

Articles and Sermons :: Taking the End by Faith

Taking the End by Faith - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/4/27 5:38

Taking the End by Faith

by T. Austin-Sparks

Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-12.

We are here in the presence of the great transition, the great change, which had taken place in the case of Peter and the Apostles and of all who had believed. Before the Cross all their hopes and expectations, their entire mentality and horizon were on this earth. They were looking for the realization of a kingdom, a Messianic kingdom of a temporal kind centered in Jerusalem and bringing with it all manner of temporal benefits and advantages, with God working along that line, concentrating His power to show His favour in a temporal way, all the blessings being temporal blessings. The Cross had changed that entire outlook and swept it all away as in a flood for the dispensation. With the resurrection of the Lord Jesus it was shown that God's intention was quite different from what they were expecting, for the time being, and that everything for this dispensation is of a spiritual and heavenly character, requiring a complete transformation of their conceptions and judgments and outlook.

Before the resurrection it was a devastating experience for them. Everything had gone with the death of the Lord Jesus, but Peter says, "God... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead", proving that the afterward which came in with the resurrection was far beyond and transcendent over what they had lost. The terms of this Letter are very clear. "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory", showing that they came to see that it was not loss but really gain through the Cross. That, then, is the background of this Letter: the tremendous change of realm and of form of Divine blessing. According to verse 5, the power of God in this dispensation is through faith.

We need to note the link between several fragments here: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls, concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.", (verses 9-10). Which salvation? "The end of your faith... the salvation of your souls." The end is the salvation of your souls. "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently" to discover the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

That may not be very clear as it is stated like that, but just lay hold of it for a moment. The statement is quite definite. The prophets sought diligently to know, to discover something, to discover a salvation, and Peter says that salvation is "the salvation of your souls". And he says further that that is not the beginning of your faith but the end of your faith. We place salvation right at the beginning, Peter places salvation right at the end. That does not mean that we are not saved now; it does not mean that we are not being saved now; but it does mean that full salvation, salvation in its full meaning, is future. Soul salvation is the end of our faith. That is one thing.

"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you... wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.", (verses 10, 13). That does not mean that we have not received grace, nor that we are not receiving grace. But there is a grace intimated to the prophets by the Holy Spirit who, as it says here, "was in them", a grace that is to come at the end, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. "Set your hope...". "Hope that is seen is not hope.", (Romans 8:24). Hope relates to something future. "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The apocalypse, the presence in manifestation of Jesus Christ, that is the grace that is to come to you.

Now the third thing which brings us right into touch with that is this: "Searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them.", (verse 11). The Spirit of Christ in them testified to the sufferings of Christ that should follow. It is remarkable how Israel, the Jews, the Jewish interpreters and teachers, almost entirely overlooked and failed to see that the Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah. All the hopes of Israel concerning the Messiah were hopes of glory, but of temporal glory, glory on this earth. They seem to have entirely missed all that the prophets were saying about the sufferings of the Messiah.

But the prophets found two things going on in them by the Spirit of Christ. In the first instance He was making them know that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah and He was making them know, not only by informing them, but by their own experience. You cannot read those Messianic prophecies and Psalms without knowing that the writers went through experiences which had to be interpreted, not as the common experiences of man in everyday life, but as something prophetic, something with fuller, further and future meaning. Hear David speak: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). There is something more in that than just the ordinary experience of a man. The Spirit was making them know that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah. The Jews missed that and fastened upon the other side, the glories. The Spirit was making the prophets know what the glories would be and the Jews fastened upon the glories alone. There would be the glories, but they would follow the suffering, be consequent upon the sufferings.

The glories are coming with the manifestation or revelation of the Messiah who suffered. That manifestation of the suffering glorified Christ is the grace that is to come to us. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.", (Romans 8:17). That is the consummation of grace.

This whole Letter of Peter, as you notice, focuses upon the trials and sufferings and afflictions of Christians in this dispensation. Now in this dispensation it is partnership with Christ in His sufferings and a Divine government of those sufferings in the salvation of our souls. Through trial and testing and by way of faith our souls are brought to complete deliverance from the grip of Satan and self over them, bringing them into fellowship with Christ and out of fellowship with Satan, bringing deliverance from the self-principle which was brought into the soul by Adam's decision. That is the salvation of our souls.

It will be a grand thing and this is what these scattered believers to whom Peter was writing had grasped. The language may sound extravagant - "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" - but they have grasped something. What have they grasped? They have seen that the time is coming when all this wretched, horrid, beastly self-principle that is in the creation, causing all this trouble in every one of us, will have been finally rooted out and replaced by the Christ-principle of utter selflessness where we are never affected or influenced by our own feelings, our own interests and how things touch us, but where we shall be completely delivered from our own souls, these souls which are a curse to us every day, our feelings, our ideas, our wants and our wills. If only we could be completely oblivious of ourselves, be completely free from ourselves, how happy we would be! These people grasped that the time was coming when it would be like that, their faith had laid hold of it and they rejoiced with joy unspeakable. That is the grace which is coming with the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is the prospect, and the trials and sufferings of the present time are working toward that - to get us free from ourselves, to turn us out from ourselves. They had grasped that and they laid hold of the end of their faith. By faith they received the end of their faith and they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

If we are oppressed by our own souls and bothered by our own souls, let us at least turn our thoughts and praise God that the day is coming when we shall be completely emancipated from ourselves. It might be that if only we could take that attitude of faith and lay hold of that by faith, the joy would spring up now. This is not just eschatology or optimism. The Holy Spirit did this in the prophets and in these believers of the dispersion to whom Peter is writing. He said to them. "Ye see him not", 'you never saw Him in the flesh, you have nothing to go upon; the Gospel has been preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; you have nothing of material evidence to prove this; we saw Him - you never had anything like that, but you received it by faith when it was preached to you and the Holy Ghost ratified it and you rejoice.' It is a wonderful picture of what taking by faith, taking the Gospel by faith, taking Christ by faith, taking the end by faith, can do. They rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In the meantime, "The proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire." is working the salvation of your souls, to bring in the fullness and finality of the grace of God, the glories that do follow. I do not know what sort of glories you are expecting. For me, there is very little appeal in the idea of having literal material thrones and crowns, or anything like that. But what does appeal to me is the prospect of being freed from this accursed self, then I shall be happy. That will be a kingdom that is worth everything. Well, that is the end of your faith and that is the outcome of your trial of faith. You have to read the whole Letter in the light of that, but there you have it summed up in the first chapter.

Re: Taking the End by Faith - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/27 11:19

Sparks writes:

Quote:
-----Before the Cross all their hopes and expectations, their entire mentality and horizon were on this earth. They were looking for the realization of a kingdom, a Messianic kingdom of a temporal kind centred in Jerusalem and bringing with it all manner of temporal benefits and advantages, with God working along that line, concentrating His power to show His favour in a temporal way, all the blessings being temporal blessings

This is not true, listen for the substance of the hope that the writer of Hebrews identifies in the OT saints.

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Sparks is very eloquent but he does not understand that the OT saints look for the heavenly Jerusalem. Sparks is only referring to those who did not live by faith during the OT times.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: Taking the End by Faith - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/4/27 11:38

"So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.", Acts 1:6-7.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/27 11:57

Job 19:

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
27 Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Zechariah 3:

Zech. 2:10 "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD. 11 "Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 12 And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. 13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!" 1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Rev. 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride a

dorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

His disciples were looking for the coming of the New Jerusalem.

Search the Scriptures and meditate on the meanings of Mount Zion and Jerusalem. Paul writes in Gal 4:

26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

The writer of Hebrews writes:

Heb. 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

In Christ
jeff

Re: Taking the End by Faith - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/4/27 12:09

Quote:

-----His disciples were looking for the coming of the New Jerusalem.

You are allowed to interpret Acts 1:6-7, by saying that it speaks of the "New Jerusalem"; but I for one understand that the disciples meant not the coming and instauration of the heavenly city, but the of Kingdom of Israel.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/27 12:40

Zech. 14:16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 And it shall be that at whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. 18 If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zech. 14:20 In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21 Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

You must understand that the disciples were Jews and that they looked forward to the time of which Zechariah mentions here in Scripture. These Scriptures speak of Holiness. There is a Kingdom of Israel.

In Christ
Jeff