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The Veil

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, *by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh*; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised." Hebrews 10:19-23.

If you notice the content of these chapters, 9 and 10 especially, and even back through chapter 8, this twentieth verse is a kind of climax, it is something that is to be led up to all the time. The thing which is in view through all these chapters and especially these here is coming right and fully into the immediate presence of the Lord and having a place there. Now to have our place fully and in the immediate presence of the Lord, is to have everything that the believer can have. You have reached the end. There you have come to the place of fulness and that is the place to which the Lord is seeking to bring His children, that is the goal which He has for them, that is His greatest desire for us all, that we may *now*, not afterwards, but now, here in this life, have our place in the immediate presence of the Lord. We anticipate the day when we shall be with the Lord, but we shall never be with the Lord if we have not been with the Lord all the time; that will be the end of our having been with the Lord - the Lord does not just want us one day to be forever with the Lord. He wants us *now* to be with Him, and His purpose for us is that we should now come right in where He is, into His immediate presence and have there, not a life of occasional spasmodic visits, but abiding in His presence, abiding spiritually within the veil.

Now, it is this veil that has been engaging me in thought and heart attention, not for the first time, but I feel that we, as the Lord's children, need to be very sure and very clear about this matter, seeing that so much does hang upon it. I believe that this veil, in a sense, was one of the most important things in the whole of the chapter. Of course we know that the Ark of the Covenant of the mercy seat was the final position, perhaps the most sacred and most important, but in relation to that the veil, I believe, was the next most important thing in the whole tabernacle order and structure. It carried with it everything else. Everything centred in it. Even the door of the court, the first approach, is found included in the veil in the same colourings, and then the first object inside the door of the court, the great altar, the blood was taken from the altar and sprinkled on the veil, and everything had a link with the veil and the veil had a link with everything. Now I leave that to you for a closer study and enquiry to just look into the relationship of the veil. And you know quite well that the very mercy seat itself was linked with the veil in as much as there was no approach to the mercy seat only by way of the veil, so that it carried and embodied in itself everything else in the whole tabernacle system.

Thus we find it given a peculiar place of prominence and importance in the New Testament. And it comes into perhaps its most outstanding mention in relation to the death of the Lord Jesus when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. We might, therefore, just remind ourselves at the outset of the composition of this veil.

We know that first of all its ground work was of fine twined linen, which always represents the spotless and perfect, holy, human life of the Lord Jesus - His sinless humanity, finely woven before the eyes of God. And then its colourings on that ground work of blue, the heavenliness of His nature and of His relationships; the scarlet, the purple, the symbolisms of these are well-known to us in the sacrificial side and the royal side - sacrifice and majesty of this heavenly One and of His spotless perfection in humanity. And then imposed upon or wrought on that veil were the cherubim. We are now well familiar with the cherubim. We know from the Word here and there that they were symbolic in a fourfold form of the man, and the lion, and the ox, and the eagle. I am not going over that symbolism again; you know what it means. And then the fact that the cherubim were the custodians of the Divine holiness; it seems that they had special responsibility in relation to the holiness of God. You find the first mention of them is in relation to the way of the Tree of Life. The cherubim were set to guard the way of the Tree of Life lest now fallen, sinful man should put forth his hand and touch that which represented the uncorrupted life of God, and so that first way of life was guarded by the cherubim. They were the custodians of the Divine holiness in relation to that Divine life, that eternal life. The precaution taken was against sinful man taking of that life and a sinful state being perpetuated, lest he should put forth his hand and take that and live forever as a sinful man. God at once saw to it that sinful man should be limited in the measure of his life. Eternal life is not for man in his sin; he has got to be a new creation to be partaker of eternal life. Here you find these cherubim in the tabernacle and temple on the veil, guarding that way as the custodians of the Divine holiness which was just behind that veil in its ultimate and full expression - the holiness of God in the most holy place - and the cherubim were there to safeguard that way. It was a way again.

Now, this veil is said here to be Christ's flesh, which means the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. His own words, with a deeper meaning than was recognised by those to whom He spoke, (and, I think, by a great many people today who are familiar with the words) His own words were, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me", "I am the way" and "there is no coming to the Father but by Me", but the deeper meaning has to be grasped and recognised. For the Lord Jesus in His incarnation, His perfect, sinless humanity was the embodiment of all that that veil typically represented. He was the

ground of sinless humanity, He was the sacrifice, the heavenly Man, and the Lord from heaven, the King, but in Him also all that symbolism that the cherubim signified, had its meaning. He is the Man who represents God and speaks for God. He is the lion, the ox, and the eagle in their spiritual meaning, and in His incarnation He takes up all that symbolism in His own Person as man, but it is still symbolism while He is still here in the flesh. While He is here on earth the symbolism is there still, it is covering, it is veiling something.

Now, types and symbols all the way through the Scripture were veils, covering; they were hiding some reality, they suggested something, but they were not that something. They hinted at things and the things lay behind them. The realities lay behind the types, and in His incarnation the Lord Jesus was a representation of things, but in His inner spiritual reality He *was* the thing that He represented in His incarnation. Therefore it was necessary that that which was but the representation should be cleft, riven, and there should be an opening up of the realities by rending, for it is in Christ that we find God. But you do not find God by going to a historic Jesus as such, Jesus of Nazareth, and taking Him in His historical person. You do not find God that way, you do not come into living fellowship with God by simply accepting the facts that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that He lived a good life and perfect life, and said wonderful things, and died a cruel death and rose again, and went about while He was here, doing good. Something has got to happen if you are to find God in Christ, and that which is but temporary, typical, symbolical, has to be removed that you may find the inward reality. That is the whole message of the letter to the Hebrews.

As perhaps we well know by now, these Hebrew Christians were inclined to hold on to the outward form of things, and were in peril of missing the inner reality of these things. They were in that place where the disciples were at one time; they were clinging to the historic Christ, and when He spoke of leaving them, of being crucified, that for them was the end of everything. They could see nothing at all, proving that they had failed to recognise the real spiritual meaning of the Lord. And when He rose, Mary would have taken hold of Him in the garden and He said, "Embrace Me not, I have not yet ascended to My father". She would still continue on the old natural, earthly, historical level of things, but the Lord says, "Things have changed now, that phase has past and we are in the realm of spiritual realities now, not earthly representations. I represented something, but now that which I represented is the order of the day". He embodied something, but by the rending of the veil, that is, His flesh, what was but an illustration has past and there is a way right through to the spiritual realities of the Lord Jesus. His flesh was then the incarnation.

Now, the rending of the veil was God's act, we know that. God rent the veil from top to bottom, and it was the sign, or shall we say the counterpart of God's smiting the Lord Jesus. He was smitten of God, God smote Him; the deepest reality in the cross was that God had to smite His own Son as being made sin for us, and a curse for us. God had to smite Him, but in God's smiting Him, several things were included, one was this: that God in that smiting of judgement, put away forever that order of things which closed the way into His presence, which shut the way of life. In the smiting of the Lord Jesus, to put it the other way round, the obstruction to the presence of God was removed and the way through was opened up: a new and a living way, but that also implied this, that the question of sin, judgement and death had been fully dealt with in the Lord Jesus by His work in the cross. Sin which had closed the way was dealt with. Judgment following upon sin, the drawn sword, the flaming sword has been dealt with. Death, as the opposite of a living way, death has been removed, and so all that having been done in Christ in the work of His cross under the smiting judgement of God, the effect of that smiting in its last issue was to remove that out of the way and open up a way into the Lord's presence, into the fullest fellowship with Him.

These are elementary facts of the gospel, but this rending of the veil by God was God's testimony, God's attesting the work of redemption by His Son. When, as it were, God slit that veil from top to bottom, it was God saying, echoing if you like, from heaven: "*It is finished*". Everything that comes between now to keep man out, has been dealt with and is done with. There is no reason now whatever why anybody should stand without and ask if peradventure they dare come nigh to God. Everyone can come right in now. It was a risky thing in the past to even contemplate that. The high priest himself had most explicit instructions about going through that veil. You remember the word was, "lest he should die". He had to take very great precautions according to Divine instructions, but now we are all put on better ground than the high priest of Israel, that we can come in with boldness. The high priest of Israel went in with fear and trembling; you may be sure he thought, "Have I attended to this? My instructions were very plain about this and it is death if I am not very careful, I am going into certain death unless I watch all these things". But the Word is here, "full assurance of faith, by a new and living way" for all of us. Elevated to a position of confidence, provided of course, that we have given due respect to the blood. It will be our smiting unless we do that.

It is a terrible thing to make little or light of the blood of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 6 is very clear about that, but provided we give the blood its place of honour, and having had our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, the spiritual meaning of that old type, let us come with full assurance of faith through the veil. But there is a sense in which there is no veil now, the way is wide open. The Lord in rending that veil Himself from heaven attested that all the work necessary to be done in order that man might come freely and fully into His presence, and abide there in life and not in death, has been accomplished in Christ by His cross. And so the Lord attested the work as complete and He then, so to speak, dismissed the veil that it no longer had a place there. That is, He removed the obscuring factor as to Divine realities. The types, the shadows, the symbols now were all swept away and the spiritual realities were brought in, and we enter into this by the removing of the veil: the realities which are not the historic, or the typical, or the earthly but are the eternal and the spiritual, heavenly things in Christ. We come into this.

It is from the outward to the inward which Hebrews 8 deals with in the new covenant. The old covenant has past and the Lord makes a new covenant and He finds fault with the old. The Lord finds fault with the old. What fault did He find? Well, it never brought people into the reality; it only kept them in the outer court of types and shadows. What does the new covenant do? It brings them into the realities because it brings the realities into them. From things being external it has now become Christ dwelling in them; coming into the realities because the realities come into them with the Lord Jesus. Now it is no longer a matter of churches, sacrifices, altars and priests as a formal system down here on the earth, all that in spiritual meaning is in Christ and we have got it all in our fellowship with the Lord Jesus. He is our sacrifice, our altar, our Priest, and our dwelling place, our meeting place, and our mercy seat where we meet with the Father. He is Church in the sense that when we come together in the Lord Jesus it does not matter whether it is in the attic or the coal cellar, you have gone to Church, in the best possible sense of that word. The church is that which is assembled into and in the Lord Jesus and it does not matter where it is. That whole thing of externalities has gone - now it is spiritual. Oh that the Lord's people would be delivered out into that, into the realities of things, for so many are still in the realm of types and symbols and representations, outward things... they are still on the earth in these matters, but we now have the privilege of heavenly fellowship with the Lord Jesus in that which is eternal. It is a matter from the outward to the inward, it is from the temporal to the spiritual. Now, that is the privilege which is ours

now, for every one of us to come into a better position than the high priest of Israel. It is a better position for the children of God.

You read the Old Testament, you read about the high priest, what a wonderful person he was, but you are in a better position than he was. Do you envy him? Do you elevate him to some position high up there? Well, of course, in so far as he was a type of the Lord Jesus you have to recognise his elevation, his importance, but in as much as he as a man, still a man, entered within the veil with fear and trembling, with judgement hanging over his head if he was not very careful, we are in a better position than him if we stand in the virtue of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. We can come with boldness to the throne of grace, we may enter in in full assurance of faith, every one of us. The ordinary Israelite would not have allowed his slightest imagination to have carried him within that veil as a person, that was far removed as beyond the possibility of an ordinary Israelite; that was reserved for someone upon whom was conferred very great honour and responsibility. But here we more ordinary folk may contemplate with perfect peace of mind, rest of heart and life, now in the very presence of the Lord, to abide through the blood of our Lord Jesus. Now the Lord rent the veil; it was God's act. (And while I was reading this and thinking about it I allowed my imagination to carry me away a little on this point: What did the Jews do with that rent veil in the temple at Jerusalem? They must have contemplated, the high priest must have looked at it and perhaps said, "This thing is torn, it is absolutely torn right from top to bottom, it is no longer whole, it is in two bits. What are we going to do with it?" And he evidently decided on one of two things, either to sew it up or replace it with a new one. I don't know, I suppose they put a new one there, but perhaps they sewed it up.)

Now, it was the sewing up of that torn veil which produced the letter to the Hebrews, in effect. God had opened a way and dismissed the veil that there should be the spiritual, heavenly, eternal realities entered into by His people, and they shut the way that God had opened, they closed the way that God from heaven had opened for them. And inasmuch as that was a new and living way, they chose the old way and a way of death. They refused what God had provided. That is what sealed the doom of Israel, that is what brought the destruction of Jerusalem, the overthrowing of the temple, the scattering of the Jews, so that they have never since been a people with a temple or altar or a land in full possession. That has had a terrible historical sequence.

But I wonder if today we are not really in the presence of something which is spiritually very much like that - that we have not appreciated what the Lord has done for us, what the Lord has made possible, what the Lord has given us, that we have not come into the light of Christ's perfect work in bringing in the heavenly realities in spiritual fulness - and this may account for a great deal of spiritual death and spiritual immaturity. The Hebrew position is so widespread in these days: immaturity. It is true there are multitudes of the Lord's dear children on the earth today who love the Lord, who have known Him for many years, who would lay down their lives for Him tomorrow, who would give up everything for Him, and yet who are just spiritual infants in the matter of spiritual understanding and in the matter of spiritual power and life. And it does seem to be such a contradiction that you who love the Lord, you who have belonged to the Lord for many years, that you should be willing to let all go for the Lord, and yet you should remain in a state of spiritual immaturity and childhood so that the matter of spiritual power in the spiritual realm is hardly known. That is the Hebrew position.

Paul, writing this letter to the Hebrews, said: "When by reason of the time you ought to be teaching others, you have need that someone teach you the first principles." They had evidently come out for

the Lord, and that must have cost something for a Jew in those days to take sides for the Lord Jesus, it was a costly thing, it meant a big break. They knew the Lord, but here they had evidently been there for several years, by reason of the time, the apostle said, and now they are still needing someone to teach them. He could not give them, he said, strong meat, they could not bear it, he still had to treat them as infants. Why? They had not recognised and apprehended what had been done in the cross of the Lord Jesus for them in the removing, in His flesh, of a system of representations and types and symbols, and the bringing in by the rending of that veil, of the spiritual realities. They still wanted to go to the temple and offer their sacrifices and carry on the old line of things because they had not seen that which lay behind and what God had done in the rending of the veil. Let us enter in by the new and living way which He has dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Let us come in full assurance of faith.

I think you and I still have much to learn as to what the Lord has done for us in the Lord Jesus and what our privileges are. We should be continually before the Lord that He should open to us the greater fulnesses of the life within the veil, the fulness that is there through the Lord Jesus and be very careful that we do not sew up the veil, that we do not undo what the Lord has done, that we do not fail to see the Lord has dismissed one whole line of things and brought in a very much richer one. We must be willing to let go that old earthly line of things, and spiritually come into His heavenly line of things.

The Lord make us also to have such standing that we can be in His hands useful to those who are still living with the veil between.