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Under the Holy Spirit's Government

by T. Austin-Sparks

*Transcribed from a message given in March 1962.
This is an extract, the full transcript is: [The Way of the Holy Spirit](#).*

His face... as a flint... to go up to Jerusalem. See what that means? All that was involved in that... we know and He knew, but He set his face steadfastly as a flint, to go up to Jerusalem; He's committed. He's committed! He's under the Spirit's government.

You know, you travel by air, you travel long distance by air, there is always a point which the pilot knows to be the point from which there is no turning back. We've gone too far to turn back; it would be far more fatal to turn back if anything goes wrong than to go on. From this point the only thing to do, whatever happens, is to go on, we're committed. Jesus went all the way from the day when the Spirit came upon Him; in His heart He'd gone all the way, there was no turning back. He set His face, steadfast.

I repeat: a life under the Holy Spirit's government is a committed life on which there ought to be no turning back. Have you reached that point of committal? Have you really reached that point of committal? As we say, all the boats burned behind, all the bridges with the past destroyed, blown up? Committed. The Wind has taken over, the Spirit is in a position of mastery: subduing, controlling, a force which subdues every other force in us. Every other force! We'll see that working out in a moment.

So the first thing - and dear friends I keep very strictly to the Scriptures in what I'm saying, you know

this is so - the first thing about the Holy Spirit as the Wind from heaven and as seen on the day of Pentecost, the great foundation of the dispensation which is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, is that He just takes everything into His hands and *demand*s that place of *absolute sovereignty*. You're not going to argue with the Wind! You know it's futile to argue with a hurricane, it's futile to try out conclusions with a mighty rushing Wind! You'll either be disastrously broken or gloriously broken. It's possible to be gloriously broken. But everything of Christ comes along that line: following the Spirit.

The next thing about the Wind is that the Wind chooses and takes its own course. You cannot tell the wind which way to go or to come. You cannot dictate to the wind as to what its choice should be, this or that. Wind just chooses its own course and takes its own course; so is everyone born of God, born of the Spirit. The Spirit demands the right to do this with us, dear friends, to choose His course with us and to take His course with us, He demands the right to do it.

Now, Peter is a very splendid example of this whole thing. In a very real sense Peter is the embodiment of all that I'm saying. It's not without significance that it's Peter who is the foremost figure on the day of Pentecost. Not without significance, I said. What significance? Why, the very significance of Peter himself! Remember the last words that the Lord said to Peter in the old regime, before the ascension: "Simon, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and wentest whithersoever thou wouldst but when thou art old another shall gird thee, carry thee whither thou wouldst not". Whither thou wouldst, whither thou wouldst not; naturally. Here you have Peter present with his own natural temperament, this *mercurial* man. What a descriptive word that is; have you ever spilt some mercury on the ground and tried to pick it up again, get it together again? Why, you've got to go after it in all directions and when you think you've got it you haven't; that's Peter isn't it? Simon, very descriptive... the old Simon, his temperament, his natural make-up and constitution and disposition... diving off all the time. Frustrated in one way; he's off in another. "Thou wentest whithersoever thou wouldst." The Lord had got Peter well summed up hadn't He: "Whither thou wouldst - you dictated your own course; you chose your own way, you followed your own likes and dislikes and preferences. YOU were the sovereign of your own life and, as you thought, of your own destiny; *but* another shall gird thee, another shall gird thee. That belongs to your spiritual immaturity all that, your spiritual maturity's going to be marked by this: another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou, the old Simon, wouldst not! This Spirit that will gird you, will work quite contrary to your own make-up, your temperament, your disposition and make it impossible for you just to do as you like or as you are disposed to do, another shall gird thee." The Wind chooses its own course, takes it, so is everyone born of God...

Peter on the day of Pentecost came under the mighty girding and *now* the battle between old Simon and new Peter begins! Next thing as you know, Acts chapter 10, Peter is on the housetop praying; been fasting and praying and he becomes very hungry, and falls into a trance and sees a vision. You remember the story of the sheet let down, full of unclean creatures. And a voice: "Arise Peter kill and eat." Old Simon rises up and says: "Not so Lord!" How we mix things up don't we, when we get into that realm of nature, "Lord..." that word won't do, that word won't do when it's our saying "not so". You cannot say "Lord" and at the same time say "not so". And three times this happened and the vision passes and Peter's called, and you know the rest of the story don't you? There arrives the three men from Caesarea and Cornelius the centurion, knocking at the door... Read the story, I haven't time to just go over it again.

Peter was girded; the Lord said "Go with them", go with them; the Spirit said go with them. *The Spirit said* go with them! It was a headache for Simon but he was girded and he went - into the house of a

Gentile! Into the company of Gentiles; unclean beasts according to Jewish ritual. According, mark you, and you've heard me say this before, to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He'd got the Scriptures on his side, as he thought, and he is standing upon his interpretation of the Scriptures, they were supporting him. But the Spirit was doing something; see the contradiction to the very Scriptures and to his whole position! Oh, I know the danger of what I'm saying, but you see the point. The Holy Spirit knows what He is doing and He demands *absolute sovereignty* in this matter for it is not even our interpretation of the Scriptures that is final, it's the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the Scriptures. And very often as we go on with the Lord we come to the place, yes repeatedly in our lives, where we have to say: I've got to make an adjustment over that, I believed very strongly this and that about that but I've got to adjust, the Lord has made a demand that I change my position over that.

There was some years ago a retired army colonel, a friend of mine who'd written books, books and books on a certain prophetic subject, published them; well-known and read everywhere. And he said to me, he said to me, "You know, I've got to recall the whole lot. The real life, light that the Lord has shown me and poured upon this matter makes it necessary for me to change my whole position, my whole life position over this matter". He was honest; he was honest! But there's no doubt about it, the Holy Spirit had taken over this matter of his mental play upon the Scriptures and interpretation and there's all the difference between a *mental* interpretation and a *spiritual* revelation.

Well, here is Peter in the house of Cornelius in this wonderful story, what was Peter doing really, or the old Simon doing in this matter? Listen: he was making Christ much smaller than He really is. And if there's one thing that the Holy Spirit is against, *He's against that!* He's against that. Israel, the elect... the spiritual aristocracy; the Gentiles, the dogs... the unclean beasts. Israel... The Holy Spirit is saying to Peter very emphatically: Jesus Christ is a much bigger Christ than ever you have seen Peter yet, you have to adjust to that. If there is one thing that the Holy Spirit is against it is *exclusivism*, make no mistake about it, when exclusivism makes Christ smaller than He is. That's the tragedy of Israel; chosen, yes! Elect, yes! Given the oracles, yes! All that, but what for? *Why?* For the sake of the nations. A testimony of God in the midst of the nations that the nations might see and believe and turn to the Lord. That's, *that's* the horizon of God but Israel...

Oh, Jonah, Jonah is really an example of this, "Go to Nineveh, that great, that mighty city". You know the story of Jonah, but Jonah represents the traditional position of Israel: exclusive, shut up within themselves, "We are the people and no other! We are the chosen, we are the elect, we have received the light, we have got the truth." But why? Why? Not for ourselves, not to make *us* something in ourselves, not to draw around us a fence, shutting out all others, but *for the sake of all others!* For the sake of all others, that's all! And Israel lost their position, dear friends, for this whole dispensation on one, one issue: these two thousand years of Israel's tragic, so tragic history, is the issue of making God's Son, less than He really is. Oh, what Christ is! What God meant Him to be to Israel and the world! You see, it's in this very chapter that the most familiar words in all the Bible are "God so loved the world... whosoever" Nicodemus, Nicodemus you've got to be *born* from above, *out of* this exclusivism, *out of* this narrow traditionalism, *out of* this fixed and set position of yours. Born right out into the *greatness* of God's all-comprehending purpose in His Son. How great Christ is! Oh, may we be saved from having a smaller Christ than God means us to have. There's no danger in that dear friends, the Holy Spirit can look after that. But my point is that the Holy Spirit in this tenth chapter of Acts is just saying this, "I'm not having any of your circumscribing of Christ on any ground whatsoever. You may quote Me Leviticus chapter eleven if you like, but I'm not having it." *What God*

hath cleansed call not thou unclean. The Cross has dealt with all that ceremonial uncleanness and opened up the vast vistas of grace for all men.

The third occasion of Peter, see first his temperament, then his spiritual bigotry. Chapter fifteen... Paul refers to what happened in his letter to the Galatians, referred to what happened. Peter is called to account for this by the elders at Jerusalem, he is, as we say, on the carpet, on the spot, having to answer for this, this unusual, unheard of behaviour. Well, you know, we quoted Peter who sums it up in all this "Who was I, who was I to resist God?" that is what it amounts to. Who was I to resist God? But something else happened. Peter's at Antioch. The Gentiles at Antioch have been saved, gathered in, the Spirit has done something with the Gentiles and Peter's down there rejoicing! He's following up, he's following up Caesarea, house of Cornelius, happily following up with the Gentiles in Antioch, eating and drinking. Alright, "But certain came down from Jerusalem, James and certain others, came down from Jerusalem and when they were come down, Peter withdrew". Peter withdrew! Peter *withdrew*... there's a withdrawing. This is a *dangerous* offence to the Holy Spirit, a violating of what He was doing. And Paul recognized the significance of this and he said "I withstood him to the face for his dissimulation. I withstood him to the face". Simon is having a bad time isn't he under this aegis of the Holy Spirit; he really is. What's happened now? Here something has come up of the old Simon - bondage to man: "What will the brethren say? What will the leaders, what will the chief men say? I must, I must be careful because of what they will say and perhaps what they'll do." And that kind of thing is set over against the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit; two things in collision, you *cannot* have it.

I'm so glad that Peter must have got the better of this, he couldn't have written his two letters if he hadn't. And he couldn't have said later on about this man who withstood him to the face and said "Peter you stand condemned, before God you stand condemned. You're guilty of dissimulation." Later Peter wrote "Our beloved brother Paul... in all his writings... in which there *are* some things difficult to understand...!" You see? But he's got over his hurdle. The Holy Spirit was choosing the way and taking it, and is finding Peter coming into line. Coming into line, there were some, mark you, who didn't come into line: "Demas hath forsaken me, returned to Thessalonica, I don't know about Barnabas. I don't know about Barnabas, even Barnabas..." says Paul, "Even Barnabas, even Barnabas, unthinkable! Dear, beloved Barnabas to whom I owe so much, we all owe so much, the church at Antioch owe so much, but even Barnabas was carried away." Barnabas falls out of the New Testament. I hope I don't exaggerate judgment, condemnation, but there are those who just get out of the way of the Wind when He's blowing toward this great, full purpose of God; dissimulate, withdraw. The Lord save us.

I don't know where to finish this. The Wind searches... may I finish on this and leave the other, the Wind searches and tests everything, especially foundations and structures, of what kind they are. I've spent a great deal of my life in Scotland, my childhood and later. There's a common sight in Scotland, we have there many pine trees, pine forests and pine trees growing along the roadside and it's a land in which the wind blows sometimes. And after any of our great wind storms, you can go along and see these pine trees uprooted, themselves lying level with the earth and their roots up in the air. Before people had admired them, said very nice things about them; what fine trees they were! What a magnificent sight! And the wind blew...and the wind blew, testing the depth of their roots. Testing their power of endurance. Testing stamina. And down went so many of these - before time erstwhile admirable, praiseworthy trees - down they went, crashing to earth. The Wind bloweth! The Holy Spirit just does that you know friends! That is what He is doing. The Holy Spirit is going to blow on us all. Christian experience is just this, under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit our

foundations are *going to be tested*; make no mistake about it, they're going to be tested, and our structure, our building, our stamina, our endurance.

The Wind's blowing today, my word its blowing over this earth. Look at all the testing, see all the tragic crashing to the ground. Do you know dear friends, that Christianity as we now know it is going to be blown to bits, absolutely to bits and there's going to be nothing of it left. Christianity as we know it. All these things *must be dissolved*, says Peter. This whole cosmic order and this whole Christian system as we know it, is going. You say, "That's a terrible statement; on what authority?" Well, plenty! I have lived through two world wars, what have we seen? I know that's a very simple and small example of what I'm saying; we have seen many and many a place with a great Christian tradition, something that *has* stood for something, simply crushed to the ground, hardly one stone left upon another. Everywhere destruction; no preferences, no favouritisms, and God, where is God? Where's God? "Oh, if anything ought to have been preserved, that ought to have been preserved, God ought to have protected that!" No, the answer is no! *Why?* Because God is not interested in things. God is only interested in one matter. The Holy Spirit is only concerned about one matter, dear friends, one matter only and history bears this out. *The Holy Spirit is only concerned with Christ*. With Christ, with what is Christ, what is of Christ, with the measure of Christ. The Holy Spirit has only One in His vision, that's Christ, and He's always saying "How much really of the eternal essence of Christ is here?"

And so you can go to Asia Minor today and find no trace of the churches in Asia, you can go to Galatia, you can go to all these places of the New Testament and find nothing today as places. Now the first three chapters of the book of the Revelation just bear down upon that. Note to the churches, to the seven churches in Asia, what the Spirit saith, what the Spirit saith, what the Spirit saith; seven times: "What the Spirit saith". The Wind is blowing... what for? Just to discover not, not whether this has got the tradition, not this and that and something else, not whether they've got a building and a place of meeting, or a technique of worship or kind of New Testament order BUT, whether they have that or not, *how much of the risen, living, exalted Christ is here?* And the Holy Spirit will go as far as to say "Repent or I will remove thy lampstand out of its place because the light's gone". What's the good of a lampstand if there is no light? Mere ornaments the Holy Spirit is not interested in. Do you see the point? The Light is Christ, the measure of Christ, it is Christ, it is Christ! What the Spirit saith is not this and that, I know thy works and thy labours and thy patience, all that is very good, BUT!