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The Inheritance Secured

by T. Austin-Sparks

An Easter conference message (from the series "Divine Order in Christ") April 1959.

Now it came to pass after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it; as I spake unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage, for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only, be strong, and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left... Have not I commanded thee, Be strong, and of a good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:1-9).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who, by the power of God, are guarded through faith, unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

If we needed something to convince us that the Old Testament has a meaning beyond itself for ourselves, this word of Peter surely is a word of such convincing. You read Peter, and you know quite well that Peter was a man of Israel; he was indeed a Jew; and he, in his very veins, carried the history of his nation and he knew the whole story - it was ever with him. As we both hear him on the

Day of Pentecost, and read him in his letters, we find that that history is coming up continually and very fully. But when we come to this letter of Peter, we find that he has moved completely off of the merely historical and earthly ground, and is writing and speaking as a member of the New Israel, and is taking up the language and the thoughts of the Old and bringing them into the New. And you find that you have these several corresponding features between what is in the book of Joshua, and in Peter's letters. He uses the word *resurrection* as the basis and beginning of everything. The first chapter of the book of Joshua is just that, is it not, it is through the Jordan at its flood, and out on to the other side - it is indeed the story of resurrection. And we know from the book, what it was unto; it was unto 'an inheritance'.

Peter takes up that idea here, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto an inheritance...". The difference, of course, with Peter as a Christian, and Peter as a Jew, is that he adds these words, "incorruptible and undefiled". That is something better, something more than the old. Nevertheless, the idea that the resurrection is unto an inheritance, is common to both. "Unto a living hope" - well, Peter carried in his heart, at one time, the great hope of Israel. It was a temporal hope, an earthly hope; a hope for the realisation of which they lived continually.

When we come into the New Testament, we find there were those in Jerusalem that were waiting for the realisation of that "hope of Israel". But Peter says, "We have found it in the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Something so much greater, so much more, than all we hoped for as Jews; we have found in Christ a *living hope*". Our language is not good enough for the translation of his actual words - a living hope.

Resurrection inheritance, a living hope, and then, all to be reached, arrived at, possessed, through conflict - so it was in the book of Joshua. The inheritance, every foothold of it, was going to be disputed, and only possessed and appropriated, by conflict. And you are not far into this first letter of Peter before you arrive at that "manifold trials", he says, *manifold trials*. "Though now, for a season, if needs be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials". Every bit of the inheritance is possessed through some fresh trial, some new phase of the conflict, some new kind of conflict.

We can begin this consideration by noting that this book of Joshua, as foreshadowing what we have in the New Testament in a spiritual way, makes it perfectly clear that what we call *salvation* (we have limited the meaning of 'salvation' to 'being saved' - perhaps from hell, perhaps from sin - 'being saved') this makes it perfectly clear that salvation is never intended by God to be an end in itself. We had that glorious song of Moses and Israel on the resurrection side of the Red Sea - "Thou wilt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance...".

You, dear friends, are so familiar with this, that it has lost some of its power and appeal. And yet this very truth is the truth of our salvation continually. It is the truth that comprehends salvation from beginning to end. You will never understand the working out of salvation, and the working in of salvation, and all that the Spirit of God is doing with you - you will never understand, and therefore you will never be able to get through the "manifold trials", through the conflict which persists to the end, unless you really do keep ever present to mind, this fact, that it is something more, and more, and more of the inheritance, which is Christ, that lies within this conflict. That you have not just been brought out (and of course you will agree with it when it is put like this) brought out of Egypt to be landed on the edge of a wilderness, and there to stay for the duration; you would not agree to that. You would agree that there is a purpose in it; there must be a purpose in it and, being of God, there must be a very great purpose.

Well, that is just it; that is just: "unto an inheritance" and that inheritance lies implicit in every trial that comes into your life and mine; into every testing; into every bit of conflict and pressure. The inheritance, that is, something more into which we have been called, is implicit in that, and in that, and in that. That is the issue all the time. And we must be alive to this, and when we come to the next bit of the difficulty, of the trial, the testing, the conflict, the pressure, to say, "There is some treasure buried in this; there is something of Christ implicit in this; I have got to have it, I have got to be able to put my hand upon it, and make it mine." Or, to come to the words in Joshua, to put my foot down on it, and say, "I take that in the name of the Lord". It is going to be like that to the end. The tragedy of the book of Joshua, as you know, is that they stopped too soon - they stopped too soon.

There is a great and far-reaching purpose in our salvation, and that, in itself, is a tremendous challenge to us. There are so many people, so many Christians, who do not like that idea, and do not want that, and who say: "Let us be satisfied with being saved: it is a glorious thing to be saved; it is a grand thing to know your sins are forgiven and that you are going to heaven, and that you are not under judgment and condemnation; let us be quite satisfied with 'being saved'". Now, the book of Joshua, and the whole New Testament, tells you that 'being saved' is something more than that. Salvation is a far, far greater thing than that. But oh, you see, that is the little thing, the little bit that you can enjoy and be pleased with, and every day rejoice in, but the rest, this way of conflict, this way of testing, this fuller way, well, we do not want that, "That makes the Christian life far too complicated! Let us have a simple salvation, the simple Christian life...". What I am saying, and many of you, of course, do not need me to say it, but what I am saying is this: that you will miss nine-tenths of your salvation if you stay there. You will miss the very thing for which you have been brought out - your inheritance; we are saved unto an inheritance.

"Begotten again unto a living hope; unto an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven...". This inheritance is secured unto us by the Cross of the Lord Jesus. That is the interpretation of the Jordan. The ark, typical of Christ, went right into the Jordan, when the Jordan "overflowed all its banks"; and mark you, it did not go into a pathway already made, it made the pathway. It was when the feet of the priests that bare the ark touched the waters, that the way was made; it made the way for the people. And it stood there, right in the depths, with the floods all around - holding death off, defeating death, and robbing death of its power. It secured the inheritance, right there in the Jordan, for the people.

And when the Lord said this to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon I have given", He not only meant that He had given it in covenant to Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. He meant that He had secured it, typically, in the Jordan. For, all the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, would have been futile but for that triumph over Jordan that day. You can have all the covenants you can find, but here you have got to face something that stands across your path, and says "No!" positively, "No!" Death is a tremendous power to nullify anything, and until it is overcome, there is no hope and no inheritance. But, by the resurrection from the dead, it is all secured. And we know quite well that Israel, Joshua and Israel, moved into possession on the strength of what had happened in the Red Sea and in the Jordan. That was always their mighty background of sufficiency.

We heard, and I think it is a marvellous thing, and I do not know whether you were duly impressed as our brother read Exodus 15 this morning: Philistia and Edom, and all the rest of them, are thrown into complete consternation by what happened at the Red Sea; they faint and are completely paralysed. And we know that when they came to Jericho, Rahab said to the spies: "We heard what the Lord did at the Red Sea, and there was no more heart left in us". The nations melt away... You

see, the thing is secured by the mighty triumph of the Cross - it is secured. And all the enemies are as already defeated. It is a mighty ground from which, and on which, we move. It is all secured in the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

I wish I could always remember this, and act upon it. What a difference it would make, when we come up against some new foe, some new difficulty, some new obstruction, something that stands across the path, and says, "No, you shall not pass here". We say, "But, but you have already been defeated; there is no question of the issue of victory - victory already is! I bring a victory with me; I am not coming to fight for a victory, I *bring* a victory!" You see, that is the truth, dear friends, that we need to know in life - I need it, you need it - that we are *bringing* a victory into the situation. It is behind us. It is underneath us all the time.

This inheritance, note, now is a *heavenly* inheritance, "...unto an inheritance, reserved *in heaven*" - in heaven! I am very glad of that, and I do not believe that that just means afterward in heaven. In the New Testament you will find that already we are in the heavenly conflict, and it is in the *heavenlies* that we have got to possess our inheritance. These are *heavenly* things; they are very much more real than earthly things.

You see, the conquest of the land of Canaan, and the overcoming of the seven nations, is not world evangelisation - that is not what you are dealing with here. This is not world evangelisation; this is not possessing the nations; this is not getting in and taking hold of *earthly* positions at all, in the beginning. This book of Joshua corresponds to the letter to the Ephesians - it is the *heavenly* warfare; it is the *heavenly* inheritance; it is coming now into actual possession of our *heavenly* things in Christ. "He hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing *in the heavenlies in Christ*", but although He has done it, we are not in possession of them. There follows, as you know, the conflict, to possess what is our own. We are simply fighting a heavenly warfare for our own - what is ours by right. This is not something that has to do with world evangelisation other than perhaps, in the evangelisation you do meet the spiritual forces, and they have got to be overcome. But we are not talking about that now. This is the Life, the heavenly Life of the church of God, where it has to come into its rightful place of ascendancy with Christ in the *heavenlies*, and of growing spiritual enrichment through Him.

The next thing, note, that not one foothold will be appropriated without great conflict and faith. Those two things go together; in a sense, they are one - conflict and faith - for after all, we do find that the issue in conflict is just faith, is it not? Well, that is shown to be the very inclusive basis of this whole book, with Jericho.

If there are seven nations; if there is this completeness of spiritual conflict and conquest, represented by the number 'seven' symbolically, it is seven times round Jericho, seven days round Jericho, and then on the seventh day, seven times again. And what is it? It is "not by might nor by power"; it is not by any human source or resource at all! The utter foolishness of silently walking around for a week - what kind of a campaign is that? Ah, but there is a mightier force in that silent going round than there is in Jericho, or in the whole country - a mightier force. And you know that very well by the way in which you look at it. You see, if that kind of thing can throw down a place like Jericho, and conquer that land, and all its inhabitants and its armies, well, it must be something very big! That *kind* of thing - what kind of thing? Walking round in silence? Ah, but what a potent silence! What a potent silence. No sword was drawn; no weapon was brought into commission; no blow was struck until faith had brought down the situation. And the wall fell down, and then they went up, and they went on. There is a mighty power in faith, and that is why it is the focal point of all this mighty conquest.

By faith, through conflict - and I think, dear friends, perhaps the conflict begins on this matter of faith; do you not think so? If we can get through on that, I think we can get through anywhere, and through anything. It is just *there* that it begins. Conflict! Let me say it again - not one single foothold of your spiritual, heavenly inheritance, nor that measure of Christ, is going to come into your possession, but only through conflict - and that conflict is the conflict of faith. Have you got that? It is, it is!

The conflict of faith! The warfare in faith! It is faith, not as something in itself - this is where we perhaps sometimes make a mistake - we think of 'faith' as an element, as a kind of attribute; something that we have got to work up, make, force, an attitude that we have got to take, something that we produce. No! The essence of faith is the object of faith, or the ground of faith. And here this book teaches us this, that the faith upon which the whole of this mighty conquest was made, was faith in what happened in the Jordan; what had happened there. If the Lord could do that in the Jordan, and that in the Red Sea, then He can do anything. If Christ has done that in His Cross, He can do anything - He can meet this situation today, and the next one tomorrow!

There is sufficient resource in Christ's Cross to meet any situation. That is where faith is tested. Did His death really mean that this, this thing, has been measured, and swallowed up? Does it mean that? Is His death sufficient for this? Is His resurrection sufficient for this? The estimate of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, His death and His resurrection, will be the measure of our possession through faith. It is like that.

There is another point here, as you notice, specially underlined as we read. The battle is not only the battle of faith, which is something in our spirits; but there is another way in which the battle begins within. Before there could be any overcoming of those great enemies in the land; before there could be any conquest and victory through the whole territory, there had to be a fundamental victory in the people in the matter of *courage*. Do you notice that? The Lord repeatedly said that to Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage... only be strong and very courageous. Have I not commanded thee, *Be strong and of good courage*".

What is courage, after all? Well, courage is having a good heart, a strong heart. Yes, courage - that is where the battle is won or lost, in the first place - whether you are in this with a heart. And the enemy is so often successful in defeating conquest and progress, and appropriation, by disheartening us. If the enemy can, he'll dishearten us, take the heart out of us; to rob us of incentive. Oh, it is a big battle, that, is it not? Discouragement - there is plenty of it; things against - plenty of them. The Lord says, "Be strong and of good courage... only be strong and very courageous. Have I not commanded thee, *Be strong and of good courage*". The Lord Jesus knew the need of that; He was constantly telling His disciples about it. It needs that.

May the Lord today revive our courage, revive our hearts, restore to us incentive and motive. And in saying it to us by His Spirit, may He bring it to us. You know, there is to be a reaction on our part. The very least reaction that we make to the Lord's bidding in this matter is: "Lord, yes I am *with You* for all that You want. In myself, I am weak, I am without courage; I lay hold on Your strength". "Not by might, not by power, *but by My Spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts".

I think we are going to leave it here. You can see that this is not just history in the Old Testament. This is not just interpreting the Bible, this is really defining what so many of us know to be very real, very true. If we thought, when we came to the Lord Jesus that it was just all going to be, "Now we are saved and happy; everything is all right", we have lived to know that there are many, many enemies straddling our path; many fierce foes who are going to dispute every foot-hold of the way; we have

lived to prove that. But, says Peter, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials...". Think it not strange! Was he speaking to people who were saying, "Well, this is not what we expected; we did not expect this when we came to the Lord! This is something altogether out of our calculation; this is a strange sort of thing". "No," he says, "think it not strange... This is native to the whole business; it is a part of it." And that is perhaps just where you need fresh courage. You did not reckon for this; you did not calculate with this; you did not think the Christian life was going to be like this. You have sometimes felt, "Lord, if this is Christianity, get me out as quickly as You can!" Have you felt like that?

Well, let us be quite honest; we have sometimes felt, "Oh, to get out of this terrible conflict, this challenging, hard way! This is not what we reckoned on. It is hard!" But remember, there stands over it all this... "an *inheritance*, undefiled, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who, through the power of God, are guarded through faith, unto a salvation waiting to be revealed in *the last time*".

And perhaps that last phrase will cheer us most. It is the last time and the revelation is soon going to be made!