

The Life and Ministry of Theodore Austin-Sparks

by Lance Lambert

We don't know the date this message was given by Mr Lambert, but it was to a Chinese-speaking audience with an interpreter. The spoken form is retained verbatim. The message can be listened to on the Audio page.

I would like to read a few verses in the Philippian letter, Philippians and chapter 1. We will read from verse 21:

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh, if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake."

Shall we just have a further word of prayer.

Lord, we want to thank You together that we are found in Your presence this evening. And we thank You once again for that anointing which You have given us and by faith we want to stand into that anointing this evening, for the speaking, translating, and hearing. Lord, will You fill this time with Yourself and use it to glorify our Lord Jesus, we ask it in His precious name, amen.

Now, I have been asked to share something with you about the life and ministry of our brother Theodore Austin-Sparks. And I would say something first about his life, and then a little about the emphases in his ministry, and then some of the qualities in his life.

Our brother Mr Sparks was born in the 1880's in a Scots town called Dunoon. He was born of a Scots mother and an English father, but he always considered himself to be Scots. His father was an impresario and therefore Mr Sparks was born into a family that had much to do with culture, with theatre, with concerts. I am not sure that his father ever had a real experience of the Lord Jesus, his mother, however, was a truly godly woman. She knew the Lord, she was a woman of prayer, and she was one hundred percent devoted to the Lord Jesus. She belonged to a group within the established church in England, the Church of England in England, and the Church of Scotland in Scotland, that have come to be called 'Irvingites'.

These 'Irvingites', as people called them, were those who were greatly influenced and blessed by the ministry of a brother called Edward Irving. Edward Irving was, in fact has often been called, the father of the charismatics. He believed that the church was the body of the Lord Jesus. He believed in apostles, he believed in the gifts of the Spirit. He believed in an experience that he called 'the baptism of the Spirit'. And this

movement began in Britain, in England, and Scotland in the 1860's or 1840's. Mr Sparks grew up in a home in which his mother often had prayer meetings. It was a home that believed that the Word of God was the Word of God and that it was the final authority on all matters. And it was a home that believed that the Lord's coming was near. His mother had a very great influence upon Mr Sparks.

Brother Sparks came to the Lord in his teens and from the moment that he came to the Lord, he was one hundred percent for the Lord Jesus. He saw the truth of believer's baptism and as a result, of course, he got baptised and he left the Church of Scotland. He became an ordained minister in the Baptist and Congregationalist churches; that is, in both these denominations he was a recognised and ordained minister.

He became one of Dr Campbell Morgan's young men. Dr Campbell Morgan was probably one of the greatest Bible teachers in Britain and the English-speaking world in the early part of this century. He was minister in Westminster Chapel in London. And he used to have a group of young ministers, and he used to get them to do a lot of the work on Bible study that finally came out in his various books. Mr Sparks was one of the brightest of this group of young men and ministers, and as a result, he was very much in demand all over Britain as a conference speaker, especially in teaching the Bible: outlines of the books of the Bible, an outline of the whole Bible, a bird's eye view of the whole Bible. This was something quite new and he was *very* much in demand for this.

Whilst he was minister of Honor Oak Baptist Church, he saw tremendous change come over the whole congregation. One after the other, these nominal Christians became born again: the church secretary, the various deacons, one after the other they found the Lord, and this turned the church inside out.

But Mr Sparks, in spite of being a nationally wanted conference speaker, and being one of the young men asked to Keswick with a view in the end to becoming one of the speakers, and in spite of being the pastor of a Baptist church that was absolutely thriving, he himself felt a *terrible* need within his life. He felt that he was proclaiming things that were not really his experience. That he was born again, he had no doubt. That God had saved him, he had no doubt. That God had justified him, of this he had no doubt. That the Holy Spirit was the Holy Spirit, he had no doubt. That Christ was Christ, he had no doubt. But within his own heart he felt he was preaching things that he was not experiencing; that he was *professing* much, but *possessing* little.

Now, Mr Sparks by nature was a one hundred percent person. He was never sort of in-between. He was black or white; there was no grey. And gradually there built up within him a tremendous tension. He came to feel

that he was a failure, that what he read in the Bible wasn't his experience. And it all came to a head one day.

On this day he said to his wife, "I'm going into my study. I don't want *anyone* to disturb me, no matter what happens. I shall not come out of that study until I have decided one way or the other." When he went into the study it was his determination that either the Lord met him in a new way, or he would resign his ministry. *He was at an end of himself*. He spent much of the day just quietly, and then he began to read Romans, the letter to the Romans. Nothing happened. He knew it very well. He had taught this letter again and again. He had given outlines of this letter, so it was not new to him, until he came to Romans chapter 6. And then he himself said, it was as if heaven opened, and light shone into his heart and for the first time he understood that he was crucified with Christ and that the Holy Spirit was within and upon him to reproduce the nature of the Lord Jesus. It *totally revolutionised* Theodore Austin-Sparks. He often used to say that his whole worldwide ministry, *any* authority he had, *any* influence he had, *all* stemmed from that day.

When he emerged from that study, Theodore Austin-Sparks was a changed man. Now he began to preach Christ, he began to magnify the Lord Jesus, and the church came into an *altogether* new experience. He couldn't explain the Cross of Christ to begin with, but a little while afterwards he began to teach "the way of the Cross", as he called it. It was at this time that he came into touch with Jessie Penn-Lewis.

God raised up Mrs Penn-Lewis as one of the most remarkable teachers in the last century and the beginning of this. She had also had an experience of the Cross and of the Spirit of the Lord, and she had been used by the Lord to bring servants of the Lord *all* over the English-speaking world into a new experience of the Lord Jesus. Of course you will be interested: Margaret Barber came into great blessing through Mrs Penn-Lewis. [*Margaret Barber was a British missionary to China, mentioned often by Watchman Nee. This was relevant because the message was being spoken to a Chinese audience.*] Now, Mrs Penn-Lewis saw Mr Sparks as the heir to the whole work that God had given her. And Mr Sparks became a very greatly loved and popular preacher and teacher in the "Overcomer Movement" as it was called.

But the experience that Mr Sparks had, instead of opening every pulpit in the land to him, *closed* most of the pulpits. They all became *very* afraid of Mr Sparks. They felt that something strange had happened to him; that he was dangerous, unbalanced - something... wrong. And so there began an antagonism toward Mr Sparks in the Christian world.

Then came a great crisis in the Baptist Church of which he was pastor. By this time nearly all the deacons had become believers, and not only believers, they had come into a real experience of the indwelling Christ

and of the way of the Cross. At that time, in about 1920... in the middle of the 1920's, the World Baptist Federation launched a year that they called: "Make More Baptists Year". Now, this Baptist Church of which Mr Sparks was pastor, they had no interest in making more Baptists! To bring more people to the Lord Jesus, *that* they would have been one hundred percent for, but to make more Baptists... they didn't feel at all happy. So they wrote to the Baptist Union and said that they could not be part of this "Make More Baptists Year". Then the Baptist Union said, "We have the title deeds to the church property and the title deeds to the house that you live in. If you do not fall in step with us, we'll put you out!" And so came a clash. Then Mr Sparks was put out in one week! I think at that time there were four children, and he was put out with his furniture on the road, and the church was shut out of the church premises.

At that time a titled lady, who had been greatly blessed through the ministry of Mr Sparks, and who was serving the Lord as a missionary in India, she was in England at the time and she heard that there was a big school, a boy's school on the top of Honor Oak hill and that it had been vacated. And she bought the whole property and gave it to the church. And thus there came into being the Honor Oak Christian Fellowship and Conference Centre.

This was the place where all these conferences were held three or four times a year, to which people came from all over Britain, and indeed the English-speaking world. Mr Sparks' ministry went from a local ministry, to a national ministry, to an international ministry.

It was in 1937-38 that our brother Watchman Nee first came into touch with brother Sparks. He had read some of brother Sparks' ministry and had been greatly blessed. He believed that there was an identity of outlook and of understanding. And in 1937 he came to Britain and Scandinavia with a special objective of meeting brother Sparks. He came to Honor Oak and he met with brother Sparks and they fellowshiped together. Brother Sparks by nature (I will explain in a moment) was a very British person - very, very superior and reserved - and he kept brother Watchman Nee waiting for two days before he finally had fellowship with him. It was an amazing time.

The Exclusive Brethren, who had invited brother Watchman Nee to come to Europe, were *horrified* that Watchman Nee went to Honor Oak. And after challenging him, they then had a special meeting and withdrew from him. In other words: they expelled him, they excommunicated him. Many years later I met one of the brothers who was at the meeting that excommunicated brother Watchman Nee. He didn't understand at the time, but he said to me, "I had a feeling that it was the end of the Exclusive Movement." And so it turned out to be.

Mr Sparks then, of course this whole work that was so amazing, in those early days of the conferences, people used to have *tremendous* experiences. I met with many of those who had those experiences. I remember Dr Thornton Stearns, who also had come, actually come to know the Lord through Marie Monsen in China. He went out as a missionary to China, and he wasn't even *saved*! And through Marie Monsen he came to know the Lord, he and his wife, and then, as you know, they became co-workers with brother Watchman Nee. But you know, Dr Thornton Stearns, he told me that when he went to one of these conferences, after one of the meetings the Lord would not allow him to sleep. "*All night long*", he said, "the Lord wrestled with me". And he said, "It was just like Jacob, when the sun came up, I was a different man." This could be multiplied thousands of times! People had *tremendous* experiences of the Spirit of the Lord and of the Cross of Christ. It wasn't just *preaching*, something *happened* through the preaching.

Then the war came, the Second World War, and this brought an end to the conferences. The whole of Europe and the world was in turmoil. Mr Sparks went to Scotland, and his closest co-worker, brother Patterson, he stayed in Honor Oak. At the end of the war they came together and then they had perhaps one of the most blessed periods in the history of that work and ministry. From 1946 until 19... I would say about 50 or 51, again very powerful conferences.

Now, Mr Sparks, as I have said, was a very, very reserved man. He was what we'd call a dour man; economic in words. He could sit with people and not say a word for an hour; not one word and he was perfectly at peace, but the others were not at peace! You know, they went, "*Why doesn't he speak?*" He was a very extraordinary man in this way. He was also a very suspicious man, he did not *easily* trust other people. He was a very gifted man; very good to look at: tall, very good-looking, very wonderful bearing.

Brother Patterson was *altogether* different: he was very *warm*, he could talk and talk and talk and talk. Anyone could talk with him. He loved everybody; he trusted people and when he and brother Sparks were together, it was a *marvellous* partnership. They were quite different and they trusted each other. And therefore, in the work and in the fellowship, there were many problems, some of them due to Mr Sparks' temperament, but brother Patterson *always* explained brother Sparks to the people and explained the people to brother Sparks. Thus there was a very good relationship. But then, suddenly, brother Patterson went to be with the Lord and his place was never taken. Others tried to take it, but it was not the same. This began a whole period of unrest and problem within the fellowship and the work.

Now I must also tell you something else about brother Sparks. He looked marvellous, but actually he suffered very much from ill-health. I think because he was outwardly a very reserved man, and very quiet man, *inwardly* much happened. The result was he had a certain kind of condition that meant that the whole of his stomach lining was covered by ulcers. This meant he had very great indigestion and much pain and he always looked a kind of yellow-green colour. Some of the greatest conferences were actually given at his greatest point of pain and trouble. One of them, now in a book called "The Battle for Life", he actually gave sitting in a chair.

Many years later, when I was in Switzerland and sharing a conference with brother Sparks, an old couple came into the meeting. They were German missionaries. They hadn't seen Mr Sparks for something like forty years. They had been serving the Lord in Brazil. And then they came in, and I shall never forget, brother Sparks spoke no German, so they spoke to me: "Is it brother Sparks?" they said. "Of course it's brother Sparks!" "But," they said, "he looks thirty years younger than he did forty years ago! When we saw him, he looked so *old*, so green, so thin, so weak." Mr Sparks had a very remarkable operation, where they take the whole inner lining of the stomach and pull it up, and peg it up, and give you like a new stomach, and when that happened, Mr Sparks did not have the same problems. He always had to be careful.

The *enormous* hostility towards Mr Sparks was something unbelievable! It was *everywhere* in Christian circles: books were written against him, pamphlets were written against him, he was spoken against from pulpits, he was named as the great trouble-maker, as a divisive element, as an erroneous and false teacher. There were *unbelievable* stories about Mr Sparks. I remember one brother coming to me, a good brother from the United States, and he said to me, "How can you *possibly* work with Mr Sparks?" "No problem," I said, "I have never seen anything but Christ in him and I have never ever heard him teach or preach anything than what is in the Word of God." "Ohhh," they said, "he has four wives." Four wives?! Poor Mr Sparks! I mean, if you knew Mr Sparks, one wife was enough for him. I mean, he could not... it was *laughable*! I said to the brother, "If you want to damage Mr Sparks, don't say this kind of thing; everybody who knows him, *knows* it cannot be true. Talk about his authoritarianism, talk about his suspiciousness of people. Don't talk about this, you will never damage him this way..." [*laughs*].

This alienation of Mr Sparks, this, this total isolation of him in many ways was the hardest thing that Mr Sparks ever bore. Year after year he went to Keswick. There, across the platform, it said: "All one in Christ" and then he would go up to those men he used to work with and put out his hand and they would turn away. They wouldn't shake his hand; they wouldn't speak to him. They would have nothing to do with him. This, brother Sparks found the *hardest* thing of all to bear.

The problems in the fellowship at Honor Oak grew. The conferences ceased. You will remember that our brother Mr Sparks came to Taiwan, twice to Taiwan. He was so thrilled on that first visit. One of the reasons was there were so many people and they wanted to hear, and they didn't have hostility, and they would take in every word. It meant a tremendous amount to brother Sparks. But then in the second visit came this terrible problem with our brother Witness Lee.

Now, Mr Sparks, his strong point was the spiritual nature of everything. His weak point was the practical earthly expression of those spiritual principles. And it was on the whole matter of locality that was the problem. Our brother Mr Sparks said to me, "There *is* such a thing as a local church, there is." But he said to me, "The way our brother [Lee] is teaching it, it will be like a denomination, with a Vatican and a Pope. This is how it will end." I'm afraid he has been proved right. That is *precisely* what has happened. He said to me, "We can take the church, which is the Body of our Lord Jesus, joined to the Head at the right hand of God, and reduce it to something earthly, make it a human organisation." This division in many ways was tragic. Of course, there were many other things too.

At the end of our brother's life he really was very much like the apostle Paul in his last letter, or one of his last letters, the apostle Paul said, "All the churches in Asia are turned away from me." At the end Mr Sparks was alone. There really were very few people with him. When it came to the end, he insisted on moving from Honor Oak, where his home was. His home was still there, but he insisted on being taken by car to Richmond into the home of his daughter, Elizabeth. And there he went to be with the Lord.

Now, there were some very real influences in Mr Sparks' life. There was Dr Campbell Morgan. I think he gave Mr Sparks very much in Bible outline, if you like, almost the technology of the Bible. Then there was Dr F. B. Meyer. Now, F. B. Meyer meant a lot to brother Sparks. He, really in many ways, brought Mr Sparks into a much deeper way with the Lord. And there was Mrs Penn-Lewis. She was an enormous influence on Mr Sparks. And then there was A. B. Simpson. You sing quite a few of the hymns of Mr Simpson. Mr Sparks used to say, of all the preachers on the American scene, of all the preachers he ever knew when he was young, A. B. Simpson was the most spiritual and the most powerful. It is interesting.

My estimate of Mr Sparks (I almost dare not to say too much) but my estimate of Mr Sparks is that he was a lone, prophetic voice in a spiritual wilderness. When you take Europe, Scandinavia, Britain - basically the English-speaking world from 1920 to 1960 - it was a wilderness. Very little happened. Of course, it was a period of almost two world wars of tremendous turmoil and very much institutionalisation and traditionalisation of the churches. The voice of brother Sparks was like a

voice, a prophetic voice calling God's people back to reality, calling God's people back to the genuine, calling God's people back to the Lord Jesus.

It is very interesting that much of the phraseology of Mr Sparks at the time seemed almost unique to him. For instance, he spoke about the "body"; the Body of the Lord Jesus. I can remember thinking, "The body? The *body* of the Lord Jesus? What is he talking about? *Nobody* talks about the body of the Lord Jesus! Nobody talks about it!" - then he said, "This is the church. We're the church!" The church is somewhere you left your umbrella, or you lost your handbag! Who understood the church as the Body of Christ? Yet *now* this term 'the Body' is a household word everywhere over the whole world, much due to the charismatics. Nevertheless, something has happened and it's quite amazing.

Or take these other words: authority and submission. Whoever thought or talked of authority and submission? Now, oh it's everywhere, of course sometimes falsely. What about "body-life"? Body-life! Whoever talked of such a thing as "body-life"? This was one of Mr Sparks' favourite phrases: "body-life". "Are we experiencing body-life?" It's now everywhere. Or I think of another little word: "relatedness", *belonging* to one another, being *related* to one another, being members of Christ and members one of another. Do you know, all these things were thought to be so strange! *No one* spoke about these things.

You know, in the Christian world you talked about conversions, you talked about Bible studies, you talked about prayer, you talked about witnessing, you talked about missionary challenge and call. And if you went very high, you talked about the victory life. That was it! You never talked about the church; you never talked about the Body; you never talked about authority; you never talked about relatedness. That was all something unknown. Now, what I'm saying is this: since 1960 these things have gone all over the world. Brother Sparks was a lone prophetic voice. And I think, like all real prophets, he was alone, isolated, spoken against - basically, rejected.

Now, what are the emphases in his ministry? I took five of the titles of his books. The first one is this: "The Universality and Centrality of the Cross". For Mr Sparks, *everything* began with the Cross and came through the Cross, and nothing was safe apart from the Cross. This emphasis in his ministry was one of the *most powerful* emphases. He said, "No child of God is safe till he has laid down his life. No servant of God's service is safe till that servant of God has laid down his life. No fellowship of God's people is safe until they have laid down their lives. *Everything* comes back to the altar." This was one of the emphases of his ministry.

Then a second emphasis was: The Pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus. This was something... well, you had to know Mr Sparks to really appreciate this. For him, the Lord Jesus was the beginning and the end of everything.

He was the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. He saw *everything in Christ*. He believed the whole new creation was *in Christ*. The new man was *in Christ*. *Everything* was in Christ. This was a tremendous emphasis in his ministry. "Where was the Lord?" he would say. "Where is the Lord in this person's life? Where is the Lord Jesus in this person's work? Where is the Lord Jesus in this person's ministry?" He used to say, "If you and I want to come right through to the throne of God, there is only one thing we need to do: *Give the Lord Jesus the place the Father has given Him*. This is the way to be preserved from error, from compromise, from backsliding, from beginning in the Spirit and ending in the flesh."

Then there was a third emphasis: "God's Spiritual House". He saw the church as God's *spiritual* House. He saw the church as the *Bride* of Christ and the *Wife* of the Lamb; as the *Body* of the Lord Jesus. His understanding of the church was *overwhelming*. Anyone who heard brother Sparks expounding the church from the Word of God was left almost, you would say, breathless. It was *such* a vision, *such* an understanding. He believed that the House of God, God's spiritual House of which you and I are living stones built together, we are to grow into a holy Temple of the Lord, a Home of God in the Spirit. "This," he said, "is the heart of history. This is the heart of redemption." This is where he used to say, "There is something bigger than salvation". Ohhh! People used to get so *angry* with him! "How could he say there is something greater than salvation? That is un-evangelical! It's not right! It's not Biblical!" Mr Sparks always said salvation is not an end, it is a *means* to an end. The end of the Lord is His dwelling place. The end of the Lord is His spiritual House. The end of the Lord is His Home in the spirit. And our salvation is a means to put us into that: God's spiritual House.

And then, fourthly, there was another emphasis in his ministry: "The Battle for Life". He used to say, "If there is spiritual life in you, all hell will come out to extinguish it. If there is spiritual life in your ministry, all hell will come out against it. If there is spiritual life in our fellowship, all hell will come out against it. We have to learn how to fight the good fight of faith and *lay hold* on eternal life. We have to learn *how to keep in Life!*" He used to say again and again, "*Everything* to do with God is Life, Life! Life, and more Life, abounding Life. Not death. Life! Even the death of the Cross, is to bring us into Life, and the more we know the death of Christ, the more we shall know the Life of Christ! Therefore this battle for Life." This was a very real emphasis in our brother's life. Many of us probably owe more to him on this matter than anything else: *how* to stand; *how* to overcome; *how* to lay hold; *how* to press on. It is a *battle* for Life, but the *Lord* is well able.

And then lastly, there was yet another emphasis. It is in a little book called "In Touch with the Throne". This is all to do with intercession. Our brother Mr Sparks used to say, "The real calling of the church is to

intercession. Intercession is far more than prayer. Anyone can pray - only those who've grown up can intercede. You cannot travail if you're a baby. You have to have a certain minimal maturity, and *then* you can conceive, *then* there can be travail, and *then* there can be burden." This emphasis on intercession, he believed that real overcomers are nearly *always* intercessors. They know *how* to intercede. And then he would say, "Intercession doesn't require your lips, it requires your whole; *all* of you: spirit, soul and body. It doesn't require ten minutes of the day or an hour, nor even an hour in the week, nor even an hour in the month. It requires *you*, twenty-four hours of *every* day, of *every* week, of *every* month, of *every* year. This is *unceasing* prayer."

These were the emphases in our brother's ministry.

Now, our brother had some... more than a few, faults. I said to the folks in Taipei once when I was talking with Miss Elizabeth Fishbacher, I said to her, "Did brother Watchman Nee have any faults?" And I remember Elizabeth Fishbacher looking at me and saying, "Faults? Brother Watchman Nee have *faults*?" and I thought, "Oh, she's going to crush me." And then she said, "Brother Nee was a *great* man with *great* faults. The greater the man, the greater the faults." Our brother Mr Sparks was a truly great man, and he truly had great faults.

I've spoken of his suspiciousness. This was a real weakness. Mr Sparks just did not trust people. And then another weakness was he was totally British. Now, you Chinese will understand that this can be a weakness, to be totally British! The British (like the Chinese) the British always felt that the temperament of the kingdom of heaven is basically British, and that to be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus means that you must be changed into the likeness of the British! Basically, it was a real weakness.

Mr Sparks was so thankful that he was born British. With it came a kind of imperialism. It was a weakness. He felt that the Latin peoples had very great weaknesses, and that the Asian peoples had very great weaknesses, and that the Jews had enormous weaknesses. He was British! It's very hard for us in the world we live in now to understand that there were people who really believed that this was the most tremendous thing: to be British. This was another weakness in our brother.

Then our brother had another weakness: he was a very isolated man. And it is very interesting: he *loved* America and the Americans. And for us in Britain it was always a cause for amazement. He was as different to Americans as it was possible to be! He always wore a tie. He always wore a suit. He was *always* immaculately dressed. He always had certain manners from which he never departed, certain regulations; and you know, the Americans to us were quite different! He would never sit with his legs stretched out. *Never!* He would never lie on the floor! He would never stretch out over a whole sofa! He would never say, "Hi!" NEVER! It

was just not Mr Sparks, yet he loved the Americans. And the reason was this: because he was so reserved, he found the Americans with their warmth and their openness, and their sort of... total... I can't explain it... he found he could be himself, he could actually be himself amongst Americans. Whereas amongst the British, he couldn't really be himself. He always had to be, you know, the gentleman. This was a weakness.

Mr Sparks had yet one further weakness and that was his authoritarianism. It was natural to him. It was totally natural. He was a total individual authority and this was the problem very much in the work and in the fellowship.

These were the weaknesses in our brother. They were swallowed up in the Lord Jesus. The abiding impressions of our brother Mr Sparks were not these weaknesses. If anything, these weaknesses only threw into greater relief what God had done in him - this is how I always will remember him.

I have, I think, received more from our brother Mr Sparks than any other person. I remember him like this: he *always* magnified the Lord Jesus - not just by word, but by life. His very presence brought in something of the Lord Jesus. *Every* time he came, the impression left with you was, "How great is the Lord!" When he spoke, when he spoke you were left with this: "How great is the Lord Jesus." He *always* magnified the Lord Jesus. This is something so special. So few who minister leave this impression of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. It is something that God did *in* him, so that his very presence brought the Lord Jesus in, and his ministry glorified the Lord. This is the first abiding impression. If I was only asked to give the one impression, this is the impression I would give. His favourite hymn was that hymn with the refrain, "How Great Thou art!"

The second abiding impression was: he was *always* pressing on, always you got the feeling with brother Sparks, he was always reaching out, always moving forward, never stationary, *always* going on. You got this feeling with his very presence, as well as his ministry. One of his favourite hymns... I can't find it in your book... I'm so sorry you don't have it... it's based on one of the great statements of one of the leading Puritans: "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word." He used to *love* this hymn. We sang it so often in conferences. "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word" and this Puritan leader said, "Let us not stop with Martin Luther or with Ulrich Zwingli, or John Calvin or the others. There's always more, always more, always more." Mr Sparks used to say, "Let us go beyond John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, George Fox, J. N. Darby, and then George Mueller, Anthony Norris Groves... Let us go on beyond!" He used to say, "I hope people will go beyond me." Some never did. "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word" he used to say, "You know, there's not just a second blessing, there's a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth, and a seventh, and an eighth, and a hundredth, and a

thousandth. Go on! Go on into everything the Lord has for you! There's more, and more, and more." This was the second abiding impression.

And then a third abiding impression to me is: he *always* seemed to minister under the anointing. I don't think I *ever* heard our brother minister other than under the anointing. Now that is something! Some people never minister under the anointing. Some people minister sometimes under the anointing and mostly not under the anointing. Some people minister a lot under the anointing and sometimes not. It's very rare to find someone who ministers under the anointing at all times. That is a secret, a secret that our brother had. He knew how to abide under the anointing, not to give dead food, not to give what he thought, but *always* to give what God gave him. This was how he ministered under the anointing.

If I were to give one last impression, I would say it was a kind of dogged determination to fulfil what God had given him. I remember on one occasion, (I was not there, but some of my friends were there) in India, in one of the big meetings of brother Bakht Singh. There were 16,000 people present. No air-conditioning, no fans, unbelievable heat, unbelievable humidity and unbelievable dirt. And whilst our brother was speaking, he told me, he said, "I saw a shadow coming across the whole congregation." He said, "I began to think I was ill. What is this black shadow that is slowly coming across all the people?" And then when it got near, suddenly he saw people brushing off, it was an *army* of cockroaches, great oriental ones! An *army* of them! There had been a flood a little way away and millions of these creatures moved, and they went over the whole congregation! And you know, our brother never stopped. Now, like many people, he had a great horror of cockroaches, and the Lord sent him a little saviour. As they came nearer and nearer a little chameleon came down and climbed up on his shoulder. It's a very slow moving creature. He went and sat up on his shoulder. Not a cockroach came near! And he fulfilled his ministry. Can you believe such a thing? This is dogged determination, the best thing about the British!

And then I remember another time when I was present, our brother got up to speak and suddenly something happened to the lighting. It went OFF/ON OFF/ON OFF/ON OFF/ON. All in the whole conference centre went OFF/ON OFF/ON OFF/ON OFF/ON OFF/ON for three-quarters of an hour. And our brother just went on preaching, right the way through the whole. I don't remember what he said, because of this ON/OFF ON/OFF ON/OFF. I mean, it was impossible to take in what he was saying, but I came away with such a blessing. It was the amazing tenacity, the dogged determination! Satan was *not* going to win in this meeting. He was going to fulfil the Lord's purpose for this meeting. Interestingly, I don't think the Lord's purpose for that meeting was the word He had given our brother, for none of us can remember it! And the tape-recorder went ON/OFF ON/OFF ON/OFF for three-quarters of an hour, *but* the amazing

thing: everyone was blessed, because it was the 'Battle for Life' illustrated.

These are the abiding impressions of our brother Mr Sparks. I thank God that I knew him, and I thank God for what I've received from him. I only pray that we might be as faithful as he.

Thank you.

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