

The Thoroughness of the Lord

by T. Austin-Sparks

Reading: Exodus 10; Ex 10:26; 1 Sam. 15:22; Rev. 12:7-8,11.

There is an underlying relationship between these passages, which we shall see as we go along, but they speak to us of three different aspects of our lives as we are called to be the Lord's people: three different aspects or spheres, but all governed by one law and that law is the law of the thoroughness of the Lord. The thoroughness of the Lord! I am sure you were impressed, as the whole of that chapter was read, with that divine thoroughness, and it is a matter about which you and I should have a due concern, for in reading the record of all the divine activities through the Word of God that is a feature which comes out everywhere. You never find the Lord in the end with an imperfect work. When the Lord reaches His end, or the place where He decides that that phase is finished, it is finished, it is complete, there have been no half measures about it, the Lord has done it and He has done it thoroughly. Of course, it is one of the things that we expect of the Lord. We never expect the Lord to be either underhanded or careless about His work; we expect that when the Lord does a thing He will do it properly, He will do it thoroughly, and He will leave nothing wanting at the end. And so in these three things which we have just brought into view out of a great number, three which cover the whole of the life of a child of God, we have this one governing law of God. In the matter of the salvation of His people He is very thorough. When it comes to the matter of our being called to service and anointed by the Lord for service, as in the second case, Saul, then the law holds good that the Lord stands for thoroughness, and He cannot accept anything else. And finally, when the Lord takes up the ultimate conflict with the enemies of His people through the overcoming company, the Word is simply this: "*Their place was no more found in heaven*". That is the end of them; they are out, they no longer have a place where they have had a place: the thing is done. That sphere is altogether cleared, but there is something which lies beneath and is basic to all these things, and it is that at which I want to come immediately and as swiftly and briefly as possible.

You will notice that in each of these cases and in all of them there is, if not in all directly stated, in all clearly implied that that which is meant by or represented as the blood of the Lamb always embodies this principle, this law of the thoroughness of the Lord. It is very evident in the case of the deliverance of the Lord's people from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh. The means of their deliverance was the blood of the Lamb. That in the mind of God was *the* thing upon which everything hung. Although up to a late moment in the course of things the paschal lamb did not come into view, so far as the record is concerned it was not mentioned, yet in the thought of God everything was hanging upon that, everything was heading up to that, everything was revolving around that and at the right moment, when things had been precipitated to a given point, the Lord brought in the Passover lamb and the sprinkling of the blood as the way of Israel's final and full deliverance; that they were at the very commencement to know the utterness of their deliverance as resting upon the blood of the lamb, and for them that blood implied — more than implied — definitely declared that their deliverance was to be an utter, full, complete, perfect, nothing lacking deliverance. That blood was as it were the gathering up of all the steps of their deliverance to make one complete, mighty, all-inclusive emancipation. Each judgement was a step towards the final step. You notice that when by the lifting up of the rod of Moses the locusts and the darkness came, Pharaoh's word was that he might be delivered from "*this death*". To him the particular judgement was a death, but each death was included in the ultimate death, the great death, the inclusive death of the firstborn. It was a working of death in parts up to the fulness of death, and the deliverance from the fulness of death, which embodied all the steps of death and judgement. The deliverance from the fulness of death for Israel was by the blood of the lamb, so that that blood spoke of deliverance from death in all its stages and degrees,

from judgement of every kind, had embraced and embodied all that had taken place in Egypt, and their deliverance by that blood was full deliverance, complete deliverance, an all-inclusive salvation, and God was simply working step by step, stage by stage to have a full thing; not an imperfect thing, not an impartial thing, but an utter thing. And when Pharaoh had hardened his heart, not once nor twice only, then the Lord began to harden his heart for him, and the Lord hardened the heart in order to make this thing utter. He was not going to leave this thing to man's aberration of whim, desire; the thing was going to be the Lord's act in the end, utterly of Himself. Judgement on the one hand was going to be God's judgement, in the hands of God. Salvation, on the other hand, was going to be God's salvation, and not man's salvation. In the ultimate issue it was not Pharaoh delivering the Lord's people, or aiding their deliverance, It was Pharaoh so hopelessly and helplessly out of things that he could do nothing one way or the other, only wish to be delivered from the incubus of this thing. It was no longer a matter in the hands of Pharaoh; it was in the Lord's hands. The Lord had taken this thing in hand, and had worked it up to such a completeness of issue that now there are no options at all, it is with the Lord, wholly with the Lord.

Now I have said all this in order to get to this point, which is basic to this and to all the other aspects of our relationship to the Lord, that to come into touch with the blood of the Lamb, to have any relationship to the blood of the Lamb, represents, beloved, no half way, no part measure, but represents an utterness one way or the other which God Himself will see to. It is a solemn word from the one angle, but a glorious word from the other. It is a solemn word from this point of view, that you and I are all in touch with the blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has been shed on this earth, the testimony of His blood is here. God has seen to it that, so far as we and a vast multitude of others are concerned, not all in this world by a long way but a great multitude, we have come to know the testimony of the blood of Jesus. It has been made known that He has shed His blood, and inasmuch as we know that, we are responsible for that blood. We are responsible for the blood of Jesus Christ since we know that it has been shed for our salvation, for our redemption.

Now, immediately we come to such an intelligent and conscious relationship to the testimony of the blood of the Lord Jesus, a course of things sets in for us in one of two directions. Either by the sovereign acts of God back of our lives to bring us to a place where our condemnation and judgement is utter, is without reserve, full and final, and where we shall stand at last before God without any ground of argument at all. That is the solemn side. But, on the other hand, when by faith you and I accept, apprehend, appropriate the meaning of that precious shed blood for our salvation and our redemption, God begins a work which He is going to carry through to perfection, and the end of it will see that thoroughness of God, which will work out in as big a thing as God can possibly do for us. As we let Him go on, as we do not frustrate the grace of God, as we do not hinder the Lord, as we do not turn again upon that blood and trample it under foot and count it an unholy thing, but as we move on with the Lord, the Lord is going to perfect the thing which He has commenced to such a thoroughness that when His work is done there will not be a flaw in us. It is a very blessed thing from that standpoint to see that the Lord has taken in hand the matter of our salvation, and seeing it is the Lord who has taken it in hand there will not be anything wanting if only we will let Him have His way and go on with Him. The thoroughness of God is implicit in the blood of the Lord Jesus. If you meditate upon the Word of God in relation to the blood you will always find that that law is there, that that blood stands for what is final, utter, complete. There is nothing left when that blood comes into view. It goes to the final issue, goes right through to the ultimate end, it involves in its nature the completeness of God's work. Oh, it is a blessed thing to remember that when the Lord Jesus went to the Cross and shed His blood He did go right through every realm and exhausted every realm, all that was against God, right through all the depravity of human nature, right through all the ghastliness and horror and power of sin, right through all the world system, through the hosts of darkness and the power of Satan, and He reached as it were the end of all these

things, exhausted them all; and His blood speaks of a finality and fulness of divine activity in relation to man's redemption, where there is nothing left to be done. And when you and I accept by simply faith the meaning of the precious blood we accept all that, but, mark you, this is the point, *God expects us to accept all that*. I mean this, that for you and for me to come to accept our salvation in the blood of the Lord Jesus from the divine standpoint means that we are going all the way. That is why I read verse 26 of Exodus 10. That is what the blood means. That is what relationship to the Lord Jesus means. That is what it means to come on to redemption ground, not a hoof left behind; everything, every fragment, every iota for the Lord, every drop, every grain, every ounce of our being, all we are and all we have over with the Lord, for the Lord, on the Lord's side. That is implicit in the blood of the Lord Jesus, and God never, never goes back upon that one degree. The Lord never goes back from His full measure. We may not apprehend it all, we may not see it all; we only come to see what was implicit in our coming ourselves to the Lord. We only come to see it in degrees as we go on with the Lord, we come again and again to say, Yes! the Lord calls to this, but it is not something fresh in the Lord's mind; for us it is another step, but in the mind of the Lord this was there at the beginning. In accepting us He did not accept us in part, He did not give us salvation in part. When we came into a living relationship with Him in His Son, Jesus Christ, through the precious blood, in the thought of God the whole thing was complete, was utter, and God is going to stand by His original principle of utterness, and so He only reveals to us bit by bit what He is expecting of us, what He wants from us. It is not the Lord putting extra things on us, it is simply the Lord showing us what was implied in our first step, for our first step was commitment to the whole. The blood of the Lamb involves it all, reckons on it all, and now the Lord is showing to us that, seeing He can never take anything less than all, if we are going to take less than all we are simply destroying God's thought of salvation.

The Word of God seems sometimes contradictory in this thing. It tells us that we are saved, and at the same time tells us that we are being saved, and then says we shall be saved. If we are saved why talk about being saved and we shall be saved? Well, just this: God's thought in our salvation is completeness from the start, and we never come into God's thought only by obedience as we go on, and so we shall be saved if we go on; not something extra to salvation, but that which was implicit in salvation from the beginning. Do you understand that? It is very important for us to recognise that. There are so many people who think that they can be Christians in part, who think they can have some sort of a transaction with the Lord and just go so far, and they think they can do this that and the other thing and arrange their own salvation. Now I want to say to you that that is a violation of what salvation is in the divine thought. Salvation in the thought of God is that not one hoof is left behind; that everything that you are and have has got to come over on the Lord's side and be stamped for ever as being for God, and that which cannot be for God has got to go. That is what God thinks of salvation from the outset. I do not want to use too many words and seem to labour this, but it is necessary for many of us to see that after all God is not putting something extra upon us when He calls to sanctification, to full consecration; He is only showing us what was in His own thought from the beginning. Oh, that the full gospel had been preached all the way through, so that people had not been given so cheap a gospel, that they could get salvation so cheaply. All it amounts to is putting your name down upon some sort of a decision card, instead of having it pointed out to you that salvation in the thought of God is "not one hoof" left behind; not a fragment of anything that is not for God. This is very elementary for some of you old saints, but it is very important that we should all see it. Now, what is the Lord doing with us? What is the meaning of extra light, extra truth? What is the meaning of the extra deep experience into which, and through which the Lord leads us, the trials which search us and find us out, discover things in our hearts which we never suspected? It is only the Lord working out His original principle. It is nothing really extraordinary after all, the Lord keeping to His original principle and saying, in effect, 'Well, from the beginning My thought was utterness, My intention was completeness, I have all the time stood for perfection and I am only working out My

original idea." It is to get us wholly and unreservedly for Himself. May God press the operation of that law into our experiences, for every experience that comes of trial, difficulty and adversity and suffering is only in the Lord's intention. If we were to view it aright we should see that it was that the Lord might have a little more of us, have us a little more for Himself. If there is some sphere in our heart, in our life, where God has not got everything, closed chambers in our hearts to the Lord, spheres in our life where the Lord is not permitted, the Lord will take us into experiences, into depths, and the effect is, if the Lord has His way, that He gets a fuller purchase upon us, a fuller occupation, has us more. And so often the trying challenges which come to us from the Lord, those challenges which precipitate crises, where for a little while we are wavering as to whether we are going on or not, whether we can accept this or not, are after all the Lord's ways of pressing His way. It is to be all or nothing. That is His thought from the beginning. If we are wise we say, 'Lord, I let go, I open up to You' and then the Lord has more of us, and when He has got more of us He can do more with us, but He is simply working to His law all the time. You may enter into some trial tomorrow. What is the Lord's thought? It is to have more of you, that is all. From the beginning the Lord has had that in mind.

Now let us recognise also that nothing whatever eludes the divine eye on this matter. The Lord's thought has been utterness from the beginning. You may be quite sure that nothing that remains contrary to that utterness will elude the eye of God. It may elude our eye, we may not see it, others may not see it, but it never gets past the divine eye. Achan may have his reservation of a wedge of gold and a Babylonish garment and he may bury it in the sand in his tent, but it does not escape the eye of God, though no one else can see it. It might just as well be hanging up on the clothes-line outside as buried in the sand in his tent, it does not escape the divine eye, because the Lord's law for the conquest of that land was utterness, and the Lord sees where that law is violated and ignored. And you know our hearts are deceitful above all things, and if we were to make our own confession should we not have to say that the Lord's dealings with us have shown us a good many things that we had as reservations which we never knew were there. The Lord saw them and pulled them out and held them up before us. It is as well for us to pause to consider the fact that the Lord is not going to let anything contrary to that basic law escape, and sooner or later you and I, who may think that we are the most devoted people in the world, may discover that there was something that was quite contrary to the Lord's way of utterness, and we shall come up against that and see it because the Lord has dragged it out. The more we go on with the Lord the more He will have opportunity of dragging things out. And so the Lord is dealing with us, beloved, not on some extraordinary level, but according to what was in His thought from the beginning — utterness. He wants us wholly for Himself, and He wants us to come to the place where we voluntarily say "*not a hoof shall be left behind.*" We are going out lock, stock and barrel with the Lord, and by the grace of God we shall have no remaining link with that old realm of satanic tyranny, no remaining link with that old world, that old creation from which we have been delivered. It will be a great thing when we come to the end of our salvation, when we do come to the place at last where for ever the last trace of the old creation has disappeared. It will be a great day then, when we shall no longer be troubled by anything of the old life. The Lord is working that in us. We have got such mechanical ideas about redemption, and that has been the cause of so much trouble. People think they are going to have an outstanding miracle wrought and there is going to be a cut made, and that is the end of everything. That is how some people think they are going to glory; there is suddenly going to be a cut and they are going to be translated to glory. Well, the outward aspect may be that, it will be in the twinkling of an eye, but the Lord is expecting His saints who are going to be translated to be all ready unto translation, to be cut off from the old realm, and it will be those who are thus attached wholly to the Lord who will know the glory of translation.

Now you see the principle. We touch it from various angles, but it is all just to emphasise one principle. God's premise, God's basic law is utterness. He deals with us for our salvation in an utter way. It is a full salvation, a complete salvation, God has left nothing undone, the salvation which He has given us, or offered us, is final, nothing has to be added to it. But God expects us to accept that as the basis of our relationship with Him, complete, utter, with no divided heart, no divided life, no reservation. And what is true in the matter of salvation is true in the matter of service. Saul in this chapter in 1 Samuel 15 was anointed by the Lord, and he was under the anointing called and expected by the Lord to utterly destroy Amalek. The work now was not the subjective work, but it was the objective work of being against everything that was not in accordance with being out to establish the whole will of God. We will not go into the history of Amalek again, we have so often covered that ground, but in a word it means this, that Amalek stood in the way of the Lord. Amalek stood in the way of the progress of the divine thought in its realisation, Amalek cut clean across the path of the progress of the Lord's interests, Amalek straddled the path of the onward march of that which was of God. And Saul was anointed, and under his anointing he was called to go and destroy Amalek, and he went to battle but he took of the best of the sheep, of the flocks and the herds and spared some of Amalek, and when challenged by Samuel as to the reservation he lamely excused his action by saying, I took the best of the flocks and the herds to sacrifice to the Lord. The Lord had demanded the destruction of Amalek, and Samuel's answer was, *"Obedience is better than sacrifice."* That is, in effect, only a hedging of the issue. When the Lord says "destroy", He does not mean offer to Him in sacrifice, or reserve things and pretend that you are reserving them in the divine interests. That is only going round a corner. The Lord means what He says — destroy. The Lord is not going to spare one fragment of this whole system which is in the way of the advance of His full thought, and we are called to be in that way. It is the utterness of our service, that we shall not allow anything that is contrary to the Lord's mind to arrest us in our devotion to the Lord's work. There are many things which paralyse service. It is for us to ask the Lord what it is, what it may be, that is hindering in the work of the Lord, arresting usefulness to the Lord. There are many stages and degrees in which arguments are put forth about that. We have heard people talking about, Well, I go to such and such a place in order to exercise a good influence, and that place may be a place wholly contrary to God. I do this and I do that, hoping that I may cover my course with the words of the apostle *"become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"*, but it is only after all that secret liking for that place or that thing. Deep down in the heart there is a desire not to have to give that up. If only the heart were to express itself there is some secret love for that thing, and it is covered by connection with religion, it is in the interests of the Lord. But it is a lie, and the Lord has not asked you to cover up what is contrary to Him with an assumed devotion to the Lord. He has said "destroy", and unless you do you lose your place as a servant of the Lord, as Saul lost his place. The blood not only calls us to full salvation, it calls us to utter separation unto service. All the utterness of the Lord is in the blood for vocation.

And finally, as in the book of the Revelation, we have already intimated we are in a mighty conflict. The Lord's people who are wholly out for Him, that is, who really are going all the way, who are not leaving a hoof in Egypt, and those who have devoted themselves unreservedly to be His, have come into a terrific conflict. It is only those who are going all the way with the Lord who know the fierceness of the battle. We are in a terrific conflict, but, Oh! it is a blessed thing to see that the Lord's principle in the blood applies to the conflict - *"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb"*. Who did they overcome? The dragon. And what was the measure of the overcoming? *"Their place was no more found in heaven"*. They are cast out; the realm of their power is now emptied of them, the blood has secured the riddance of that realm of the forces of the evil one, and they who in the blood have met the fury of the dragon have overcome *"because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony"*. And what is the word of their testimony? The word of their testimony is surely as to the absolute triumph of the Lord Jesus through His blood.

Now all this, whether you are able to follow it, accept it, understand it, can be resolved into one emphasis, that is all, and if you fail to remember and fail to grasp much, just remember the emphasis upon one thing. God is a thorough God. The God with Whom we have to do is a very thorough God, and in the end there will be nothing lacking with Him, and our relationship to Him is upon the blood of the Lord Jesus. There is no relationship to Him apart from that blood, and that blood embodies in it the very principle of divine thoroughness, and the Lord expects us to be as thorough with Him as He is with us, as out and out for Him as He is for us. If we are out and out for the Lord we shall find the Lord is out and out for us. In the long run we shall discover the Lord has left nothing undone. Let us see that we are committed to this thing. If we make any profession at all in the Lord we are committed to utterness, to have nothing back, and although we may not know what that means at the moment, if with the understanding that we have now we say we are out for God right up to the measure of the light which we have, then new light will come, and a new challenge and a new conflict. Well, I am going on, Lord; I realise that my initial step involved all this, and I am going on. And "*He that hath commenced a good work will perfect it until the day of Christ.*" Take comfort from one side and warning from the other. All the children of God who are devoted to Him can take great comfort from this — the thoroughness of the Lord. Beloved, He is going to save you and I thoroughly, He is going to sanctify us wholly, and to glorify us out and out, if we go on with Him and do not check His work. And, on the other hand, the solemn note must be dropped in the midst for any who may be trifling, dilly-dallying, holding back, not going all the way. Oh, the Lord will work out to thoroughness for you, but it will be in the other direction. Your loss will be a very thorough loss; it will be such a loss as will be utter.

The Lord save us from checking Him in all His thought for us. The Lord bring us into the fulness of His own intention; a perfect redemption, a perfect sanctification, a perfect glory.