

But for a time as this.

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

**Before Christ can come into His own place as the rightful ruler of this world, taking the dominion thereof, He must have a testimony to His sovereign Lordship.**

When David was driven out of his kingdom by the usurping Absalom, he left the loyal Abiathar and his company in Jerusalem so as to have that which was of himself to which to return; and while Abiathar and his priestly company were there, the reign of Absalom could never be universal, but would always be virtually disputed. The presence of the true Church in the nations is meant to act in exactly this same way in relation to the rejected Lord.

The Lord said that His apostles should *be* witnesses unto Him. **Satan and his powers are not very interested in doctrine or truth as such, but they are seriously concerned where there is representation and evidence. They will do all in their power to swamp, kill, drive out, break up, paralyze a vessel which really represents the Lordship of Christ as in the power of the Holy Spirit.** If only the Lord's people will *always* keep immediately in mind the fact that it is not with flesh and blood that they are wrestling, but with principalities and powers, etc. and that the sole object of the enemy's assaults is to destroy or spoil the evidence of Christ's Lordship, then there would be an adequate motive for "standing and withstanding," and for dealing with everything that gives Satan ground to spoil the testimony.

Truly the spiritual state in the light of the Lord's revealed mind as to His Body compels us to one of two positions. Either the Body of Christ is something distinct from the general multitude of those who confessed Christ and received eternal life; or else it is wholly a matter of the Church in general and "Overcomers" in particular as those who "press on toward the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling". Whichever it is, the issue is the same. The Lord *must* have His testimony here in fulness. The Church as a whole is far from "setting the evidence". The appeal therefore is for "Overcomers" and their testimony. This is *the* point of this letter. The conviction deepens and grows that, since the loss of the Church's spiritual position in late Apostolic times, the Lord's chief concern has been with "Overcomers"; that is, with those who preserved or would recover the original position and testimony as to the absolute Lordship of Christ in every realm of life, and pre-eminently in the realm of the spiritual evil powers. This is a time when this testimony needs to be brought out in strength and clearness as never before. If we were asked what we most truly believe to be *the* paramount need of our time we should say with considerable emphasis: A vessel represented in all the nations which serves the Lord in exactly the same way - only in the spiritual, not temporal, realm - as Esther served Him and His people, coming to the Kingdom "*for such a time as this*". It is that the Lord should have a people placed over the earth who know "Throne union" with Him now in intercession and testimony, with a background of deep chastening and travail: an instrument through the warring prayer of which He can bring evil counsels to naught and save the life of His people. To put it simply and plainly, as the whole Bible shows, the Lord must have a company in the earth who, in every respect, are a heavenly people. Their spiritual resources of life, power, wisdom, knowledge, purpose must be heavenly and by mediation of the Holy Spirit alone. Their means and methods must be Divinely

supplied and dictated. Their energy must be directly Divine energy; which means that they must have been separated from their own.

From time to time God has sovereignly raised up a ministry or an instrument to serve Him in a special need which then existed. We have, as the result, the heartwarming stories of these mighty times and ministries. But they are now of the past, and while they inspire us, they only make us grieve that there is nothing like them now. Surely everyone is aware of the need of "a new thing" from above. Let us not bind ourselves to the same form which God has taken before, but realise that He may be moving *on*, and the need may be of something quite in advance of anything that has been, although its essential spiritual features will be in accord with the original pattern; that is - the Lordship of Christ will be the transcendent issue. If we are coming at the end *back* to that original issue, it will certainly mean more in *every way* than it has ever meant in the intervening centuries, because the consummation of that testimony is in view.