

The Testimony of Jesus (part 15)

Lord, we are thankful that we can continue in Your presence. Even as we look back through history, we see the great working of the King of glory. In spite of man's failures, even the religious ways we would try to reach You, Lord, You have in every way proven Yourself faithful. You continue to reveal Yourself to us, and we are thankful. We offer ourselves to You today that we would be those who are true disciples, true learners, ones being taught by You to know how to live in the days that we find ourselves in. In Jesus' name. Amen.

II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

Even though this is an Old Testament Scripture, you will notice that it is in the present tense; it is applicable today. It is always upon our Lord's heart. We have seen throughout history how He is always looking. He is looking for those whose heart is towards Him in order that He can draw them to Himself in a greater and fuller way.

Isaiah 59:19: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him."

We are thankful that we have seen throughout history, when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord moves in a marvelous way to raise up a standard. He raises up that testimony of Jesus to continue on and to be the great work that He is doing in this hour.

Major Events of the 20th Century

Today we want to look at the 20th century. When I started trying to summarize some of the things that have gone on in the 20th century, I did not have enough space. If you would stop and think about all that has gone on in the last 100 years, it has been an amazing thing. From computers, which at the beginning was just a fancy adding machine, and now we have the internet, PCs, and all this technology that has come in. It is truly amazing the progress that has been made there.

Then there are the automobiles. At the beginning of the 20th Century you had to start a car with a hand crank. Now they have remote starters, self-driving and everything.

There is the telecommunication. Back then there were operator assisted calls and party lines. Some of these things I am sharing will tell your age, for young people have no idea what a party line is. They would string a line between three or four houses. The first house was the first ring, the second house was the second ring, the third house was the third ring. Of course, you always had a nosey neighbor who would pick up and listen to the calls that came to everybody. There has been a wonderful way of progress to cell phones, watches, everything that you can think of.

Look at the progress of airplanes. First, was the Wright Brothers, and now we have space tourists.

We have also been impacted with some major wars—World War 1, the Russian and Chinese Civil Wars, the Sino-Japanese War, World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, Soviet-Afghan, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia which are some of the major ones. There have been conflicts throughout the ages. The intensity of the conflicts was beyond what others had ever imagined.

We think of healthcare—x-rays, insulin, penicillin, vaccinations that we all used to get. Now we do not have to worry about smallpox, polio, (most of us remember when we were kids the ones who did have polio), whooping cough, chemotherapy, pacemakers, all of these and many more. It is amazing the progress man has made.

In culture they had the Civil Rights movement, women's lib, women's rights, counter culture. This is the dynamic of a 100 years. If you look at any area of life, there has been such a major change. We went from outhouses to smart toilets. If you pick any area, it is just amazing all that we have gone through. There was also a lot of turmoil involved, particularly in the 60's and 70's.

Also, within the church in the 20th century events, we looked at Azusa Street, which most people mark as the beginning of the Charismatic movement. During the 30's there was the beginning of the recovery of the truth of God's eternal purpose in the church. These truths were really getting formed within ones' hearts. A major event that occurred with the outreach of the Gospel was Billy Graham and the Los Angeles Revival. It was really the kicking off of some of the major significant revival movements that went on not only through the U.S. but throughout the world.

In the sixties and seventies there was the Charismatic Movement. One of the things about the Charismatic Movements was that it spread across all divisions that man had made. It did not matter about the age, race, sex, denomination, economic conditions, whatever. It was just going forth in a marvelous way, and ones saw the unity of believers in a wonderful way through that. Also it was recognizing and appreciating the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

I believe one of the reasons that the Lord did this great work in the Charismatic Movement and the Jesus Movement was because Christianity by the late fifties had pretty much crystallized. Everybody had gotten very comfortable and had their own little set of denominations. Back in the fifties there were no nondenominational churches at all. Everybody knew exactly what to do. Everybody knew the laws of the land, the blue laws in which nobody could do anything on Sunday except go to church. Everybody had to go, and the deacons would be out on the steps smoking cigarettes during break time; they would put them out and go back in. There was an outward form of godliness in this country, but very little spiritual reality.

God did a great shaking, and out of that shaking came the Charismatic Movement and the Jesus Movement. This was predominantly among young people, and it started on the West Coast and eventually came to the East. If you speak to anybody that was living during that time who was a believer, most of us were impacted. That is when Stella and I really gave our hearts to the Lord in a fuller way, and many people in here during the sixties and seventies really came into a personal encounter with the Lord. The thing that blesses me the most about the Charismatic Movement and the Jesus Movement is that it was not attributed to a man or a person. In some of the revivals in the past, there were certain ones who had been praying, but the Charismatic

Movement cannot be attributed to one person. It was like the Lord just swept through with a mighty breeze and touched many hearts and lives and drew them to Himself whether you were Protestant or Catholic. Those huge barriers were broken down, and many entered into Him. The Jesus Movement was predominantly young people, and out of that you will find a lot of house groups; nondenominational assemblies began to pop up and were growing throughout the country. At the beginning there was the creation of the Christian music industry. It has changed a lot now, but there was a purity back then. Also, among those who were being saved during the Jesus Movement, there was an evangelistic fervor, there was a desire for the Lord's return and for the truth of His Word.

Why was this? Why did this movement of the Holy Spirit occur so powerfully? During the sixties and seventies there was something spiritual that was going on. There was something in the heavenlies because it was like all hell broke loose, and then the Holy Spirit broke loose at the same time. In the sixties there was a counter culture that came. I remember sitting in my Spanish class on November 24, 1963, and there came an announcement over the loud speaker that President Kennedy had been assassinated. That shakes you in a way that you remember where you were. A few months later, Martin Luke King was assassinated and then Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. The world that you knew was changing. The Viet Nam War was dividing the country like it had not been before. The peace protests were breaking out throughout this country. There is another date I remember, May 4, 1970. If you were at Kent State you would remember it. It is a date in the U.S. history when there was a group of college students protesting the Viet Nam War. The national guard was there and opened fire on them and killed four students, and many others were injured. That shakes your world when you see things like that going on.

During the sixties the U. S. was invaded by England. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones came on the scene, and it changed everything. There was an upheaval that occurred. The drugs began appearing more and more. There was marijuana, lsd, acid, the psychedelic drugs. It was not so much the heroin and cocaine of today, but it was a psychedelic feeling that you were trying to get high on in order to find truth in reality. That is when the hippies made their appearance, and in 1969 Woodstock made its appearance. In the culture of this world ones were seeking something through protests and drugs. There was a searching for something because they saw how this world was crumbling. And tragically Christianity had crystallized in such a way that it was not able to reach ones, but God moved in a mighty way and it took a great shaking to wake up many. But thank the Lord for how unity came, and through both of these movements many saw Christ. And they had a simple desire to return to a simplicity of gathering in Him. They were not bound by walls and buildings and old laws. There was a Life that was leading them. Now there were extremes, for in any movement there are going to be extremes, but that does not mean you can throw everything out because God was in it. The Lord was moving in that, and many people came to a very personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that they had never known before. He was able to draw many unto Himself, and we reap the benefits of that.

So during this century, particularly the latter part, there was a lot going on, but praise God, in marvelous ways the Lord proved Himself faithful. And as we see the times that we are living in, it can be times of despair because the enemy is coming in like a flood again in the days we are living in. However, throughout history the enemy has come in like a flood, but the Lord has raised

up a testimony for Himself, and that is the hope we have. And as He has touched our hearts, we want to be strong in Him to be the testimony He has called us to be, and that our brethren throughout this world would be strong and be the testimony for Him also. So as we come into this century I just want to touch on a couple of people that really had a very solid impact on this.

A. W. Tozer

The first one I want to speak about is Brother A. W. Tozer, a 20th century prophet. He went by A. W. because his name was Aiden, and he did not like it. So instead of Aiden Wilson he went by the name of A. W. He was born in a small town in Western Pennsylvania, and by the age of seventeen he was converted to Christ in Akron, OH. Actually he was working and as he was walking home from work, he heard a street preacher. It is interesting the number of street preachers we will hear about today. He heard a street preacher calling out to him and said, "If you do not know how to be saved just call on God, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." And that pierced his heart. He went home, he got in his room, and he cried out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." And the Lord came in and transformed his life.

He was self-educated; he did not go to high school, and within a few more years, in 1919 when he was about twenty-two years old he took his first pastorate in Nutter Fork, WV, which is near Morgantown. Then he moved to Chicago where he did most of his ministry. He was thirty years in Chicago with the Christian Missionary Alliance, and he finished up in Toronto, Canada.

Another thing to keep an eye on today as we talk about different ones, Tozer had no formal training. He had no formal education as far as universities, Bible school, any of these things. He was self-taught by the Lord. He had a hunger for the Lord, and the Lord met him in that way.

He ended up becoming a prolific writer, and he wrote his first book in 1940 at the age of forty-three. He waited awhile. Some people write a book too early. He waited until he was forty-three and had some experience with the Lord. If you look at the lists of 100 most significant Christian books in the last century, several of Tozer's book are normally on there. If you really want to get to know him, first read "The Pursuit of God" because many of these books have come out of his own personal testimony. If you read "The Pursuit of God" then move on to the "Divine Conquest" and "The Knowledge of the Holy." He had a powerful, straight forward way of speaking to the people. I appreciate how one person summarized Tozer's ministry, and if you read him you will understand this. It says, "To listen or to read Tozer is about as safe as opening the door of a blast furnace." If you are looking for comfort, he pierces right into your heart, right in to where God wants to touch those sensitive areas that maybe we do not open. But he would pierce right through.

Tozer was also what is called, and he called himself, "I am the evangelical mystic." Most of the times we do not put those two words together—the evangelical and mystic. We think of the mystics as those out there in the subjective realm. We do have to be careful when we read the mystics, but there is a treasure in them. However, he called himself the evangelical mystic, and that is what he was encouraging ones to be. Actually, as you read through what he described as evangelical mystics, I believe most of us would fall into that category hopefully. But he says that it is one who has been brought into that intimate fellowship with the Godhead. Their theology is

no less and no more than is taught in the Scriptures. They walked the high road of truth like the apostles, and those down through the centuries—the martyrs, Reformers, Puritans and evangelists. They are rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Some mystics are experienced-oriented to the neglect of the Word of God. Tozer was very grounded in the Word of God, and he said, “Evangelical mystics differ from the ordinary orthodox Christians only because they experience their faith down in the depth of their hearts while the others do not. They know the kingdom of God is a spiritual reality. There is a reality that you touch in the Spirit, and you know this is real. It is like Moses who endured as seeing Him who was unseen. This was Tozer’s testimony.

Their religious experience is an immediate acquaintance with God by union with the Son. It is to know that which passes knowledge. It is beyond just the physical head knowledge that he was able to enter into.

There is a wonderful testimony by Martin Lloyd Jones in one of his books. Martin Lloyd Jones was a famous preacher and a great commentator in England, and he was very influenced by the Puritans. If you ever want to read to get an overview of the history of the Puritans Martin Lloyd Jones has a book called “The Puritans,” and he brings a great history within that.

Once he and Martin Lloyd Jones and Tozer were together at a conference and Martin Lloyd Jones recalled: “Dr. Tozer and I shared a conference years ago, and I appreciated his ministry and fellowship very much.”

One day he said to me: “Lloyd-Jones, you and I hold just about the same position on spiritual matters, but we have come to this position by different routes.” And Tozer said, “What do you mean?” Tozer replied, “You came by way of the Puritans, and I came by way of the mystics.” And “You know,” Lloyd-Jones said, “he was right.”

Martin Lloyd-Jones came to the fulness of the experience of Christ through the Puritans, through which we think of as the objective teaching side. Tozer came to the fulness of Christ through mystics which we think more of the subjective side. But both of them had an experience with the Lord and lived that balanced life. It led them to the same place, which was a greater revelation of Christ. There is one path that we are on, but for each of us we have personal experiences along that path, and the Lord works with us in different ways. The goal is always the same, and the end product is what He is desiring. But as we go through various experiences, sometimes we try to pattern everybody else by our experience of the way we go. “I got there this way; that is *the* way.” And the more you go on you find out there is one way, but there are different experiences and different ways in that one way.

A couple of quotes by Tozer, and I really appreciated this one: “Whatever comes into your heart and mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.” When you think about the Lord, what comes to you? What is the image of the Lord that comes into your heart or within your mind? When you stop and think about Him, what is that image to you?

Also he said, “To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love.” You found Him but you are still pursuing Him—that is the paradox of love.

Then into some of his bluntness, he said, "When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection." We talk about wasting time, but there is no resurrection there.

"Christians don't tell lies, they just go to church and sing them."

So you can see how he could get under your craw if you are a little sensitive. That is a little bit of the blast furnace that comes out of him. It is amazing the impact that he had. He was with the Christian Missionary Alliance group that was formed by A. B. Simpson and was greatly used of the Lord. The helps that ones have received from Tozer are timeless. Thankfully they have kept his books in print.

Jessie Penn-Lewis

Another dear saint who was really used of the Lord during this time was Jessie Penn-Lewis. Throughout history the Lord has used many sisters in many different ways. Sadly, because of the prejudice of many historians and the way we have looked down on sisters throughout the years, they have not given them their recognition. Many of them do not receive the credit that they rightfully deserve. They do not receive that place of influence that they had. And we see in Mrs. Penn-Lewis one who was greatly used of the Lord to help many that were her peers, to help many who were even older than her. The Lord used her in a great wonderful way.

She grew up in a strong Christian family and was saved at an early age. She was the oldest of eight children, and when her father died, she helped her mother care for them. Throughout her whole life Mrs. Penn-Lewis always wrestled. She was frail, she was sick, she was weak, but throughout her whole life she battled these things, and through it she found the Lord as her sufficiency. Many times she would be laid up, but the Lord would meet her and raise her back up. It is a precious testimony that is found in her biography.

At the age of nineteen she married William Penn-Lewis. He was an accountant, a very revered person within England. They moved to Richmond, England, and they actually lived on Halford Road. The house that she lived in was about three or four houses down from where Lance met at Halford House. Of course there is a lot of time difference between these two. She attended what was called at that time the Holy Trinity Church which was pastored by Evan Hopkins at Keswick. She had a great desire for the Lord to grow in her, and she was very active. She and Mrs. Evan Hopkins founded the YWCA in Richmond. She also worked and taught in the rescue home for girls in Richmond, and through these ministries she really poured her heart out. She had a desire to serve the Lord, and she was involved in many good works. She felt that the more she loved the Lord, the more she was to do, and she wanted to encounter the Lord in a fuller and greater way.

But then she had the year that transformed her life. She had been laboring for the Lord, serving the Lord in many different ways, but she was never satisfied. She felt like she was insecure in her service. "How can I do enough for Him?" She had been reading through the ministries of Madame Guyon and Andrew Murray and Henrietta Soltau who was with China Inland Mission. And she came to the realization: "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me." And the Lord revealed to her that all of her consecrated self was as filthy rags. Everything she had been doing herself was as filthy rags. She saw that out of that life death

came. She saw that she was crucified, and she testified, "I am dead; I am dead to the world and everything. I have been crucified." She entered into a great liberty and freedom. As she was before the Lord she prayed for the filling of the Holy Spirit for His power to serve. She wanted that power for service, and as she prayed for God to fill her with the Spirit, she said, "He asked me three questions. "If I answer your cry, are you willing to be unpopular and rejected?" Then He asked, "Why did I desire the fulness of the Spirit? For my success or His?" Why do you want this power for service? What is the origin of it? Do you want it just for yourself so you can have a great ministry? Or do you want it for His glory? Then He asked the third question: "Would I be willing to have no great experience of the baptism of the Spirit but to simply walk by faith?"

He challenged her with each of those questions. Then as she gave herself to Him she saw how everything of herself, even all of her good works were as filthy rags. And this revelation of the experiential side of the cross has helped so many. There is a lot of teaching out there on the cross for our salvation, but there had been very little teaching at this point of really experiencing the cross in an experiential way of being crucified to Christ until Mrs. Penn-Lewis began teaching it. "I no longer live but Christ lives within me." The new life that she had really liberated her. It is very similar to what Hudson Taylor had gone through with the exchanged life and others at Keswick who experienced it. Her books on the cross really brought into a focus of the truth and reality. She called it the touchstone of faith. When people think of the cross, they think negative, but whenever she shared it, she saw that the cross was victory; the cross is resurrection life. How do we get to resurrection life? We experience the victory that He won and were set free. It set us free from ourselves, the sin, the world, and the flesh. We are free to be able to serve Him in a greater and more powerful way. There was a great impact that influenced believers.

As she had really given herself to the Lord in this way, she and a couple of other sisters started having some conferences through the YWCA, and she was so popular that over 13,000 would be attending these conferences, and then she started traveling all over through Sweden, Ireland and Denmark. She came to the U.S. and ministered with R. A. Torrey and A. B. Simpson in New York City where Simpson had his Christian Missionary Alliance place. So she was greatly used.

In 1897 she visited Keswick for the first time, and the next year she started speaking there. They were so touched by her that she soon began speaking. But it sparked a debate about women ministering to mixed audiences. So when she saw that, she backed out. She was not interested in an agenda, and she backed out. At first they set up a women's tent for her to minister in so that women could go and hear her speak. But even though it was the women's tent almost half of it was filled with men. They wanted to hear her also. Later on, you would hear different stories about some of the great sisters who were co-workers in China, and the brothers would sit outside the door and listen to them. She did not want to get involved in the debate at that time, so she ended up withdrawing.

In the Welsh Revival the Lord used her to help bring a balance to a lot of works of the flesh that was going on. Her teaching on the cross and the crucified life brought in a needed balance with Evan Roberts and allowed it to go forth in a solid way.

In 1908 she started a monthly magazine called “The Overcomer.” T. Austin Sparks ministered and wrote with her for several years up until 1926. Actually, the Overcomer Magazine still continues today. It has changed significantly, but it is still being printed. This is a dear sister who was used in a wonderful way, and one of the ways that she was used very much was in this whole matter of spiritual warfare. In spiritual warfare sometimes we try to make it so complicated, but she came in a very succinct way. And I appreciated this when she was talking about spiritual warfare, and this is a quote from her book.

“Briefly, prayer warfare simply means holding unceasingly the power of the “finished work of Christ over the host of evil, In their attack upon some place or person, until the victory is won.

Just as Moses lifted his hands steadfastly until the victory was won, so the prayer warrior holds up steadfastly the victory of the cross—the finished victory of Christ over Satan—until the forces of evil retreat and are vanquished.”

Standing on the completed work, standing in the victory for Christ and holding that up is the secret that she has shown us of spiritual warfare. She was a dear sister used to help many, and we are thankful. And she had an impact upon Brother Sparks’ life, and we will move on to him now.

T. Austin Sparks

I appreciate Brother Sparks because even though he was not a man with a great personality, in his writings he was very transparent. He had a magazine called, “The Witness and Testimony” and if you go through “The Witness and Testimony” in many ways it is a personal testimony of his growth in the Lord. I appreciate his transparency in that.

The reason he used T. Austin was because he did not like Theodore. He was born in London, but he grew up with his father’s family in Scotland. When he was about seventeen years old, he was saved by a young street preacher in Glasgow. A group of youngsters were out in the street preaching the Gospel, and through that preaching he was saved. And what we are always encouraged to do as soon as we get saved is to go out and witness. And Sparks went out there and began preaching. What was he preaching? He was sharing his testimony: “I was blind, but now I see.” He was just a young man, seventeen years of age, and immediately, as soon as he was saved, he began going out and testifying of who Christ was to him. There was a lot of things he did not know, but one thing he did know was that the Lord had saved him, and he testified of that without hesitation.

Again, without any formal training or schooling, from 1912 to 1926 he served as a Baptist pastor for three churches in London, and during that time he sat under the teaching of G. Campbell Morgan. And throughout his writings he commented on him, and he also established a close lifelong relationship with F. B. Meyer. I think it is amazing that there was a lot of good preaching in London at that time, such as Morgan, Meyer, Sparks. But we can see how the Lord moved in his life. Again, the Lord trained him up. He did not go to college, but he sought the Lord, he studied the Word, and the Lord trained him and brought him into the fulness of Christ.

This is one thing I just learned. In 1923, while he was still the pastor of Honor Oak Baptist Church, he started the publication, "The Witness and Testimony" Magazine. He published it bi-monthly until the final issue when he died in 1971. It is interesting how so often when I talk about "The Witness and Testimony" it shows his personal growth.

I was looking at the various covers on the "Golden Candlesticks," and it was not until 1947, 1948 that the cover of "The Witness and Testimony" changed to the "Golden Candlestick." The Golden Candlestick to him represented the testimony of Jesus. Many were Gospel messages, sanctification messages, and consecration messages, and you could see throughout the years how the Lord was growing in him, and one of the things about Brother Sparks was that he was never satisfied. He always knew there was so much more of Christ. And as he sought the Lord with an honest and open heart, the Lord continued to show him more things, revealed to him things about his desire for a church and a testimony. The turning point in his life came in 1926 when the Baptists had a campaign called "Make More Baptists," and he replied, "We can only make more Christians," and he resigned his Baptist pastorate from Honor Oak Baptist. Honor Oak is the name of a street in London. That is where the gathering began of the "Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre." You notice that it is the British spelling for center. So don't anybody say I spelled it wrong.

The pictures we have of it now does not look the way it did back in those times because it was bombed pretty heavily during World War II. But they have rebuilt it.

Honor Oak really became a teaching and training center for many dear ones. But because of the stand that he took when he left the Baptist Church at that time, renouncing everything and setting up an independent assembly in 1926, he was ostracized and rejected by many believers. He wrote: "They closed every door on me that could be bolted and barred, but God opened doors. He opened so many doors throughout the world in ways and places I never could have imagined."

He went from what appeared to be a pinnacle. He was a respected Baptist pastor, and he turned from that. It looked as if he was being rejected and come down to nothing. But in God's kingdom he was promoted. He was used of God as a great servant in that way.

Honor Oak always had a heart for others. They sent out ones to many different places throughout the world. Many of the brothers would go out to different places, and they received brethren from throughout the world.

In 1933 Watchman Nee first visited Honor Oak, but Brother Sparks was not there, and he returned in 1938. Later, three sisters from the assembly in Honor Oak moved to Shanghai—Clarke, Featherstone and Taylor, and met with the assembly there. Soon after that Brother Bakht Singh came on the scene. In my glorious ambition I was going to do Watchman Nee and Bakht Singh today, but I realized that we would be here until 2:00.

Brother Bakht Singh was from India, and he visited and established a close relationship with Sparks, and actually that is where two brothers from the assembly in Honor Oak, brothers Fred Flack, who has been here a good number of times and Raymond Golsworthy who went to India. They co-worked with Brother Bakht Singh throughout India.

Brother Nee met Brother Sparks in 1938 in London, and they had some sweet fellowship together. Actually, it caused Brother Nee some trouble because he had been associated in fellowship with a group of Exclusive Brethren at that time. They had been a support and encouragement to him and a help, but after he met with Brother Sparks, who was not part of the Exclusive Brethren, he separated from them. Basically, you had to meet with them and nobody else. That meant you could not meet with other Christians, and Nee had never bought into that. He met with Brother Sparks and other believers, and the Exclusive Brethren severed their relationship with him. It is pretty sad how ones who think they are doing the right thing, holding to the faith, contending for the faith, and yet in what they were doing they were blind; they did not see. They saw in part, but they did not see the fulness of all that Christ was doing.

Lady Ogle

One of the people who Brother Sparks impacted in his life was a sister named Lady Ogle. She was a very wealthy widow, aristocratic lady, and she testified one time that she felt life was meaningless after salvation; you get saved and you wait, and then go to heaven. She did not really feel that there was any real meaning in life. But one time she went to the Swanwick Conference where Jessie Penn Lewis was speaking also. She had been invited, and after she went, she said, "I heard this young man share about God having an eternal purpose. God has saved us with a purpose to be His testimony upon this earth, for the bride to make herself ready, to have a church with a visible testimony upon this earth. It revolutionized her life. Her eyes were opened for the first time, and she saw that there was meaning to life. It revived her and she served the brethren for many years. We have heard from Stephen and Lance many stories about this dear sister.

I still remember one that Lance told, and I am going by memory so I might not have all the facts. Lady Ogle was so given to the Lord, and she was also very, very wealthy. She was wealthy before she got married, and when her husband died, she was double wealthy. She had been supporting a lot of missionary groups, and there was one that had a ministry in Egypt, and she wanted to go. So she applied to this group, and because they said she was too frail, and the conditions there were so tough, she could not go. So they would not support her, but it caught them in an awkward spot because she was one of their main contributors. Nevertheless, she went anyway. She said, "I am going."

She went to Egypt and was teamed with another missionary who was a doctor. They were really ministering to the down and out throughout the cities, to the poor and neglected. So one day the doctor got a message that a lady outside was in bad shape. She was a prostitute and rejected by everybody. She was filthy, lice all over her, and her body was diseased with syphilis. You can hardly imagine how degraded a human being could become. The doctor and Lady Ogle went out to meet this lady, and the doctor told her that she was going to have to hold her so he could take care of her. Lady Ogle replied, "Hold her!" She was repulsed, but by the grace of God she responded and she held this lady. She had never even come close to this type of filth in her life. As she was holding this lady, she heard within her heart the Lord say, "Kiss her." And she said, "There was not a clean place on her body to kiss with all the sores and the smell." And the Lord said, "Kiss her." By faith she kissed this woman, and it was like she was so full of the love of Christ that it just overwhelmed her heart. She saw how in many ways that is what the Lord has

done to us. The One who left the splendor of heaven has kissed us in our filth and rags. It opened her heart and her eyes, and she continued to serve Him in many different ways.

She was a very modest lady. She had a mansion in Italy, one in England, and in Scotland where saints could go and rest. She also had one in India. I remember Brother Kaung talking about how when he came out of China because they had to leave, he went to Singapore, then over to India and ended up at Lady Ogle's place. He did not know her, and when he saw this lady, he thought she was one of the servants in the house because she was so simply dressed. He went in and as he was waiting, this lady, who he thought was a servant, came in, and it was Lady Ogle. She cared for him with such gracious hospitality.

You see ones throughout history, such as Whitfield who had a Lady Huntington. These were saints who were poured out to give of their hearts and resources. The Brethren had a Lady Powerscourt who laid her life down. Some would give all their money away. C. T. Studd gave everything away, whereas the Lord used others in different ways. We do not know how He works, but I am so thankful the Lord can capture these ones who in the world's eyes have everything; they have need of nothing. But they know that great void within, and they know that the simple message of the Gospel can transform a life. Thank the Lord.

Then from 1947 on, after the war, Brother Sparks continued ministering throughout the world. He went through Manila, Taiwan, many various places, but in 1947 he first visited the U. S., and he was invited by Dr. Thornton Stearns. That is not the one we know, it was his father who invited him. Dr. Stearns had been a missionary in China and had been associated with Watchman Nee. He actually served as an elder at the assembly in Shanghai. But during the war he was imprisoned by the Japanese, and during that time he cared for other prisoners. He became so exhausted that he almost died in that prison camp, but in 1943 they were able through the Red Cross for some prisoners to be exchanged, and he was able to return to the U. S. Watchman Nee had told him that whenever he was able to return home he needed to search out Brother Sparks and invite him to the U. S. It was through Thornton Stearns that Fromke, Sparks and Kaung were connected. Brother Sparks came to the U. S. where he continued for many years. He was very active in traveling all over. He had conferences throughout Europe, Australia, Taiwan, India—a world-wide ministry that the Lord greatly used.

In 1966 they had the first conference at Wabanna Camp in Maryland with Austin Sparks, Stephen Kaung and Devern Fromke. As we know Kenny shared at the memorial service and the impact that had. After it ended there was a conference raised up here. So we see part of our heritage here as we start looking back more and more of how the Lord used many of these dear ones, and we are thankful for them.

One of the training things that Brother Sparks would always do was to have training conferences throughout Europe, and he would call many different leaders together.

In 1957 in Copenhagen there was a conference with many in attendance that we are familiar with. Among them was Brother Kaung, Lady Ogle, Mrs. Sparks, John Paul from India, Fred Flack, Bakht Singh, Paul Manson, who was from Denmark and hosted the conference, Richard Akeroyd from Kentucky who married one of Sparks' daughters, Raymond Golsworthy who went to India

with Fred Flack and Brother Sparks. It is wonderful to see the preciousness of how the Lord brought these ones together and trained them, and they had a heart to learn and serve together. This handful of different ones had such an impact throughout the world, and we are greatly indebted because of that.

Brother Sparks' ministry is really far more important than just his life. Many have asked, "Explain to me Brother Sparks' ministry." Well, the book that captures it the most is "The Stewardship of the Ministry." Any of his books are free online at the T.A. Sparks' website.

Watchman Nee shared an interesting thing, and I think this was early in his life. You can see how Brother Sparks was growing as you look at the different aspects of his ministry.

Brother Nee said, "The world did not know what resurrection was. Resurrection was spoken about, but the world never knew what resurrection really was. It was not until brother Sparks wrote and spoke on resurrection that you got the substance of it."

There is a real resurrection life for us to live in. Resurrection was not just one event in history, but there is a resurrection life that He wants each one of us to enter into.

The Essence of Spark's Ministry

Some have asked Sparks, "What is the essence of your ministry?" And he wrote this in a little booklet called "This Ministry."

"It is the revelation of the significance of Jesus Christ in God's universe. Just as the sun is the center of the solar system and the source of all its light, life and energy, so Christ is the divine center of the spiritual universe, governing all things and giving light, life, power and purpose to all in that sphere. Yes, it is the absolute ascendancy of the victory of Christ and His filling of all things which is this ministry."

It was a very Christ-centric ministry. Before that so much ministry was ego-centric, man-centric. But it was a revolutionary way of how he saw the significance of Christ, the universality of Christ, the centrality and universality of Christ. If you read brother Sparks, your vocabulary will be expanded. Put a dictionary beside you as you begin reading. His focus was on Christ, and that is what he wanted to bring ones back to.

Also, ones were asking him, "What is the local church?" He said, "The local church is a company of born-again Christians brought together by the Lord in any given place, and over whom the Headship of Christ is an established operating reality."

That is what they desired at Honor Oak Christian Centre as they gathered. They did not want to form another sect, they did not want to form this or that, but they wanted to simply form a testimony unto Him, a local church of born-again Christians, any born-again believer brought together by the Lord in any given place and over whom the Headship of Christ is an established operating reality. Praise God, for that clarity of vision.

Finally, before he passed away, one of the last things that he wrote, was in The Witness and Testimony in 1967. Ones wanted to know about the ministry, and he summarized it this way as he was looking back and reflecting as to what God had revealed to him and the purpose of the

ministry. He died in 1971 so he had a good number of years of experience as he is looking back. "There are four main points in his ministry.

First: "To convey the eternal counsels of God, firstly in relation to His Son. The superlative and transcendent place and greatness of His Son." That was the focus—bringing ones to Christ.

Secondly: "To convey the greatness of man in the thoughts of God." Why does God need man? Brother Sparks was able to bring to light the necessity of how much God needs man to accomplish His purpose. He has chosen to work through man, and we can look down so much on man, but through Sparks' ministry we see how those redeemed ones can really be used of Him.

"What is man? That has remained unanswered as to its fulness in God's purpose concerning Him." What is man? Lower than angels. "But in spite of his fall, he still remains the conception of God for glory, honor and dominion over the inhabited earth. God desires to work through man, and He wants man's helps and assistance. "I am not talking about humanism. That is the antichrist counterfeit."

Thirdly: "To convey the greatness of the church; 'the one new man,' the counterpart of Christ. To show the true nature, vocation, calling and preparation for its glorious destiny and function is the ages to come."

In the article in which he was writing this, he said, "Some people would want him to put number three first to convey the greatness of the church." He said, "Unless you convey the greatness of Christ, if you do not see the necessity of man you really cannot see the essence in fulness of what God has in His purpose for the church."

Fourthly: "To convey the greatness of the cross by which Christ gains His preeminence of victory. By which alone redeemed man can reach his purposed nature, glory, honor and dominion, by which the church can attain to its eternal purpose."

I appreciated how in a very concise way he was able to pull together the very heart and essence of his ministry which you can see in these truths here. As we read these, and because of him and others that followed, these are not so strange to us. To many these are very strange, but we have been entrusted with much, and to whom much is entrusted, much is required. And we want to be those who are faithful to that.

I am thankful to the Lord how he was able to find these ones who were unknown by the world. They were not the finely educated ones, although throughout history God has used great educated men, but these ones that we have seen today from Tozer to Sparks, Penn Lewis, were not educated according to the world's standards; they were not the greats of the world. But the eyes of the Lord went to and fro, and He found ones whose hearts were completely His, and He said, "I can use that vessel." And praise God, they responded and each one of them were never satisfied, never satisfied with enough. They always knew there was much more of Christ, and may that really capture our hearts also.

As we wrap it up today, just a reminder that the Lord is ever looking for ones whose hearts are completely towards Him. And when the enemy comes in like a flood, He will raise up a standard; ones whose hearts are completely His are never satisfied. And those whose hearts are

completely His are often rejected by other believers. One of the greatest sufferings is not physical but being misunderstood and rejected. You will find in the biographies of many who were misunderstood by those whom they loved, and were rejected by ones whom they thought were accepting them. But one whose heart is completely His forsakes the world and the praise of man because he knows he is accepted in the Beloved. He has been captured in a very fresh way. That one whose heart is completely His endures that momentary light affliction because he sees that eternal weight of glory. It is something that keeps you going. One whose heart is completely His receives, as Paul said, that crown of righteousness. There is a glorious reward, and may we be those whose hearts are completely His. We are thankful how the Lord found these ones and opened their eyes and their hearts that we may benefit from them. It is getting pretty close to our age and time, and we have a great conflict going on as the enemy is flooding in today. So may we be strengthened to be the testimony that He is calling us to be.

Let's pray:

Lord, we thank You that we can call upon You. We are thankful that we can draw near to You. And Lord, we are thankful that You are the One who is accomplishing a great purpose. Lord, outwardly, it would look like You are a failure, but we are thankful that as we began today the King of glory has come in. We are thankful that You have won the victory, and we thank You for the work that You have begun that You are going to complete. We are thankful, Lord, that as You show us these ones who have gone before us, we are challenged within our hearts that we can say, "It is not I but Christ." We do not want to respond out from ourselves, but just to know the reality of who You are and the reality of the death and resurrection that we have in You. It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives within me, and we give our hearts to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.