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## "Lord, Lord..."

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*Edited and supplied by the Golden Candlestick Trust. Message given in May 1933.*

Reading: Matt. 19:16-30.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

The words of this twenty-first verse remind one very much of the cherubim standing with drawn sword, their flaming sword, guarding the way of the Tree of Life with many approaching that way seeking to reach the Tree of Life and coming with: "Lord, Lord" on their lips, prompted, provoked by various things to that utterance: "Lord, Lord", and the cherubim and the flaming sword answering back: "Not every one that saith, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter. Can you pass the second test? Can you go the rest of the way? Do you stand up to its requirement? Otherwise there is no entrance, no open way, no access. Not saying: 'Lord, Lord' alone, but doing. Not saying, but doing. Not even saying 'Lord, Lord', but *doing the will of the Father in heaven.*"

You will immediately recognise what a very solemn test these words bring to us all, how very challenging they are. And they are calculated to find us out everywhere, to get behind every kind of disguise, to reach down beneath everything on the surface and discover something far more than words, profession, declaration; to find out how far we go with God in His will in very deed.

You will notice if you look at chapter 7 that they form the opening words of that concluding and most solemn paragraph of what is commonly called, 'The Sermon on the Mount'. It is now being

brought to a close and there is a summing up, and things become solemn indeed as all these wonderful utterances are being brought to the point of direct application. And here in these opening words of the concluding part of the great discourse, the Lord applies to all would-be (and perhaps already thought to be) subjects of the kingdom of heaven, He applies to them that which He has just been saying about false prophets. That is a most startling thing. It strikes you very forcibly as you recognise that. He has been speaking about false prophets. You see verses 15-20, "Beware of false prophets... therefore by their fruits ye shall know them", and if the Lord had stopped there, everybody would have gone away with an objective consciousness, that is, having other people in mind. They would have seen that He was talking about those people whom He called 'false prophets' and that these things applied to them and obviously He had in view Scribes and Pharisees who appeared to be one thing, but were really another; appeared to be sheep and really were wolves inwardly. And so the people would have gone away with these others in their minds, with an objective consciousness, but He did not stop there. He directly, as it were, turned upon His heel to those who, not Scribes and Pharisees, not necessarily openly false prophets, but who were saying: "Lord, Lord", and applied the very principle to them and brought it right home to them. That, I said, is a startling thing as you realise that here is the Lord Jesus in one moment speaking about false prophets and saying these terrible things about these false prophets, Scribes and Pharisees, and of course everybody hated that, felt a revulsion to that. No one for a moment liked to think of themselves in that realm of things so there was stirred within them this feeling of hatred for anything like that, and suddenly He said, as it were; "But *you* may be like that; you may be all unconsciously right in that very category while you are saying 'Lord, Lord'". And so He searches them with this word.

The fruit which proves the genuineness of the tree is not the leaves of profession: "Lord, Lord", it is the genuine fruit of doing the will of the Father. And the tree must be a genuine, good tree to do that and not a make-believe tree. That is, there must be genuineness here. It is that that He is after. He even, mark you, includes in this searching word His own disciples. Oh yes, they are included in those who are saying: "Lord, Lord". Their subsequent history proves this, and we shall see that. Not on the rim of the crowd only but right there at the centre, near to Him, there were those closely associated, following Him about every day saying: "Lord, Lord" and He does not spare them. He says, even to them - and it was kind of Him, it was not cruel or harsh, it was good of Him to do it - the Lord has nothing to gain from having outward professions of friendship. And He knows that the individual who makes such outward profession may be living in a fool's paradise, and He wants no one to live there, and so with the faithful wounds of a friend, for their good, He says even to His disciples: "Not every one that saith unto Me 'Lord, Lord', shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." You see, that is a very sifting word, and the Lord is constantly sifting out amongst those who on the face of it are His followers. He is constantly coming to put the practical test to their profession, to apply the real test of doing to all their declarations. And the result is that we very often feel after that test that we have been saying a lot of things that would not carry the weight that we altogether made our position, and we discover that there is something more needed to be made up in what we are, to bring us abreast of all that we say; He is constantly doing that.

The Lord has no place, of course, for being patronised. He does not feel it an honour for people to say "Lord, Lord" to Him. He knows the heart far too thoroughly, and human nature far too well, to find any satisfaction or pleasure in merely "Lord, Lord". His heart can be satisfied alone by the doing of the Father's will. Superficial following is nothing to Him. Perhaps you are saying, "That is obvious, that goes without saying, that hardly needs to be mentioned, we know that quite well". Ah yes, but there are a good many, I fear, who still say: "Lord, Lord" without the adequate follow-up of the doing of the Father's will.

We read Matthew 19 and in that chapter we have a very good illustration of this very thing. You notice that the question of Life is mentioned three times. In that part of the chapter where the man who has become professionally known as 'The Rich young Ruler' is in view. Firstly he says: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may *have* eternal life?" The Lord Jesus says: "If thou wouldest *enter* into Life...", and finally He says: "*inherit* everlasting Life". You see the three things in relation to eternal Life: have, enter in, inherit. And they represent aspects of this great question of eternal Life which go right down deep into the being and find us out as they found this man out. That man was tested out by the very thing that he himself first raised, the question of Life, and his way of approaching this matter is: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?". "That I may *have*". Let us ring that out. "I", "Have" - "That I may *have*". Everything for this man turned upon his desire for possessions, his acquisitiveness, he was great on acquiring, on having, and with all his possessions he wanted to have still another, and to add to his possessions, perhaps give them a perpetuity, an immortality. He wanted to *have* eternal Life; to his adding he would have eternal Life. "That I may have". "Good Master..." that sounds very much like "Lord, Lord" doesn't it? It sounds like an acknowledgment, a recognition, but is it a patronising?

What I am getting at is this. Is the association and relationship with the Lord Jesus in which language and terms are used which recognised values in Him and would call Him "Good Master" or "Lord, Lord", is it not all with some secret desire to possess for ourselves some good? Well, that proves to be altogether beside the question for the Lord. To have eternal Life for the eternal good and blessing, for the salvation, for the benefit, for what will come to us, for that from which we shall be saved and that which will be ours because of salvation. Is that the motive? Is that behind the "Lord, Lord"? Or is there something deeper than that?

Now, I have said that these words are searching. The Lord begins His work of searching with this man and He does not say anything about having eternal Life in the sense that this man used the word, that he should acquire something for his personal good, enrichment and satisfaction. He began to test him out and the end of the next phase of things is: "If thou wilt *enter* into Life". Entering into Life is a very different thing. Life is something into which you enter, eternal Life is something into which you enter, but it is like this Matthew 7:13. What the Lord is saying now is only putting into other words what He said in Matthew 7:13: "Enter ye in at the straight gate; straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life...". Narrow and straightened is the way to Life, but *enter* in by the narrow and straight way if thou wilt enter into Life. What is the way into Life? It is the way in which we prove that we are prepared to let everything go in our estimate and valuation of the Lord Jesus Himself. "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor and come and follow Me." "Am I more to you than all your other having?" That is really what the thing issues in: whether the loss of all things and the gaining of a vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus is held in far greater esteem than all the possessions without Him. "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." You see, the will of the Father in heaven, when it is brought to some crystallised, concrete definition, is faith's living union with the Lord Jesus as something far more than all other possessions for which you are quite prepared to let everything else go. That is the crucial test. And the straightened, narrow gate just will not admit of those bundles and parcels of personal interest that so many have in coming to the Lord and in trying to serve the Lord. Oh yes, this young man came along simply bulging with his parcels of personal interest, personal possessions, and when he came to the narrow and straitened gate he could not get in sideways - he bulged in all directions, and it showed that this man must be stripped of everything of himself and his own interests, ambitions, quests and considerations in order that he might come to the fulness of Christ. Was he prepared for that? No, he proved that he was not. It was proved here that after all it was what "I may have". It was, after all, his possessions, his possessing, his having. Oh, the utter blind folly, the blinding deceiving work of him who darkens the minds of

them who believe not, that leads men to think and to believe that to let all go to possess the Lord Jesus is not gain. We will come back to that.

To *enter* into Life demands the stripping off of all our own personal interests in having eternal Life. Later, (and Peter was very sharp and shrewd on this business proposition) he had a very quick mind and he jumped in on that to get something out of it and said: "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" Oh, the Lord had just said: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me." "If thou wilt *enter* into life..." "Lord, we have let all go, what shall we *have*?"

And eventually the Lord came to this clause: "Shall *inherit* everlasting Life". "Everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29). How we must be careful there not to think of this inheriting as meriting. That is not the real force of the thing here. Do not confuse meriting with inheriting. If that were so, the thing ceases to be of grace and becomes a matter of works, that we can have eternal Life by meriting it, and there is nothing in the Scripture to warrant any such apprehension or conclusion. Inheriting here just means this: that you become an heir through grace, not because you are in the direct line of legal inheritance, but made an heir through grace. Grace governs the whole question of our heirship.

Later in the New Testament we have these principles which are only here set out in illustrative ways, more fully defined, and we are spoken to later about being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. That is grace, infinite grace, to be a joint heir with the Lord Jesus. But there is a way to it. What is the way to it? "Though He were rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." He let go everything for our sakes. That is the grace of God, and then, not in the same category, not in the same realm at all, but in an altogether different realm of things He says: "Are you prepared to let all go for Me?" We can never let go what He let go, we have never had it. We can never give up what He gave up for our sakes, but nevertheless there is that which we may hold dear, we may want, by which we may lay store, and oft times we are challenged upon our heart's ties, affections, possessions. The principle is applied, and then faith takes a mighty leap and lays hold of Him and love reaches out and we see that we cannot hold on to anything that would supplant our Christ, would take His place, and we lay our treasure in the dust, "The gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks", and the Almighty becomes our treasure. But is the exchange really worthy of comparison? It is perfectly true that we cannot have entrance into the kingdom of heaven and hold on to the kingdom of this world, which is the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of our own interests. That must go. And so eventually we come from the thought of *having* things, to the thought of *entering* into Life, and then of enjoying our *inheritance* in Christ.

These are stages of spiritual pilgrimage from self to Christ, and then with Christ all things inherited through grace. Life inherited. In other words, put to our name in His grace. That is being an heir. Having it put to our name, and He waits to put it to our name until we have let all else go in our recognition of the supreme value of Himself. This is the way of the will of the Father in heaven. This is something far more than: "Lord, Lord". Beloved, that "Lord, Lord" may mean anything less than the necessary thing. That "Lord, Lord" has very often just meant feeling rather than conviction; feelings have been moved, perhaps by the words of a hymn, the appeal of a message, by the entreaty of someone whom we esteem or love, by some appeal to our emotions, music or literature, or in some way our feelings have been stirred and the outcome has been: "Lord, Lord" in the moment of emotion. We, perhaps even with tears, have somewhere on our knees said: "Lord, Lord". We may have done that many times, and yet there just be lacking that which is necessary to get us there. Oh yes, it may be feeling, emotion, sentiment and not the downright utter, mighty, conviction

that what is necessary is not profession, but obedience. So often our words of "Lord, Lord" fall short of that heart obedience which does what we know God wills us to do, what we know to be the will of God. It may be that forty-nine times we will do what we know and there is one direction in which the Lord has spoken again and again, one thing upon which He has put His finger not once or twice and made us uncomfortable, made us know that He has a will in that matter for us and for us His will points in a certain direction, and we have gone on with our profession, saying: "Lord, Lord" and never dealt with that thing. We have never obeyed the voice of the Lord in that matter; and mark you, beloved, the word comes back: "Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

His disciples, until the day when the Spirit of God took possession of them through the cross in all its deeper meaning, having been wrought into their souls, were constantly breaking down in the will of the Father in heaven while they were saying "Lord, Lord". You find an almost unbroken sequence of these breakings down where they were proved to be in opposition to the will of God. Yes, in opposition to the will of God. You have only to go through Matthew and you will find that in a whole succession of chapters you have a breakdown on the part of one or another of these disciples in vital matters of the will of God. The Syrophenician woman who cried to the Lord Jesus about her daughter, cries to the Lord for help and the disciples say: "Send her away for she cried after us." Is that in line with the will of God? Oh no, surely that is out of harmony with the will of God, when a soul in distress cries to the Lord Jesus for help and disciples find their pride upset. They do not like this woman crying after them. "Send her away, she is a nuisance". That is not the will of God, and from that, right on, you find in chapter after chapter a breakdown in some cardinal thing which represents God's mind. And at last, Peter with the loudest voice, "Lord, Lord", said of Him who he had acclaimed Lord: "I know not the man, I tell you I know not the man", and the words are not recorded that he used. The Lord said he would deny Him with oaths and curses. Those oaths and curses are not put on record. There was evidently some very vehement strong language in association with this denial - and yet here: "Lord, Lord".

Oh yes, it was proved to be necessary this word, in chapter seven, for the disciples as well - constant breakdown. But beloved, you cannot doubt that there was feeling when these disciples said: "Lord, Lord". There was emotion in it, there was something in it which they thought to be perfectly genuine, but when put to the test it was only feeling. Then this "Lord, Lord", might, and it often has been, a voice of mere formality as over against genuine reality. The "Lord, Lord" of the ordinary set meetings - gatherings to which we go and in them we say: "Lord, Lord". And then some special call, something arises which involves some tremendous interests of the Lord which reach out perhaps to the ends of the earth, and the majority of the people who say: "Lord, Lord" are not found in that. The will of God is in a peculiar way bound up with that, the will of the Father in heaven is peculiarly represented by that challenge, that call. Yes, there is the "Lord, Lord" of formality; so many times a week is our rota, anything beyond that is outside of our reckoning, what we are in the habit of doing - and so the "Lord, Lord" is largely a matter of formality and not downright reality which rises to every requirement and demand of the will of God as far as in us lies. It is this genuine reality which is not a matter of meetings and the mere outward form work of Christian life, but it is that which is there right in to the last ounce and the last drop for the Lord's interests. This will of the Father; that is the real thing. That proves that the tree is a good tree and not a formal tree.

That which I have just said of course can be applied over a very wide range from the mere cold formality of church-going to formal prayer-saying. It may be brought more and more inward until it comes to a challenge to those who are in a very large way occupied with the Lord's interests, but then there comes a challenge on the Lord's part for some fresh intensification because of some fresh, deep Divine issue involved, and the will of God for us becomes an apparently exacting thing.

But the enlargement lies in that direction, and once more we are tested as to personal interests, as to something else that we wanted to do, somewhere else that we wanted to go, something else that we have arranged for which comes into collision with some vital interest of the Lord, and every time beloved, you and I choose that which we wanted to do, that place to which we wanted to go, that something upon which our hearts were set as over against some call, some demand of the interest of the Father, every time we make that choice we have come into the realm where it is "Lord, Lord" without the will of the Father in heaven. We have come on to false ground.

That "Lord, Lord" may be the voice of sincerity without sacrifice. Not a question at all as to whether we are sincere, whether we mean it. Oh, we would feel most terribly upset and hurt if anybody raised a question about our sincerity, for we really do mean this: "Lord, Lord" from our hearts. We mean it, as far as we know ourselves we are genuine, and yet there is such a thing as sincerity without sacrifice. That is, we may mean it with all our might, and yet there may be lacking that proof along the line of sacrifice; devotion which costs.

Now, all this is but an enlargement of what the Lord Jesus said in these words, it is all contained in them I think. And as we have said early on, the Lord does not want His people to be in a false life, a false realm, deceived. He does not see how there can come in gain to them by being left in a realm where they think and verily believe that they are all right, and they are true, and they are honest when after all He knows deep down that there is just a falling short of doing, even with all the professing, and He would save us into the realm of reality and fulness.

We, the Lord's people, are going to be called upon by Him to have nothing, not one fragment, which is not utter abandonment to Him, where they have no interest outside of the Lord's interest, and where they have nothing in all this life and world that they could not easily relinquish if the will of God required them; where we hold everything so loosely for the Lord, where it will not be a business to pull up our pegs and to get away if the Lord calls us to. Oh, we are moving into that realm where the Lord must have an utterness of abandonment to Him, nothing less than that we may be found in Him, where we shall say: "It is no loss really"; to be found in Him in all the will of God. We need to be on solid ground where our life represents a full obedience to the Lord and not just even with sincerity of mind and real feeling of heart: "Lord, Lord".

The most terrible thing, we have often said, in the New Testament, perhaps is that next thing the Lord said: "Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons?' then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.'" As you have been reminded often, those words "I never knew you" are literally: "You stand in no vital relationship to Me". The same meaning as the words to His own mother at Cana of Galilee when asked by her indirectly concerning the water being turned into wine: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Literally He said: "Woman, you are moving in one realm and I am moving in another and we have no vital relationship in this thing. You are wanting to save the face of this feast and get Me to do something that will be merely a social act to redeem this social function from shame and disgrace. I am not moving in that realm, I am moving in another realm: My realm has eternal elements in it." And it related to His hour. And when He realised the hour had come, He did it, but it was the work in which He laid the foundation of redemption and showed that a marriage of the church, His Bride to Himself, is on the basis of precious blood as represented by that wine. And we know the cup we take at the Lord's table, the one is a type of His Blood, by which we are joined to Him in one life as the bride to the bridegroom, as the husband to the wife. And that was the first miracle and the foundation of all His work illustrated; and you see how far from Him His mother after the flesh was in that, and so He said: "We are in different realms, have no vital relationship in this matter." He used exactly the same thought

and expression in these words: "In that day I shall say, we stand in no vital relationship to each other. You may have gone about in My Name doing things, using My Name, but the relationship is not there." "Lord, Lord" and yet no vital relationship. What is the vital relationship? It is that in which we are found doing the will of the Father in heaven.

The Lord stress in our hearts where necessary and apply it in the way He sees to be necessary, that doing is more than saying, obedience is more than profession, that what we are before the Lord, the measure in which we are His, is everything to Him and that much more than what we profess to be. May we be able to stand up to all His tests.