

## The Lord's Government of the Ear and the Hand

### T. Austin-Sparks:

The Lord is to have supreme control of the ear. We must come on to the ground where the ear is dead to every other controlling voice, every other governing suggestion, and is alive unto God, and unto God alone.

It is quite clear that, in some way, the governing faculty of every life is the ear; not necessarily the outward organ, but that by which we listen to suggestions - that, as we say, to which we "give ear." The suggestions may arise from our own temperament and make-up; the constraining things in our life may be our natural inclination; the pull and the draw of our constitution, deep-seated ambitions, inclinations, interests, which are not cultivated nor acquired but which are simply in us because we are made that way. To listen to these is to have our lives governed by our own interests. Or it may be other things, such as the suggestions, the desires, the ambitions of others for us, the call of the world, the call of human affections, consideration for the likes of others. Oh, how many things may come to us like the activity of a voice, to which - if we listen - we shall become slaves and servants, and the ear, and the life with it, become so governed.

You and I, if we say that we are consecrated men and women, mean that. we have brought the death of Christ to bear upon all the government and domination of voices which arise from any quarter save the Lord Himself. We are not to consult the voice of our own interests, our own ambitions, our own inclinations, or the voice of anyone else's desires for us. We must have an ear only for the Lord. That is consecration.

It is a solemn and direct word for everyone - and perhaps especially for the younger men and women, whose lives are more open now to be governed by other considerations, because life lies before them. It may happily be that the sense of responsibility about life is uppermost. The feeling is that it might be disastrous to make a mistake and along with it there is a strong ambition to succeed and not to have a wasted life.

Herein is your law for life, and although the course of things may be strange and the Lord's ways oft-times perplexing, and you may be called upon in a very deep way to give ear to the exhortation addressed to us in the book of Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding", nevertheless, in the outworking you will find that God's success has been achieved and after all what matters more than that or as much as that? The course may be very different from what you expected or thought or judged would be the reasonable way for your life, but that does not matter as long as God has been successful in your life - as long as your life has been a success from God's standpoint. This is the secret - an ear alive only unto Him, and dead to everything that comes from any quarter other than the Lord Himself.

Chapter 17 of John's Gospel is an exposition of that. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." If we were of the world, we should take the judgments of the world for our lives - what the world would suggest to be the course of greatest success, prosperity, advantage. The spirit of the world does sometimes get into our own hearts and suggests to us that it would be fatal for us to take this course or that: to give heed to that voice is to become conformed to this age. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service". From the outset the point of supreme government is the ear. The ear must be put under the blood, to be God's vehicle of government It means that we must have a spiritual ear. As children of God we have, by reason of our new birth, a spiritual faculty of hearing and we must take heed to develop it as the Lord would have us do.

It means that the ear must be a listening ear. Many people hear, and yet do not hear. They have ears and they hear, but yet they hear not, because they do not listen. The Lord says many things to us, and we do not hear what He is saying although we know He is saying something. There must be a quiet place for the Lord in our lives. The enemy will fill our lives with the voices of other claims and duties and pressures to make it impossible for us to have the harvest of the quiet ear for the Lord.

That ear must be an ear that is growing in capacity. The child has an ear and it hears, but it does not always understand what it hears. A babe hears sounds, and you notice the signs of the babe's having heard a sound, but that babe does not understand the sound that it hears. As it grows, it begins to know the meaning of those sounds. In the same way there must be a spiritual ear - a consecrated ear - marked by the same features of growth and progress.

Then, further, this ear must be an obedient ear, so that hearing we obey. Thus God governs the life from the outset.

### The Hand

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The Lord must have the place of honour and strength in the activities of our life, in the work of our life. Now this all sounds very elementary, but we must listen for the Lord's voice in it. The point is that in whatever we are doing, or about to do - in all our service - there must be death to self: no self serving, no world-serving, no serving for our own gratification, pleasure, advantage, honour, glory, position, exaltation, reputation. In the death of our Offering we died to all that, and now our hand, in whatever it does - and it may have to work in this world's business, to do a multitude of uninteresting things of a very ordinary character - whatever activity of life it has to engage in, on the one side our hand is to be dead to self and on the other side to work with the Lord's interests in view: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..." (Ecc. 9:10).

You will remember how much the apostle warned about service being done to men, as by men-pleasers, and not as unto the Lord. He was speaking largely to the slave of those days. When the slave system obtained and the slaves had to do many, many things that must have gone much against the grain - he said to them: Fulfill your service, not as unto those men who are your masters, but as unto the Lord.

We must question ourselves as to why we are in any given place, or what it is that moves us to desire any particular place or work. What is the governing motive of our ambition for service? Before God we must be able to say that any personal or worldly consideration is dead and that our service now is not only a reluctant nor resigned giving of ourselves to what we have to do, but a ready applying of ourselves to even difficult, hard, unpleasant, and uninteresting things for the Lord's pleasure.

Do write this word in your heart: that the Lord will not - indeed cannot - exalt you and give you something else, something more fruitful, more profitable, more glorious for Himself, until in that least, that mean, that despised, that irksome - maybe even revolting - place and work, you have rendered your service utterly as unto Him, even if it has meant a continual self-crucifixion. That is the way of promotion. This is the way in which we come into a position where the Lord gets more out of our lives than we imagine He is getting.

There is a priestly ministry in doing that difficult and unpleasant thing as unto the Lord, but we do not see that we are priests at the time. The idea of being girded with a linen ephod at the time you are scrubbing floors and washing dishes, and other like things, is altogether remote from your imagination. Yet there is a testimony being borne which is effective, of which maybe you have no consciousness. It may come to light one day. Someone may say: I proved that Jesus Christ is a reality, simply by seeing the way in which you did what I know you naturally hated doing. It was wholly distasteful to you - you had no heart for it - but you did it in such a way that it convinced me that Christ is a living reality. That is no imagination and sentiment. It is true to life. The Lord has His eye upon us.

The Lord is to have the direction of our lives... all our outgoings and our stayings are to be controlled alone by the Lord's interest. We are not always being bidden to go. Sometimes the going is a relief. It is staying which is so difficult. We are so eager to go, and yet often the Lord has a difficulty to get us to go in His way. However the case may be, it is a simple point, it is a direct word. Our going has been rendered dead to all but the Lord, and our staying also. Our life has been poured out, has been let go, has been taken away, that is, the life which is for ourselves, of ourselves. Life has been taken up on another level.

Had He, the Supreme Example, ever an ear for Himself or for the world? Had He not an ear for the Father alone? Satan came to Him in the wilderness and began to speak - the strong bearing down upon the Lord Jesus of certain other considerations, every one of which was in His own interest. He heard what Satan said, but His ear was crucified, and the power of that voice was paralyzed by His consecration to the Father. In effect He triumphed on this ground: I have no ear for you. My ear is for the Father alone!

Satan came in other forms, not always openly but under cover. Thus a beloved disciple would sometimes serve him for a tool: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee" (Matthew 16:22). The Lord turned and said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan". He recognized that as the voice of self consideration, self preservation. He was dead to that. This way of the cross was the Father's way for Him. He had an ear for Him only. And so it was, all the way through.

Was it true of His service? Did He for a moment seek His own ends by His works - His own glory by what He did? No! Even in tiredness and weariness and exhaustion, if there were interests of the Father to be served, He was alive to those interests, never consulting His own glory or His own feelings and I have no doubt that His feelings were sometimes those of acute suffering.

We read of Him as "being wearied." We know what that is, and how in weariness we would not only sit on the

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well but remain sitting on the well, even though some demand were being made upon us. If we are the Lord's we must be governed by the Lord's interests and brush aside all the rising suggestions of looking after ourselves.

So it was with Him in all His goings. He submitted His going or His staying to the Father. His brethren would argue that He should go up to the feast, but He does not yield to their persuasions and arguments: His one criterion is, what does the Father say about this? His mother entreats Him at the marriage in Cana, and says they have no wine. His unlooked-for reply is, "What have I to do with thee?" In other words, what does the Father say about this? So His whole life was, on the one hand, dead to self, to the world, and on the other hand, alive only to God. And what a fruitful life... what a God-satisfying life!

Are you reaching out for something? Are you being governed by your own conception of things, by what other people think of you, by what the world would do or what others would do if they were in your place? These are not the voices for you to heed. What does the Lord say? Wait upon that; rest in that. You may not understand, but be sure a life on this basis is going to be God's success.

Do you want God's success? God may do something through you for which you are temperamentally, constitutionally, altogether unfit, and for your part you have thought that because you are made in a certain way, that must govern your direction in life. Not at all!

Come, then, let us get down before Him on this matter, to deal with consecration, if needs be, all anew.