



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.

The Well Within

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published and edited by Harry Foster in "Toward the Mark" magazine, July-August 1976, Vol. 5-4.

"The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." (John 4:14).

"And Isaac digged again the well of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them up..." (Genesis 26:18).

The Word makes it clear that from the Lord's side the life of the Holy Spirit, with all its up-welling and outflowing, should be a spontaneous thing. On God's side there are no difficulties. So far as He is concerned there is nothing more to be done to make possible the reality of the well within. The very fact that when the Lord Jesus ascended to glory in the power of a completed and perfected work, the Holy Spirit spontaneously came down from heaven, is proof that from God's side there was nothing remaining to be done to effect that release. The Lord had made full provision. On the other hand, though, such a spontaneity of up-welling and outflowing of the waters of the Spirit is not as general among Christians as it should be. It is our intention to seek some explanation of this limitation.

The well is there; the spring is provided. If we have believed into Christ and truly belong to Him, then His Spirit is present as the well within. There can be no doubt about this if we are true believers. But we may have seen a swampy patch, with all the evidences of water but no freshness or flow, and have discovered that although a spring existed, its water was interrupted by some stone or obstacle which hindered its flow. This can happen in human life. The spring of the Spirit may be present, but

with various obstructions lying heavily upon it, preventing the outflow in a definite course.

Abraham was noted for the wells which he dug. He was a man of faith, and faith always digs wells. The Philistines, however, blocked them up with rubbish after he died, so that his son, Isaac, had to unstop them. Isaac speaks of the power of a risen life in union with heaven, and this gives a good indication of the meaning of the opened wells. The Old Testament type finds its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus, the greater Isaac who, in the power of His resurrection, ascension and heavenly life, has opened up anew those fountains of the Spirit which had been blocked and choked by many things which were contrary to the will of God. The wells are opened in His resurrection. The Spirit is now freely given. But we have to see that no obstacles are allowed to hinder the flow. Perhaps it will help us to do so, if we consider a few of the hindrances which need to be removed if the well within is to be unstopped and the water allowed to flow freely.

Hindrances in the Realm of the Mind

Firstly, there are hindrances in the realm of the mind. We have been told that man is quite unable to cope mentally with the spiritual and heavenly things of God. For this reason God has provided the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, of revelation and of spiritual knowledge. So there will obviously be hindrances to the free flow of the Spirit if we try to reason things out for ourselves instead of heeding the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. If we try to think things through ourselves, we become involved in all sorts of problems and questions. We are specifically told that: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Corinthians 2:14), a fact which needs to be accepted and remembered by Christians for themselves, as well as for the world around. There will always arise moments of crisis or experiences full of perplexity and seeming contradiction, for which the only answer is that we must trust God. If we resolve that we will reason the matter out, or if we turn to other men for their explanations, we will never understand the ways of God. His Word is our only source of light. It will, at times, be hard to understand. It will, perhaps, be difficult or even impossible to explain. But if we heed its message we will be delivered from man's foolish reasoning, and we will have lifted off a load of rubbish which was blocking up the well within.

There are bound to be matters which defy analysis or argument, for the ways of God are past finding out. The real test is whether we will trust God when we cannot fathom His ways; whether we will deliberately and positively take up a position of faith reliance on His faithfulness. Even that may not provide us with an answer which satisfies our minds and solves all our intellectual problems, but it will bring us that blessed peace which is promised to those whose minds are stayed on the Lord. This is just the opposite of the mind of the man who is stayed on himself and his difficulty. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). It does not say that his heart will be at peace because he knows the answers to all the questions. No! The basic thing is a faith attitude towards God's faithfulness. To act in this way is to remove a big stone, and I venture to say that it will clear the way for a new joy, and new peace and a new strength. The Holy Spirit has been pent up, blocked, hindered, arrested, by incessant reasonings of the natural mind. He is released by the simple exercise of a faith which feeds on God's Word and relies on His faithfulness.

Hindrances in the Realm of the Heart

There is another possible realm of hindrances to the up-welling of the Spirit, and this is the realm of the heart. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of love. If there is coldness towards the Lord, a lack of true devotion to Him, then this is like a heavy stone which makes the life more like a quagmire than a fresh spring. Any reserve which we have, not in the knowing of God's will but in the willingness to do it, will inevitably stem the flow of the Spirit's power. It is always the work of God's enemy to clog up our lives by introducing love of self or love of the world, and it needs ruthless determination to remove the accumulated rubbish and re-dig the well in purity of devotion to Christ.

It may well be, though, that the hindrances arise from lack of love to our fellow believers. We must remember that the Holy Spirit can never have free course in us and through us if we harbour unloving thoughts concerning other of God's children, let alone put those thoughts into actions. He is the Spirit of fellowship, so that if we fail in that realm then we fail in the matter of love. It is so easy to allow unworthy considerations to quench brotherly love, to be clogged up with resentment or to be wrongly influenced by our susceptibilities or hurt feelings. What is more, we find it the easiest thing in the world to say or hear unkind things about others, things which put them in a bad light and somehow make us feel self-righteous. We must not dismiss such matters as unimportant, for although they may seem small in themselves, they become the deposits which unite to clog up the well of the Spirit.

This matter of personal relationships is one in which we have to set ourselves definitely to digging out the earthiness which stops up the wells of the Spirit. We must refuse to speak and refuse to listen to those critical accounts of other believers which would grieve them if they heard and do grieve the Spirit who is always present and who always hears. More than that, we have to be active in positive cultivation of fellowship. To some it is quite natural to be independent. For them deference to others represents a major difficulty. Sometimes they may deliberately ignore or despise others, but sometimes they just prefer to do it alone and never seriously think of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence.

The Word of God, however, is most explicit in ordering us to esteem one another, to submit to one another and to live and work together. The Holy Spirit demands that the people of God live according to a team order of things, that they should be governed by a family spirit. Anything which is of an isolated or detached nature, which fails to recognise and fully accept the family thought of God, is a check on Him. By failing to observe fellowship we quench the Spirit. It is not only a matter of avoiding giving offence but of active pursuit of fellowship. Some may be wondering why there is so little up-springing from the inner well, when they are sitting back in a wrong kind of modesty, failing to bring in their own personal contribution to fellowship life and ministry. Unkindness is not the only obstacle in this realm. Shyness and diffidence can equally rest like a stone on the flow of life. The only thing to do is to dig it up and move it away. Get in, get right in, and let yourself go! Do not always choose the back seat because you like to be left alone, but come forward in the Lord's name and give the Holy Spirit a free course in your lives. He is well able to check you if you become too self-assertive, but there is little He can do if your well is all stopped up with fears and inhibitions.

Hindrances in the Realm of Daily Living

There is one more area of life in which this hindering work may be found, and that is that the flow of the Spirit may be checked by inconsistencies in the daily life. The question which constantly faces us

is whether or not we want to know the free flow from the well within. Do we want that springing up of living water, of which the Lord Jesus spoke? Do we want that, as He promised, rivers of living water shall flow out from our inner life? If we do, then we must always give serious consideration to anything which may serve as a blockage. Any disobedience, yes, any reservation in obedience, from our side will be sure to hinder the flow from God's side, acting as a deterrent to the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can never know the well springing up and the river flowing out if at any point where God has revealed His will, we fail in the matter of obedience.

This well is choked by disobedience to the known will of God. It is choked and blocked by inconsistency of walk. The Lord wants more than mental agreement with His Word; He expects to see it working out in practical terms. He is concerned with how we spend our time, how we manage our financial affairs, how we behave both alone and before others. He watches us in the home and at our work, as well as in our fellowship activities, always looking for a walk worthy of the gospel which we believe and preach. Not that He desires us to have a narrow life. Far from it! The Spirit has come to bring enrichment and fulfilment to us. God's command to us, though, is that we must not quench the Spirit nor must we grieve Him; in other words that we do not allow any rocks, stones or rubbish to accumulate as a hindrance to the springing-up well. We need to watch the practical expression of our daily life and so avoid a quagmire of suppression, whereas God provides for a well of water springing up into eternal life.