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God's Means of Achieving His Purpose

by T. Austin-Sparks

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By what means does God reach His end in His people? What is God's means of achieving His purpose? It is by the Spirit of sonship through the Cross (Galatians 4:6-7,18; 3:14).

There is much more in this letter about the Holy Spirit, but the central emphasis in respect of the Spirit in Galatians is that of the Spirit of sonship. The Spirit of God's Son is here pre-eminently as the Spirit of sonship in our hearts, and there is no hope of reaching God's end, or of even taking the first step in that direction, without the Spirit as the Spirit of sonship. First there must be the infant cry, "Father!" There must be that relationship brought about by the Spirit.

Then the Spirit of sonship, once He is within us, must proceed fully to form Christ in us. Thus in this letter the Apostle says, "My little children, for whom I am again in travail till Christ be *fully* formed in you". Indeed, we might say that is the occasion of this letter, in that these Galatians were falling away from that life in the Spirit as sons which was to bring them to God's full end. The Apostle is in travail over this matter. It is not a case of my struggling toward God's end, but of the Spirit of God's Son in me energising toward God's end. Oh, that we had faith here. If you really have faith on this particular point, you will have the secret of a profound rest.

You know, we have our "off" times spiritually; "off" times in the prayer life when it seems impossible to pray, "off" times in many other ways spiritually. No matter how we struggle, we can make nothing of it. What are we going to do? Well, if my experience is of any value to you, as I believe I have discovered just a little of the secret of things, I have come to this position: Through the Spirit, Christ is in me, and everything is with Him, not with me. It is not what I can do, nor what I cannot do, nor how I am today; all is with Him. Today maybe I am not conscious of His indwelling, but on the

contrary very unconscious of His indwelling, and very conscious of other things that are not Christ. Well, that is my state; but He is faithful, He is true; He has given me certain assurances about never leaving nor forsaking me, and about abiding through all the days unto the end, and He that hath commenced a good work will perfect it unto the day of Christ. He started this thing, I did not; He undertook this thing.

Before ever I had a being - He had undertaken to carry through His perfect work in anyone who would trust Him. That was all undertaken for before ever I saw the light of day: so that I did not start this, it is not commenced with me. My one thing to do is to trust Him, trust *Him*, and if I cannot break through, say, Lord, I cannot pray just at the present, I must trust You to do all the praying.

No one who really has their heart set upon the Lord will take hold of a statement like that as a back-door way out of prayer. I am not trying to give you some excuse for giving up praying. I am saying there are "off" times, and I am not sure that the Lord does not allow us to have such times lest we should begin to build again upon works. He takes us right off that basis and throws us upon Himself, where there is no alternative but to trust Him. You are not surrendering your prayer life in taking that course at a time like that. If you could pray you would do so, but now in a time of real inability you are just trusting the Lord about it.

I find I have these "off" times, but as I definitely trust the Lord, and say, "Lord, this is Your responsibility, and I know this will not last; that prayer life will come back, and I am trusting You in the meanwhile", it does come back, and in greater fullness and greater blessedness. Beloved, I have proved that again and again. It comes back.

It is not merely that you get better and start again. You know quite well that you may be perfectly fit and yet be unable to pray. No one can make prayer. It is not a matter of health and strength to be able to pray. You may be a perfectly strong man or woman, but you cannot get through to heaven in prayer because you are that. Prayer has to do with an opened heaven, prayer is fellowship with the Lord; and that is His doing, not ours. He brings that. Trust Him. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me"; He has the whole matter in hand. While my attitude is one of faith in Him, He will see that there is a prayer life, He will see there is a life in the Word. Positive faith in Him is the secret of everything in the will of God.

We will leave the rest for the time being. Faith brings into oneness with Divine purpose, with Divine method, with Divine means. The purpose is a heavenly seed in union with God's Son. The method is separation from the earth and nature, and union with heaven. The means is the Spirit of sonship through the Cross. All that is in Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me". And He will see me through!