

Articles and Sermons :: Loose Him and Let Him Go - T. Austin Sparks

Loose Him and Let Him Go - T. Austin Sparks - posted by MJones (), on: 2009/1/18 10:50

I have condensed this 8 page sermon into about 3. It is one of the best of his I have ever read by him. If you want to read the full version, it is found in the 'text sermons'.

Loose Him and Let Him Go – T. Austin Sparks (condensed)

Reading: John 11:38-44

"He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go."

"I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

First of all, it is possible for us to have life by the word of Jesus Christ, resurrection life, divine life, that which is called eternal life; it is possible for us to have that life by which we have been brought from the death of our natural state into this newness of life by the fiat of the Son of God, and yet be limited in every way while we have it. Limited in ministry - 'his hands bound'; limited in progress - 'his feet bound'; limited in understanding - 'a napkin around his head and over his eyes'.

Let me repeat that, for it is so true, and it is true of multitudes today. It is one of the problems in Christianity that, while the rough simple response to the Word of the Lord Jesus, many have been born again and are His people, are children of God and have divine life, it is so possible - and is actually so in numerous cases - to be limited in almost every way as to that life, and that life is so limited in them.

Oh, how many Christians are just tied up in this matter of real fruitfulness, real ministry - and when I use that word 'ministry' I am not just talking about platforms, or Bible preaching, but the ministration of the Lord Jesus. In the next chapter we read that Jesus came back to Bethany and they made Him a feast. Martha served and Lazarus was one of those who sat at meat. It would have been a poor lookout for that whole occasion if Lazarus had been tied up in his grave clothes! But, no, he is able to share with the others in this experience, and if you think I am trying to make something of nothing, look again, because it was at that point that the Jewish rulers took counsel to put Lazarus to death also, because by reason of HIM many believed. That is what I meant by loosed hands, ministry, fruitfulness: "By reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." Is it not true that multitudes of Christians are not in that release of life where many believe because of them? They remain isolated, tied up, bound. They are Christians, but in the meaning of hands of fruitfulness, of service, of the ministration of Christ, of the testimony of Jesus, they are still in the grave clothes. And that is why Jesus said: "I came that they might have life", but, more than that, "have it abundantly". And Lazarus had the life, but not abundantly until he was loosed.

Now you get into the Epistles with that fragment only, and see how much there is about the life of the believer being an effective life, a fruitful life, and a responsible life, a life that is really producing something. Indeed, we could say that one of the major purposes of all the Letters that the Apostles wrote was to get these Christians (and need I remind you again that more than ninety per cent of the New Testament was written to Christians? That is impressive and challenging!) who had the life to have it more abundantly, that is, to be loosed in this matter of their newness of life.

THE GRAVE TOUCH

Lazarus came forth and he had life, but at that moment when he came forth he was still in contact with the grave. There was still that about him which spoke of that sepulchre, and the limitations of that sepulchre.

LOOSING FROM THE NATURAL LIFE

If you turn to the first Letter to the Corinthians, and have any knowledge of what is in that Letter, you will know what we mean by the grave touch still upon born-again Christians. Paul opens that Letter by addressing the Corinthians as "saints", which means those who are the Lord's, but as he writes on and on an awful situation is unfolded, is it not? They have

life, but you cannot say that they have it abundantly. The grave clothes are on them, that is, the grave touch is still there, and in the first Letter to the Corinthians it is the grave touch of the limitations of the natural life. They are Christians, yes, but they are bound and limited by the ties of the natural life.

It is grave clothes, and you are not surprised that at Corinth the world is not feeling the impact of their testimony, that the church at Corinth is not counting in the world, because the world has got into the church, and into its members individual ly. In this sense the grave clothes are still on them, by reason of the limitations which come upon the spiritual life when t he natural takes charge and governs, controls and directs. It is terrible spiritual limitation. There is life, yes, but not 'life a bundantly'. Do you see what I mean? Their testimony is bound. There is still something of the grave, and that Letter to th e Corinthians was written in the same spirit and with the same idea, intention and object as the Lord had when He said: " Loose him and let him go". Paul is striving to get these Corinthians loosed as Christians loosed, liberated, set free into th e fullness of the life which they had.

LOOSING FROM TRADITION AND LEGALISM

We pass from Corinthians into Galatians, and no one who knows that Letter will dispute the statement that here you are in touch with the grave very truly. You know all that the Letter to the Galatians is about, and you know the two prominent words - Liberty - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 4:1 - A.V.) - and sonship. Not servanthood, nor slavery, but sonship; the liberty of sons. They are the two great words of that Letter, but what are the grave bands there in Galatia? They are the grave bands of tradition, of legalism, and all such things. You know, dear friends, it is very easy to get tied up with these grave clothes! The persistent peril through the ages of Christianity is to crystallize itself into something set, something fixed. You have s ome light, some revelation, something of the immensity of truth, just a fragment of it, and it is not long before you begin t o form that into a set system and make it the limit, saying that this is what people must believe, they must come within th is horizon, and they must behave like this. It becomes a system again: 'You must... you must not!', and there is no differe nce between that and the Old Testament 'Thou shalt... thou shalt not!' Christianity has fallen into that peril, and is contin ually doing it, circumscribing the great revelation, making Christ smaller than He is, crystallizing truth into something fixe d and set: 'This is how...', and the meaning of that is: 'This is the ultimate'.

LOOSING UNTO FULL SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

I close with one other thing. Look into the Letter to the Ephesians, and you, having come through the loosing of the hand s in Corinth, and the loosing of the feet in Galatia to walk in the Spirit and stand fast in liberty, now move to the head. In Ephesians Paul takes the napkin from the head and does it thoroughly. Ephesians has to do with the napkin around the head. What do we mean? Well, Paul hardly begins that Letter before he says: 'I bow my knees unto the Father of glory, t hat He would grant unto you Ephesian Christians that you should have the whole counsel of God given to you, to grant u nto YOU a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, Christ, that the eyes of your heart be enlightened, th at you may know what is the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, the exceeding greatness of H is power to usward who believe.' 'That you may KNOW... the eyes of your heart being enlightened' - there is the napkin off the head! This Letter to the Ephesians is a wonderful revelation as to the eyes of the heart being unveiled, unbound, as to the greatness of our calling and vocation, as to the immensity of that for which we have been brought into union wit h His Son. How great it is! Beyond all our grasping, dear friends. Believe me, it is no exaggeration, and Paul says: "that you may KNOW".

There is one little prefix missing in our translation which is the key to the whole thing. The Apostle says: 'That you may k now... that you may know', and in the New Testament we have that word given to us in part and in whole. It is not given t o us in our translation, but it is just this: Knowing, in itself, is applied to our beginning knowledge of the Lord. To quote Jo hn again: "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Je sus Christ" (John 17:3). That is the entering into life, the receiving of divine life but when Paul speaks here about 'knowin g', he is using a compound Greek word which we do not have in our translation. It is 'epignosis', FULL knowledge. 'You k now', he says to these Ephesians, 'that in the space of two years I ceased not to preach unto you the whole counsel of God.' They knew, and on that initial knowledge they had come to the Lord, but now he is praying, at the end of his life fro m his prison: 'that you may come unto full knowledge.' It is more than life; it is life abundant. It is more than seeing; it is s eeing with a great range of divine purpose and meaning for our calling and our having life.

Will you tell me that all Christians are like that? Are there not many around whose heads there is a napkin, which obscur es their spiritual vision, limits their spiritual sight, and narrows down the range of their comprehension of the great purpo se of their calling? Real revelation, dear friends, is not just information. It is liberation. To see fully, and more fully, is to b

e released.

I think we can see that that one verse in the whole of John's Gospel contains the Bible. Is it not true that God's mind for man, God's thought for His people, is: 'Loose him. He has got life, but loose him and let him go!'? "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."