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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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## Questions That Are Sometimes Asked

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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### **1. As to the Cross.**

Why do we make so much of the Cross, and refer to it so constantly? Why not speak of the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit, the Second Coming, etc., in equal measure? Firstly, let it be said that the physical death, or the cross in material form, is not in mind when the word is used. The mentality which creates physical pictures in spiritual matters is always open to many perils and misconceptions, as see the vogue of the crucifix in some circles. The all embracing spiritual realities back of the historic act must govern our conception of the Cross.

In the same way when "The Blood" is mentioned many find a revulsion and a sense of repugnance rise within them. It is never the crimson fluid which is pictured in the imagination of the spiritually instructed and enlightened. Blood and Life are synonymous terms and the "shedding of blood" is in other words, the "pouring out of the soul (or life) unto death."

Secondly, be it strongly emphasised that the Cross is basic to everything else, and all else is related to it. There can be no subjective experience of resurrection, ascension, and reigning life in Christ, only as we are initially, and progressively baptised into His death, and "bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus." The Cross never leaves us and we never get beyond the Cross. There is no Pentecost until there has been a Calvary, and even then the Spirit's work is to constantly lead us on the one side ever more deeply into the Cross, that, on the other side He may lead us more fully into the Resurrection. Paul linked these together always. His ambition was to "know Him in the power of His

resurrection," by being a sharer in His sufferings, so "having been made conformable to His death."

The "Second Coming" is not some isolated event in history, but at a point of the fulfilment of the work of the Cross, and it must needs wait for this. When we get beyond that, even in the glory, it will still be "The LAMB (as though it had just been slain) in the midst of the Throne." The Cross is eternal. It is the hub of the wheel, and all other things are the spokes fastened to it, moving out from it, and at the same time coming to it. Let the following passages be considered: Phil. 3:10; 2 Cor. 4:10,11,12; Rom. 8:36; 2 Cor. 1:8,9; Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 13:4.

## **2. As to the Adversary.**

It is often asked why Satan and his system are so much in evidence in the language and thought of this ministry. Many objections are raised, which need not be dealt with separately. The answer will be in a general way, which embraces most of these interrogations and demurrings.

Firstly. Let it never be thought that it is necessarily the power of Satan that obsesses us. (There is no obsession at all in this matter.) Many think that we put the adversary in a position only a little less than almighty, and allow him attributes which are almost equal to those of God Himself. This is utterly false. If it were but a matter of power Satan could not stand before the Lord for five minutes. It is not might but right. The flesh is the heritage and rightful ground of Satan and his operations, and he must have it. His resources are doubtless very great, and he uses all these when he can find the suitable instrument for their expression and his purpose. The instrument is the "flesh" as the condition and active law of the fallen nature or creation. Hence, believing that the fallen state is not the end of Satan's work, but only the reducing of things to a condition suitable to a far greater work on his part, we must emphasise -

1. The need for the "putting to death of the flesh" by being "crucified with Christ."
2. The walk and life in the Spirit and not in the flesh made possible only by union in resurrection, and therefore
3. The "destroying (lit., "putting out of action") of the works of the devil by abiding in the Cross.

It only requires a little bit of flesh in one's personal life, or in a Christian community to give the enemy the means of working terrible havoc and of robbing spiritual effectiveness beyond a certain measure.

Then it must ever be borne in mind that the Bible from Genesis to Revelation makes clear that it is not just a human state which is the basis of the Divine activities, but a false spiritual system which in different places and in different ages manifests itself in different forms. Back of the religious systems there are intelligent spiritual forces all of which are antagonistic to God and His purpose to "sum up all things in Christ."

Until the nature of our conflict is recognised and we accept the meaning of Christ's Cross in this direction we shall always find that there is a realm which lies beyond our power of effectiveness. We shall go so far, but beyond that we are beaten and bewildered. Scripture need not be quoted to show this, and indeed there is too much of it to quote.

"Why could not we?" - may be the tragic question resultant from a failure to recognise the nature of the problem quite as much as the nature of the equipment.

The simple study of the word "power" in its two Greek forms in the New Testament is sufficient to show that the first of these - authority or jurisdiction - relates to a position held in a spiritual kingdom superior to that which is back of the world and men in their fallen state. This judicial ascendancy is resultant from a destruction of the other judicial basis of the counter spiritual hierarchy. The new uprising of spiritual forces and their impact upon the Christian consciousness today is going to create a situation which only those who know their nature, methods, and intents, and the relationship of the Cross of Christ to them will be able to meet.

Prophecy foretells how things *will* be, not how things *need* be. Had the Church abode by the conception of the spiritual background of things which is patent in the New Testament these waves of spiritual forces so devastating in spirit, mind, and body, would not have had the chance and success which they have had. Hence the need for a constant testimony and a strong emphasis upon the superior jurisdiction of the saints in the "Sovereign Head" over this authority of Satan.

The system is one, whether it be that behind the African witch doctor or the scientific spiritist, and the principles for dealing with it are the same in all the world.

"It is not with mere flesh and blood (that is the fallen nature) that we are wrestling," but those forces which find fallen nature the very means by which to pursue their purpose of trying to thwart the Sovereignty of the Christ.

Let us repeat, we are not obsessed, but simply "not ignorant of his devices." This is not a treatise upon the Satanic system but simply an explanation of the attitude taken.