



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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## The Reign of Light

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*Edited and supplied by the Golden Candlestick Trust.*

Reading: Gen. 1:3-5,8,14-18; Rev. 21:10-11; Col. 1:9.

"Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

"Once darkness... now light". "Ye are the light". John says, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

We are quite familiar with the truth that the natural creation is a comprehensive system of symbols and signs of spiritual things, and as we have read about the creation of light and the ruling bodies, so our minds have been carried forward from the symbol and the sign to that symbolised and signified. That is, God has, behind everything else, His spiritual thought to be realised in a people filled with spiritual understanding, light, to be the ruling class in His universe. And you must always keep very much to the fore in your minds that prospective aspect of the New Testament, suggested, for instance, by a very common phrase in the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews, "Not unto angels did He subject the inhabited world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5). We speak of the inhabited earth to come and its rulership, its government. That is what the apostle says right at the beginning of the letter. "He showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God", and the characteristic first and foremost is light. So it is quite clear that God is seeking to have a governing class in a spiritual way for the ages to come, and is preparing that class now on practical

lines; not theoretical lines, not merely technical lines, but on practical lines, to do it now so that they will be qualified to do it then; not to learn about it now in order to do it then, but to do it now.

### **Light is Personal**

You will notice that, as it was with the Lord Jesus Himself, so it is with us. Light is personal. It is not objective, something outside of ourselves which we carry and take and hold. It is ourselves. "Ye are the light". It is there in the singular. Not "Ye are the lights". "Ye are the light"; in the same way as He has said, "I am the light" (John 8:12). Again Paul says, "Ye were once..." not, *in* darkness, or, once darkness was in you, but "Ye were once darkness, but are now light". It is personal, not something held; it is what we are, not what we say, the things that we call 'light'; but it is our very being, and that is where the real value lies. What we are is the value, the real value.

Now, God's method is to make and to place the light in personal form. To make the light; "God made" and then God placed. That is His method, that is His order. Firstly, to make us light, and then to place us for governmental purposes. The real power of government is not official; it is not because we are called by some peculiar name, a minister or a missionary or a Christian worker or anything like that. The real power, the real impact, is the light that we are, and it is the only sure impact. In the Western part of this world, there is a great deal of Christian knowledge, and therefore by the Christian world, impact is not a matter of just adding to the information and knowledge which it already has. It will sit in judgment upon everything said and be interested and receptive merely in terms of whether this adds to information, to the store of knowledge; but if the witness comes, being something more than average, in whom there can be seen something that the heart longs for, something more of the Lord Jesus, that is the captivating thing, that is the thing which goes far beyond the bit of extra truth that we may possess. It is the registration of light, which resolves itself into a verdict like this: it is not the teaching that you give that is the argument; it is the impact of your life with it that has won the heart, that has won the way. I know how simple and elementary that is. We have got to get very clear in our minds about this, but after all, it is only leading on to something else.

As we were saying, in our case, as it was in His case, light is a personal thing, and not an objective thing in the matter of truth.

### **The Conflict between Light and Darkness**

Now then, the natural light, the sun and the moon and the stars, have to contend with a lot of things from this world. There they are; they are light, the light is with them, they are the luminaries of the universe. But, in order to fulfil their function so far as the earth is concerned, they have to contend with quite a lot. They have to contend with fogs, they have to contend with clouds, they have to contend with mists. The miasmas which rise from this earth are ever challenging them and putting to them some fairly real propositions.

### **Overcoming by the Patience of Faith**

When there is a fog, well, from the earth side, from our side of one of those really good fogs known to us, nothing can redeem the fog. The sun looks on that fog, and how does the sun reason about that fog? Well, if he were like some of us, he would become tremendously introspective, begin to raise all kinds of questions about himself because he was not getting through, and getting into an

awful mess and into a fog himself, simply because of that thing there, and he is not getting through. I do not think the sun does that at all. What does the sun do? It says, I will just wait my time; that is a passing thing; fogs come and fogs go; it makes no difference at all to the truth, the absolute God-established truth about myself; I will wait, I will bide my time! Simple child talk, but it is as much to the point as anything can be. It is just like that, so often. "Ye are light in the Lord". But we have to contend with many fogs which belong to this world, the lower levels of things which rise up to try to quench and eclipse us, and there are times when the only thing we can do, but the thing which we must do, is to say, This situation will pass, this dark hour will go, I will hold on; it makes no difference really to the fact, to the truth, as to myself in Christ; I will hold on. Do you see that that kind of thing is the very qualification for ruling? You can give up, if you like, you can surrender to the situation, you can allow yourself to be quenched, in effect; you can take it on, accept that, and lose all your power and right to rule.

The Lord, in His sovereignty, has allowed fog; I do not know what for, I see nothing whatever naturally of value in a fog. But I do see this, that when you carry it over to the spiritual realm, the Lord in His sovereignty and wisdom allows dense fogs to come into the life of His own children in order to make the matter of government very practical, and not merely theoretical. Our reaction to these dark times is proving whether we are really in the position to rule, and, as I said at the beginning, this governing class for the ages to come is in preparation now. We shall not leap into it suddenly at some moment at the end of our lives or at the end of the dispensation. It will simply be moving out to do in fulness the thing which we have already been doing in the measure possible.

The qualification for spiritual rulership now and afterwards, then, is along the line, firstly, of endurance, persistence, and not giving up and giving in, surrendering to the situation which obtains for the time being. It is the patience of faith. I will hold on because this cannot go on forever. It will be a sad thing, if, when the change comes, it be found that I gave in and let go during the test.

### **Laying Hold of Adversities to the Glory of God**

Then the sun not only acts like that, or reacts like that towards the fog. There are mists which rise from this earth. They are not fogs, they are mists. There are those things which are neither light nor dark. They are very perplexing things. There is nothing like indefiniteness to try you out, the uncertain things, the mists that come. What does the sun do with the mists? Do you know what a sunset is? You have looked at the glory of a sunset, overpowering sometimes in its beauty, with the marvellous variety of tones, tints and colours. Many have felt their souls go out in something in the nature of worship and adoration as they have beheld some of those wonderful sunsets, but after all, what is the sunset? Of course 'sunset' is only a figure of speech. The sun never does set; it is only something related to a certain time and position. But what is this that we call a sunset? It is simply the sun taking hold of the mist and transfiguring it. The mist acts as a prism to the rays of the sun and the rays of the sun apprehend the mists and transform them into all those colours. It is the effect of mist upon the sun, and the sun's reaction to mists.

May that not have a little message for us? There are many things which arise from our life here on this earth and from this earth which are not pleasant, not all as we would like them; things which speak of the heat of life, the heat of the earth. There is such a thing as taking hold of these things and turning them to the glory of God. One of the imperative features and factors in spiritual rulership is just this, that we lay hold of adversities and turn them to the glory of God. Is that not the expression of the government of His sovereign grace? Is that not just exactly what sovereign grace

has done and is doing? Look at the situation. Sin rising from this earth and all that comes with sin - sorrow and suffering and unhappiness, so much of it; but the mighty sovereign grace of God has taken hold of sin and made it serve His glory. The very works of Satan have brought out the glory of God as nothing else would have done. The activities of the enemy, as we have them recorded in the book of the Acts have been made, by the grace and power of God, to fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel, to enhance the grace and glory of God, and our attitude towards these difficult things is proving whether we are going to reign or not. How do we treat even our physical sufferings? Do we sit down under them and give way, mope, repine, complain, become the picture of misery, everybody knows all about what an awful time we are having; or is our reaction Paul's - "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9)? It is another attitude; even, you see, the sentence of death being taken hold of and brought out to a sunset glory of God.

I know it is easy to stand up on a platform and talk about these things, but here it is. We are in the test of this reigning matter, and if you think the ages to come is too remote and abstract, well, look at it in this present time. You will have to decide even now in this life who is going to have the upper hand - the devil or the Lord: and that is going to be decided in our lives by means of the everyday adversities. It is not something objective out there that the Lord is going to be Lord; it is right here in your and my reaction to the things which arise from this evil world. It is patient endurance, even when it is so difficult, or in the more ordinary, everyday things of our lives, taking hold, in some way transfiguring them, by the grace of God learning to reign.

Let me say, this is the very essence of the Lord's service. The Lord is making and placing, and don't you think for a moment that it is going to be any different in any other situation or place on this earth than it is where you are now. Do not think, If only I could get out to China, out to India, I could serve the Lord, I could be in the Lord's service; or somewhere else - anywhere but where I am, I could serve the Lord. Let me say to you that if you get placed in any place - in China, India or anywhere else, you will find it exactly as it is here on these grounds. You have to contend with the same kind of fog and the same kind of mists, the same kind of extraordinary and ordinary everyday difficulties and adversities rising from this earth. The form in which they come to you, through other people's language or colour or temperament, may be different, but they are the same things; the test is just the same. Are you going out or over? It makes no difference where you are on this earth, and your service is not that you are going to say a lot of things to yellow people or black people or other people; it is what your impact is going to be there personally, and that is determined by your spiritual ascendancy; ascendancy even when, like the sun, you cannot get through for the time being, nevertheless, you are in the ascendancy, you have not given way.

If you are going to be introspective at all, think about that, measure up to that in this way. Do not begin to judge yourself because you are having a dark time, fog has wrapped you round. No! Remember that little incident in Lockhart's 'Life of Sir Walter Scott'. Two men emerging from London Bridge Station in a real good, old-fashioned, pea-soup fog, and they could not see each other, even passing each other on the same pavement. He heard the man singing to himself, "On, Stanley, on! Charge, Boswell, charge! In the fog, in the dark - on, charge!" That is all he heard. He was in the ascendant. That is the test, wherever you are; that is right to rule. It is power to rule wherever you are, wherever we are to be like that.

And the service of the Lord again is the personal impact upon the situation. Sometimes it is so black and thick that we can do nothing more than hold on. While the devil tries to wear out the saints,

hold on; say, All right, it is pretty dark today, but it will not last, it will not be eternal, this will pass, my day will come again.

And in the other things. If you want to be introspective, just make it all a matter of, What is the truth, God's truth, about it? Am I still darkness or am I light in the Lord? Have I been translated out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love? What is the truth? Then the fog makes no difference whatever to what I am. Whatever the enemy says about the fog is one thing, and I in Christ am another, and we must just look to our shining - that is all.

What is our business? Your business and my business is just to shine. What does that mean? That people do not see darkness in us. If people who were so introspective would only have a little more thought for how they look! They would get up in the morning and go through the day and say, How am I looking? - that is a good kind of introspection. Not, How am I feeling but, How am I looking? What impression am I making? What is the tone of my voice? It is a mark of youth to be able to do this sort of thing. An old man may also say, My voice is getting a bit too miserable, I am not conveying the joy of the Lord in my tone; I must put that right. That is a healthy kind of introspection. It is all a part of shining. "Ye are light." What we are to do is that as light we shine; not take on all the things against us which say we are not shining. We know what the Lord has done in our hearts. He hath "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). No fogs or mists or anything else ought to be able to deny that fact.