is an essential and inevitable fruit of this knowledge, and in those who know Him there is a quiet restful strength which speaks of a great depth of life.

To close for the moment, let me point out that in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden," and the Lord's will for us is to come to an ever-growing realisation and personal appreciation of Him in Whom "all the fulness dwells."