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## The Seen and the Unseen

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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### **(The 1928 Motto)**

Faith is the victory that overcometh and "faith is the conviction of the reality of things not seen."

If this is true then the secret of victory is the capacity for and the deliberate persistence in looking - not at things seen but at the "things not seen." So it has always proved to be in the history and experience of God's people. Paralysis, defeat, disaster have always been consequent upon judgment after the sight of the eyes (the eyes of the natural senses). Victory has always issued sooner or later from someone's assurance of and discernment of the Divine resources and realities behind all else.

How often this twofold issue upon this one principle is seen in the scriptural record of the experience of men. How often deliverance was because someone was given spiritual and moral ascendancy because in their close walk with God their inner eyes refused the tyranny of their outer and were given to a spontaneous "LOOKING OFF"! How often the effect of the Divine admonition by which triumphant emergence came was negatively "NOT AT THINGS SEEN," and positively "BUT AT THE THINGS NOT SEEN." And when "*things*" were hidden for faith's purifying, the sum total of all the things was "HIM Who is invisible."

So when a deep sea lies ahead, a ten times hardened and infuriated Pharaoh and his host hotly pursue, unnegotiable peaks rise on either side - a humanly impossible situation - but the saving attitude is "Not at the things seen, BUT" and *what* a "but"!

A land of promise, of fulfilment, of realisation, the entering into the purpose of long and painful preparation lies immediately before. But, as is so often the case, one big final challenge to spirituality as against carnality stands between an exodus and an eisodus. Gigantic difficulties demonstrate before the senses and God waits in the dim unseen.

Again the issue of going over and in, or back and out rests upon a capacity to apprehend the Supreme Asset, and the exhortation is again heard - "NOT AT THE THINGS SEEN."

A prophet's servant who depends upon another's spiritual perception and has none of his own will see only the forces of earth beleaguering the city and will be petrified with fear and paralysed with apprehensiveness, but the prophet who has a firsthand fellowship with God sees the mountains round about filled with "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

An apostle who has seen what others have been blind to because of their grossness; and because they do not know the Lord finds his supreme opportunity when all else in the company are terrorised and in dismay because of things seen - storm, tempest, havoc, darkness, threatening destruction. Everything falls into his hands because his resources begin where men's end and his confidence is not resting in "*the things seen*" but in "*the things not seen*."

Thus we might illustrate *ad libitum*. Satan succeeds along a line which captures the senses of body and soul, and many of God's sincerest children are led away by an appeal thereto. God seeks His ends in and through the spirit, deeper than feeling or seeing, deeper than sensation or emotion or reason.

Satan is great at demonstrations.

God is great at hiding Himself, in order that He may be sought out in spirit and in truth. If the Church is a heavenly body, if the law of her life is faith, and if the pilgrimage of faith is translation and transition from the earthlies to the heavenlies, from the natural to the spiritual, then surely we may expect that the nearer she comes to the end of her journey the more acute will become the demand for spiritual vision, discernment, and perception. The more will Satan seek success by deception on the ground of the senses, and the more will the Lord make the true life in Himself spiritual, divorced from earthly proof, evidence, and gratification, one of the pure essence of faith, looking "Not at the things seen," or FOR things seen. The spirit of pilgrimage is that of "strangers on the earth," and the sense of strangeness and estrangement in the earthlies must necessarily increase even to an agony of home-sickness for the things which are heavenly.

So we gather up the word; victory, spiritual progress, and transcendent service lie in the direction of a spiritual capacity to recognise, draw upon, and rest in those Divine things unseen, but all inclusively "HIMSELF." "JESUS."

Take this motto word by word, bit by bit.

"WHILE." - May it be all the time, no lapses because we ceased to look away.

"WE LOOK." - Deliberately, fixedly, in faith.

"NOT AT THE THINGS SEEN." - Let this be a check, a warning, a rebuke, a correction, in the hours of the seeming.

"BUT." - Every adversity and difficulty may be very real, actual or threatening - "But -".

"THE THINGS NOT SEEN." - And perhaps the supreme reality, though so often hidden from the natural consciousness - "Christ IN YOU."

"LOOKING OFF." - Oh, for a trained and spontaneous gravitation of looking off - from - unto.