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The Basis of Authority

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Psalm 45:1-7; Hebrews 1:8,9.

"My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the kings enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

"But unto the Son He saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.'"

The Conflict Between Two Kingdoms

May I just say here, for the sake of the setting of everything, that what we are seeking to see in these meditations is that the cosmic conflict between the two great kingdoms, the kingdom of God, of darkness and of death and life, is heading up in a very intense and comprehensive way at this time unto the end, and that the Lord's people everywhere are involved; and in a very real sense the conflict rests upon them for its issue. The Church is the eternally chosen instrument and vessel in and through which the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus is to be manifested and administered. Unto that a deep spiritual preparation has to be made on very practical grounds and along very

practical lines, for these kingdoms are not just systems set up in an objective, external way. They are not political; they are not economic; they are not earthly in any sense. They are spiritual; and the very essence of their nature and strength and existence is a spiritual state, and that state is found within the very constitution of those who belong to the two kingdoms respectively. We have sought to see that the kingdom of Satan is really within man by nature. It is there in man's own nature that Satan now has his strength. On the other hand, the kingdom of the heavens is an inward thing. It is within you, and it is therefore a matter of inward constitution. Therefore one thing which arises for us is as to whether this kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens within the life of the people of God, is really going to manifest and express its supremacy, its ascendancy; and that is what we are called unto, and that is really the challenge of these meditations.

Righteousness The Expression of The Righteous One

Now, if the kingdom of Satan is based upon sin, and if sin is what we have said it is - rebellion, perversity, with all its outworking: pride: self in all its forms; unto enmity against God, separation from God, and utter impotence and helplessness to redeem itself - if that is the basis of the kingdom of Satan, then the kingdom of God is based on righteousness; that is, upon that which is exactly the opposite of sin. If Satan is the embodiment of sin, then Christ must be the embodiment of righteousness, when rightly understood. The point is that it is something personal, not abstract or something in itself. Do not talk about sin as some abstract thing. Sin is the expression of a person. Satan is sin, and all that emanates from him is sin. In like manner; Christ is righteousness, and the righteousness which is of God is Christ, Who is made unto us from God righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). He is the Righteous One (Acts 3:14). It is personal. We need to say that and emphasize it, so that we shall not get any kind of mentality that we are dealing with things. We are dealing ultimately with persons, and therefore with kingdoms. On both sides it resolves itself into 'Who?' not 'What?' Who is going to have the kingdom?

Now if the 'Kingdom' suggests dominion, authority, power - as, of course, it does - then dominion, authority, power, rest upon - spring from a nature. They are not official, exercised and asserted by an appointment. They spring from the nature of the person or persons concerned; that is, you and I will know no more of Divine power than we know of Divine nature, of Divine likeness. Our spiritual power, dominion, authority over the power of the enemy, depends, upon nothing other than our nearness to God, and our likeness to Him. Any system of teaching about authority which takes up a certain kind of phraseology and begins to throw about phrases at the enemy without a deep knowledge of the basis of authority is a most dangerous and pernicious thing, and will involve all concerned in inevitable trouble from which it will not be easy to extricate them. This is not just a statement of ideas, this is fact. Some of us have seen the devil make awful havoc of people who stood up talking about Satan being a defeated foe, and throwing at him phrases from the Bible. The end of that has been scattering and shattering. But that does not mean that there is no such thing as authority over the enemy. What I am trying to emphasize is that it is necessary to know the basis of authority, and that basis is what is here meant by righteousness.

Features of the Righteous One

(a) Meekness

So then, in coming to the nature of the Kingdom which is founded upon righteousness, we see how opposite it is in all its features to the kingdom of Satan. In the latter, as we have seen, pride is the starting point, the first feature of revolt, rebellion, and the long history of perversity. Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty (Eze. 28:17). Therefore the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son

of God's love, must have at its very foundation the opposite of pride which is meekness; and I would call your attention to the large place that the matter of meekness has in the Word of God, in both the Old Testament and the New. Let me give you but a little handful of references, which will make many others spring up in your mind immediately. Psalm 25:9; Psalm 37:11; Psalm 147:6; Psalm 149:4; Isaiah 11:4; Isaiah 61:1.

These fragments, surely, are sufficient to bring us right up against this fact, that power over the whole power of Satan is found centered in the first place in meekness. It says that all that mighty power of sin, all that mighty kingdom which Satan has set up, into which he has drawn all the sons of men by nature - his kingdom is to be undone by meekness; that meekness is a greater power than that.

(b) Yieldedness And Obedience

We use another word here in this connection - yieldedness. The actual word does not occur often in the Scriptures but what it means fills the Scriptures. We saw that in Lucifer's rebellion, and then in the great betrayal of Adam into his hands, the thing which influenced and governed the enemy and Adam was possessiveness, drawing to self - I will, I will, I will - and all Satan's force was bent upon having and holding and not letting go; so his kingdom stands upon that. Does that need any argument? Look abroad today - the grab, the acquisitiveness, the stretching out of the hand to have, to take, to dominate by possession. Against that is the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of the Son of God's love, and the characteristic of Christ and of His kingdom is yieldedness.

(c) Dependence

Then dependence; the opposite of independence, with all its many forms of outworking, of which we were speaking earlier - either throwing God over altogether, seeking to realize our destiny without calling upon Him, or through the various less blatant expressions of independence on to the place where even the sanctified man begins to show signs of spiritual pride because the Lord blesses him. It is so easy to assume that, because He has blessed, a step taken can be repeated without the need for going back to the Lord and saying, 'Lord, even though the last hour was a mighty hour, nothing can be for the next hour unless it comes from Thee.' That subtle movement, the taking of a second step because the first one has been blessed, springs from spiritual pride - presumption.

Now our whole being revolts naturally against the idea of dependence. Our pride will not let us be dependent; we are independent by nature. Yes, that is the poison of Satan in us. If that comes into the spiritual realm, it is in principle the kingdom of Satan coming into the kingdom of God.

But dependence is the way of power. Why? - because it is the way along which the Lord comes. It is the meek, the dependent, to whom the Lord looks. To this man will I look... (Isa. 66:2). Power results from having the Lord with us. We may presume and assume and go on with some activity, but what is the good if the Lord is not with us?

The Effects of Sin Negated by Righteousness

What is the result of all this meekness, yieldedness, obedience, dependence, selflessness? Well, just the opposite of what sin was on the other side. Sin was enmity against God; the result here is love, the love of God in Christ shed abroad in our hearts, destroying the enmity. Sin put at a distance; this nature of Christ brings nearness and likeness to God. Instead of impotence comes power with God and the power of God.

The Issue of Righteousness: Life

How shall the enemy be overthrown? How shall his kingdom be destroyed? By the nature of the Lamb being so developed in us, the people of God, that all that other kingdom of Satan is undone in principle.

What is life? It is letting go to God; it is meekness; it is all this that we have been speaking of; it is Christ, the Life. We are not dealing with things - although there may well be a very literal side to all this and it is not simply all principles and abstract ideas: yet behind all else there are spiritual features. We are not thinking of going to heaven until heaven has come to us. We are not thinking of going to the Lord till the Lord has come to us. We are not thinking of a kingdom which is going to be given to us until that kingdom has already been constituted in us. All that depends upon what the Lord does inside us now and our intelligent co-operation with Him in what He is after.

The Kingdom Established Within by the Tests of Faith

Why is He treating us as He does? Why does He lead us through the experiences that we go through? Do you ever have the slightest sense that the Lord has left you? In spite of what we have said about Christ bearing all for us, do we not from time to time feel the Lord is far away? Why? Oh, we have puzzled over that! He has said, "Lo, I AM with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age (Matt. 28:20); I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). 'Then, where art Thou, Lord, today? Thou dost seem to be a thousand miles away today, I have no sense of Thy presence.' Why? Just this; God's fact is that He is not far away. What about your faith in God's fact? Are you living on facts or feelings? by faith or by sight? - for everything has to be established by faith. Faith must rise up and say, 'Lord, Thou dost seem to be a thousand miles away today, but Thou art not. Thou art here, according to Thy promise. I repudiate the devil's suggestion that Thou hast left, and that I have grieved the Holy Spirit and Thou hast forsaken me; I repudiate it on the ground of all that Thou has done to *bridge* that gap by the Cross.' When faith thus asserts its position things are restored, the trouble is cleared up.

And as it is with that matter, so it is with all others. We are in the school, where we are to learn that we are not just living on the Bible in an objective way, and that there is a sense in which the Bible merely as a book cannot help us or do us any good. Somehow or other, there has to be something done between us and that which God has said, in order to make it real, and that is done through testing and trial; and thus the spiritual reality - the Kingdom - is established within us, and we learn to reign over that other kingdom. THE LORD HELP US.