

## **Trustworthiness**

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

Reading: Rev. 21:9-11,15-17; Heb. 11:10; Acts 7:2; 26:16; John 2:23-25.

All these passages contain an element which centres in one feature of the Lord Jesus which is to be developed in the people of God so that it becomes one of the basic elements and features of the City of God, which is the church, and that feature is trustworthiness.

The Lord has, beloved, a very great thing in view, That which is in His mind for ultimate realisation is contained in that verse from the Revelation 21 which we have read, *"and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God."* Having the glory of God. That is the thought of God for His church, that ultimately it shall be a vessel containing the glory of God. Having the glory of God. You can sing of nothing greater than that, nothing more wonderful than that. The very highest point of our calling in Christ is that eventually, together with all members of that Body, we should be a vessel having the glory of God and that is seen by the apostle in realisation coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God. In order that that great thought of God should be realized the vessel has to be suitable to its realisation, some great work of fitting and suiting has taken place. Something has been done to make the vessel suitable to its great divine purpose, and it is eventually God committing Himself to a vessel, God trusting Himself to a vessel, God allowing Himself, shall we say, to be involved, in the very life of that vessel, God has let Himself go with perfect confidence put in that vessel.

It stands just at the opposite end of things from that in John 2. *"The Lord Jesus did not trust Himself to them ("commit Himself to them" A.V.) because He knew what was in man."* He knew what was in man; man is untrustworthy. *"Many believed on Him seeing the signs which He did";* yes, and when the signs withdraw — He would not, and could not trust Himself to man, but when grace has done its work *"Having the glory of God"*. God, the God of glory has committed Himself to a vessel. That is what is in view. And so trustworthiness is a thing which the Lord is seeking by every possible means to develop in the saints; to bring them to that fitness for that ultimate high purpose; to bring them to the place where He can commit Himself to them.

Trustworthiness. That explains everything. All the Lord's dealings with us can be explained along that line. We read about Abraham who looked for a city which had foundations. In Revelation the City which has foundations comes into view. But do you know what is said symbolically about the City in Revelation? It speaks about the walls great and high, the measurements, the dimensions, the height and breadth the same, four square, twelve foundations of most precious stones. The trustworthiness of this thing. Walls are those defences, those enclosures, those preventative things. Walls are very important. Go back to Jerusalem in the Old Testament and you know how important the walls of Jerusalem are and you come into the spiritual interpretation of that and you see that these walls must be absolutely trustworthy so that there is a continuous stress in the symbolic thing in Revelation. The walls have a strength and an endurance. They can be counted upon; they are the complete, the consummated work of divine Grace in the saints. Grace has made them strong; they are absolutely trustworthy.

It is a very blessed and precious thing for us to recognise that the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were on the twelve foundations and wherever you find them in the Gospels they were very unreliable people. Always interpreting things wrongly, or misinterpreting things and the most outspoken of them says *"I will follow thee unto death"*, and a little while after denies the Lord with oaths and curses. How untrustworthy and yet when you get to the work of grace you find the names of the apostles of the

Lamb where the walls are spoken of; walls speak of trustworthiness. What grace can do in man that cannot be counted upon in the flesh. God is working into us this trustworthiness.

Abraham looked for the City which had foundations and he was learning by experience, and he was having the features, elements and characteristics of those walls built into his own soul. Take up his life and you find that it is one succession of dealings with him on the part of the Lord to bring him to the place where God could say "My friend". I can trust him, I can commit myself unto Abraham. The first time in the Bible you read of the God of Glory is where it says God appeared to anybody. "*The God of Glory appeared unto our Father Abraham*". God is trusting Abraham, but He has known his man and knows He can prove him before He put him through the discipline. It is blessed that the Lord knows us before He starts trying us. He tries us to bring us into the position in ourselves that He sees that we can occupy. That is very important. He calls the things that are not as though they were. He calls us a strong man when He knows we are weak as water because He knows what He will make us. Abraham was having the foundations of the City built in his soul, having trustworthiness wrought into the very substance of his being. How did God do it?

Firstly by calling him out to take a journey without giving him any particulars about it. Under sealed orders to come out and move with God in absolute faith, living by faith. Abraham obeyed God and went out not knowing whither he went. That first step was a step into the divine confidence and produced something in Abraham which brought him the first stage of the way which was to lead to that great declaration "*Abraham, My friend*". Then the Lord made him a promise of a son. The promise of a son when from all natural standpoints the thing was an impossibility; a promise which was immediately answered by nature with "impossible", so impossible that even Sarah laughed the laugh of ridicule. She ridiculed the message of God. All nature shouted, "No, it cannot be". It has never been heard of before — and Abraham believed God. Paul tells us his own body was as good as dead yet he staggered not at the promise but was strong in faith giving glory to God. He believed God. God made him a promise the fulfilment of which was in direct contradiction to all the arguments of worldly wisdom and natural possibility.

You see how God works trustworthiness into the souls of His people. He calls us sometimes out into realms where we have nothing from nature to support and where all argue that it is absolutely ridiculous, the thing is impossible and the Lord lays a promise in the direction of that. It is His challenge. We are up against that every day. Do we trust God when nature says folly, impossible? Put into that position in commonplace things of our ordinary lives where it is a matter of do we believe God or do we take the argument of nature and of men. This is a step further on the way of that trustworthiness which the Lord is seeking to develop so that He can commit Himself. Then He goes deeper; the promise is given and not fulfilled. Long tarrying. God waits before He fulfils and you are brought into that period of unfulfilled promises, the most testing and trying thing of the Christian life.

The Lord's children; the Lord has promised, you have had a divine assurance and there is not the slightest sign whatever that God is doing anything at all, and the prolonged period of unanswered prayer and unfulfilled promises, of waiting and it seems the whole question as to whether you were right or the Lord was right, is raised. Abraham clung to God and His promise. Beloved, one of the most certain, sure ways of developing trustworthiness in us unto great heavenly vocation is for us to be put into a place where nothing is happening, where God has made His promises to us, given us assurance and then put us in the waiting-room and left us there, almost as though we are forgotten. The Lord has forgotten, has put us in the waiting-room. What is He doing? Developing this. Can we be trusted, shall we give up, break away, rebel, put our own hands on things, try by nature to do that thing or shall we believe God? You know that Abraham was trapped over that. I do not think that Abraham's faith broke down but Sarah's did.

He may have been weak for a moment but nevertheless the whole weight of Scripture was brought to bear upon the fact that Abraham believed God. We must take the emphasis for it. Some of us have been there and some of us are there now. In God's waiting-room. Promises, assurances, callings, and other things all in suspense, nothing happening, the Lord seems to have forgotten; silence in heaven. What is the Lord doing? Come away from all your questionings and all your doubtings, away from all your bitterness.

God has a vocation on earth and in heaven and He is far more concerned about our spiritual fitness than He is about our spiritual activity for the time being. We must believe that. The Lord is infinitely more concerned for the state and fitness of His children than He is for the amount of work they do; and what He is doing with us in such times as these, having left His promise for the time being unfulfilled, is fitting us for the fulfilment of the promise, getting trustworthiness into us.

Can He really commit Himself to us? Then the promise is fulfilled and the deeper step still is taken, Isaac is given up. "*Take now thy son whom thou lovest.*" The realisation and now God contradicting Himself. We need not enter into that more fully. This strange conduct of the Lord that often a God-given thing is sometimes demanded of us; that which God has brought about is sometimes withdrawn in a certain realm and we lose it in that realm, of course only that we might get it back in another realm where it is more permanent, and He gives it back in another realm. A terrific test. What is He after? Trustworthiness. Can He count on us? Can we be relied upon? You see the force of this whole thing. I need not go further. It is one tremendous divine emphasis upon this, that unto a divine commitment of Himself as the God of Glory to an individual or to a company unto the fulfilment of the highest vocation, one thing is absolutely basic, that God can count on us. Trustworthiness.

Take the Lord Jesus as a supreme example and you see that it is after all only the revelation of the very nature of the Lord Jesus in the church, the City of God. Take Him and see how the Father could count upon Him. Count upon Him in adversity when things were all against Him. He could be trusted. Ah, but in prosperity when they would come by force and make Him King, when they would claim Him, He is in this attitude: You do not get Me on that line, the Cross is the way, I am not carried away by this. It is a moment of infinite peril when having had a long season of adversity, opposition, contradiction, slander, lies, misrepresentations and very few believing, suddenly there is a turn in things and there is an open door to prosperity, to success. It is a moment of infinite peril as to whether you will take cheap success, cheap prosperity, whether after all the Lord can count on you to refuse the prosperity and success that is not in line with His own purpose. It is an hour of trial.

I love to see the Lord Jesus in an hour when it looked as though it was so easy for Him to come into His own, putting it back and saying, No that is not the way unto the Glory. The Lord tried Him out in every way. He was made perfect through suffering. The one thing that was satisfying the divine Heart all the time was His trustworthiness. He could be counted on when things were as bad as they could be. When things were calculated to sweep Him off His feet and everyone wanted to make a fuss of Him, He set His face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem. Not by hook or by crook could He be got out of the way of the divine will.

So all the experiences which the Lord brings to us are to develop this feature in us. No resources and yet to trust the Lord, then to be tried by having resources and means. This is a greater test than anything as to whether the means become our strength or still the Lord. It is a blessed thing to have plenty to do with and not be able to do anything because the Lord does not let you do it. Whether the Lord can count on you in adversity or prosperity, weakness or strength the Lord still remains the one and only Governor of everything. Can we be counted upon? How far can the Lord count on you, on me? He is

seeking to bring us to a place of absolute trustworthiness where He can commit Himself to us. I do not challenge you. He challenges you. But are you in any measure trustworthy to the Lord? Are you there on the spot? You young men, are you taking your place in the assembly? Are you taking your place in the assembly of God? Can the Lord count on you? Are you there in spiritual energy? Can you be counted on by Him to be available when there is work to be done? Are you there by initiative of your own and the grace of God?

May the Lord speak to your heart as He is speaking to mine about this matter of trustworthiness. You want to know the Lord do you? You want the Lord, the God of Glory to appear unto you? He appeared to Abraham; He appeared to Saul of Tarsus. But He reveals Himself to those, makes Himself known to those who are trustworthy. He never commits Himself. He knows what is in man. Oh that He might be able to give Himself to us without any fear that we shall let Him down or fail Him. If you want the God of Glory to appear to you, if you want the friendship of God, that He trusts Himself to you as a vessel for His Glory, use and service, it can only be as He can count on you to have His interests and the interests of His House supremely at heart. May the Lord show us the sacredness of the House of God. Do not let us get away into these abstract conceptions of the House of God. A company of people in so far as it represents and is comprised of born again children of God, born again by the Holy Spirit, represents the House of God and beloved, for us to touch one of these children of God with our lips, our tongue, is to strike a blow at God's holy thing which He purchased with His own blood. You would not, if you saw literally the blood of Jesus Christ poured out, trample it under foot and be a blasphemer, but He purchased the church of God. To damage it by criticism is as bad as to trample it under foot. So have God's interests first. Have we got God's interests at heart? Are we concerned about those unsaved souls?

The great calling is that the church may have the glory of God.

This is the result of spiritual progress. It is something wrought into the City, the people of God, and the basic thing is trustworthiness.