

The Spiritual & Natural Man - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon discusses the transformation from the natural to the spiritual man through a deep understanding of Christ and His resurrection power.

Duration: 36:36

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 1:26-28, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, 2 Corinthians 3:18

Topics: "Natural Man"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the great wisdom and sovereignty of God and how it all begins with a fourfold portrait of man. The speaker emphasizes that the Christian life starts with a supernatural act, a miracle, which is being born again. The difficulty of consecutive meetings is acknowledged, as new people join each time. The speaker highlights the importance of understanding the New Testament in the light of bringing Christ into view and showing the transforming work of believers. The passage from 1 Corinthians 2:14 is mentioned, emphasizing the contrast between the natural man and the things of the Spirit of God. The speaker also mentions the alternative humanities or mankind, one created by Satan and the other by God. The transcript references the four gospels as a magnificent presentation of Christ and explains how Satan changed the humanity of man through Adam, producing a race after his own mind. The sermon emphasizes the need to comprehend the significance of these teachings in the New Testament.

Transcript

One of the difficulties of meetings of this kind, which are consecutive, is that the company changes all the way through in some cases. Fresh friends come in from meeting to meeting, and it's just difficult to follow straight on. I say that because we have started on a course which is consecutive, and we cannot go back over what has been every time.

But for those who are with us, and you, I will try to help them in. And perhaps the best thing to do is just to pick out one or two of the fragments of the Word by which we are being led, and then come to the special part which is for this morning. In the first letter to the Corinthians, first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 2, it is the whole chapter that needs to be in mind, but we cannot read that now.

You will notice what it is about, the line that the Apostle is following. And I just pick out these two fragments. Corinthians, verse 14, Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him.

He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth, or examineth, all things. As those two designations, the natural man, and he that is spiritual.

In the second letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 3, at verse 18, But we, all with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image. We are transformed into the same image. I'll add a fragment from the letter to the Romans, chapter 8, well known, but helpful in this connection, at verse 29.

For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son. Foreordained to be conformed, made with the form of his Son. We are being transformed into the same image.

From the natural man to he that is spiritual. Now you're going to have some surprise, when on this day, when we are thinking so much about the resurrection, I'm going to take you right away from the end of the life of the Lord Jesus, here on this earth, to its beginning. In the Gospel by Luke, you will please turn to chapter 1, at verse 26 and onward.

Chapter 1 of Luke's Gospel, at verse 26. Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

He came in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. The angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.

And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, who shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, shall be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee.

The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. Wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called the Son of God. This falls right into line with our present consideration.

We are seeing that Christ is Christianity. If we really do need, as we do, to understand, know what Christianity really is, amidst all the confusion that has arisen within the compass of that word, Christianity, to understand the real nature of this into which we have come, requires that we shall have a true, a genuine, spiritual understanding of Christ. And that is not as simple as it sounds when it is stated like that.

For the oldest believer, one who has gone longest and farthest with the Lord, still realizes how much he or she needs to know and understand the Lord Jesus. And if we want proof of a statement like that, let us remember that so great a servant of Jesus Christ, with so great a revelation of Jesus Christ, who could say that he had at a certain time been caught up into the third heaven and shown unspeakable things, which is not lawful for a man to utter, who could say, I will come to visions and revelations of God. Man, with all his spiritual history and spiritual knowledge, in the closing days of his life in his prison, is still crying, that I may know him, that I may know him.

Still the predominating ambition and quest of a man with all that, everything, therefore, is a matter of knowing, in a spiritual way, the Lord Jesus, so that Christ is really Christianity. It is not a system of truth, doctrine, teaching, practice, creed, and so on. It is a person, and yet a person beyond all comprehending.

Well now, we come to this next phase of our present consideration. Paul said here to the Corinthians, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ. Amongst you, all I intend to know is Jesus Christ.

And then he said, and him crucified, and him crucified, Jesus Christ. To know Jesus Christ among you. That was excluding one whole realm of things, and focusing and concentrating everything upon this person, Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Why? Here again is the key to our New Testament, as well as to these letters. Jesus Christ has come into this world as the first and representative of a different type of humanity. A different type of man has broken into history in the person of Jesus Christ.

And it is this that gives the meaning, the explanation to the incarnation, the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. And you know that the two things about which there has been more controversy than anything else where Jesus Christ is concerned, where all the schools of theological interpretation have been in conflict, the two things were the birth and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Many other things, of course, in his life and so on, but the two main points of controversy have been the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection.

Very significant that it is so. Leaving the resurrection for the moment, we get there in these days, remains to be seen. We have a long way to go.

Let's start here with this birth of which we have just read. What is called, and scripturally called, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. I said that this is the point of controversy and the point of difficulty in its real spiritual understanding.

And the battle began, the spiritual battle of these ages began at that point when there emerged into this world and into history this one after this kind, this particular kind of humanity. So soon after his birth, all hell rose up to quench that flame, to blot out that life and its testimony. Herod, that devil-dominated and driven man, went as far as to massacre all infant boys with the object of getting this one, just this one.

And that was not Herod only. Lord Jesus later himself said, of other men than Herod, fear of your father the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning.

In the works of your father he knew. The murderer behind Herod and all of his kind rose up. Immediately this type of humanity broke into this world.

Well, that's patent, isn't it? And the answer, the explanation? The explanation? You see, you have two alternative humanities or mankind. You have the one that Satan made. When he got hold of Adam he changed the humanity and kind of being that man was.

He changed that man. By an evil spiritual fornication he produced a race after his own mind, after his mind. Comprehensively the word declares the whole world lies in the wicked one.

A race after Satan's mind. Which he is. Confessedly by the Lord Jesus, the Prince and the God of this world.

A kind of humanity. On the other side there is this kind, this type brought into history, into this world by God, another, an alternative humanity to that other. In whom all that other was going to be judged and if unrepentant and if not transformed, passed over from the one to the other, doomed to be blotted out of God's universe.

Therefore all the painstaking work, labor and effort of the evil one and all the evil powers in the whole Adam race is going to be upset by this new kind of humanity. Going to be, all his work is going to be undone in this. All that ever Satan set himself to do in spoiling God's kind man is just going to be undercut and blotted out in this one who has now broken into this world.

You can understand why Satan said we must as soon as possible in his earliest days blot him out. Dismiss him, get rid of him. That lies behind this kind of humanity that is God produced and not man produced and not Satan produced.

This kind of man that is in his very conception God's act a miracle. Now you would understand why the rationalists who don't know anything about new birth take offense and objection to the virgin birth. What is after all the best testimony to and confirmation of the miraculous supernatural birth of the Lord Jesus is our new birth.

We don't have to argue it as theology or mere Christian doctrine and creed. We know that Jesus Christ is a miracle because he is a miracle in us. But the rationalists don't know about new birth.

Therefore they can be caught in this controversy over the birth of the Lord Jesus. Well the explanation you see of this this antagonism and this animosity and all this confusion the enemy is the author of confusion all this confusion about the Lord Jesus in his very conception and inception and nature and being is because of this one thing which runs right through the New Testament another kind of manhood mankind has been introduced into history and introduced not as an afterthought not as an afterthought but foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son. Out from the eternal thought and intention of God the image is introduced to which the believers the Church has to be conformed into whose likeness we are being transformed.

Now you see this is all worked out in your New Testament. You want to understand your New Testament anywhere, anywhere read it in this light. What is this all about? What does it mean? What is it after? What is the portent of this? Every bit of it is to bring Christ into view and to show this transforming work of believers.

Isn't it all through the New Testament? First you have the magnificent presentation of him in person in four portraits of four Gospels the great wisdom and sovereignty of God. It all begins with a four-fold portrait of the man and then from then onward by the Holy Spirit the work begins and proceeds to transform and conform a people to that man so different so different that a mystery and a miracle lies right at the very heart and root of this thing. The Christian life begins in truth begins with a miracle a supernatural act you and I know that if we are born again and it proceeds on the basis of that miracle and that mystery of something other something other and something different that God is doing is not just allowing us to go on our natural course not encompassed by a statement like that isn't it?

That under the Holy Spirit's government we are not allowed to go on our natural course we are continuously brought up against the demand for something supernatural something above the natural more than the natural we are continually brought up against the fact that naturally we cannot rise to this standard we cannot meet this demand we cannot go through this experience and challenge we need something more than we have in ourselves we need something supernatural that's the whole history of the Christian life begins on that supernatural basis for no man can beget this type that which is born of the flesh is flesh that which is born of the spirit is spirit and which were born not of the flesh not of the will of man cannot be done cannot be done cannot produce this order by any natural means

whatsoever it's only produced by God I'm saying things that you all know and agree with I'm quite sure but I have just said that the whole New Testament opens out along this very line we were in 1 Corinthians 15 for a few moments this morning you see in Adam all die in Christ all made alive the first man Adam the last and the contrast are simply the contrast of two orders of creation altogether between the two first and last the second man and the last Adam always be careful how you quote scripture second man yes but the last Adam no more races after Christ not going to be another race after Christ finality in humanity is in him the end if any man be in Christ as the apostle there is a new creation in Christ a new creation so we come back to our starting place we are being in process of

being transformed into the same image and all I'm going to say again this morning in this briefer time is where I closed last night depends entirely upon which of these two orders in each one of us is predominating the Corinthians were Christians they were born again believers they were addressed as such but during the five years between Paul's first visit to them and sojourn amongst them and his letter they had become such a degeneration and decline in their spiritual life they had opened the door so widely to this world that as Christians predominantly the natural man was in charge so you have this terrible letter of all these things belonging to the natural man he has to say I could not speak to you other than as babes as babes well they were babes they were babes it's alright to be a

babe while it's time to be a babe but after seven years he was there with them two years and then five years later he wrote his letter after seven years you ought to at least begin to emerge from babyhood you think it's strange a child of seven years by the way seven years is the most original time of life a child of seven is the most original person in creation it's all original now you parents know that quite well by the questions that are asked my eldest daughter about that age after coming to the service and hearing the chapter read about the end of the age the end of the world rather as it is in the authorised the end of the world that phrase when we got home she said Derek if a man went up in a balloon and while he was up the end of the world came what would he come down on well you

at seven years can put some posers to you it's original but that's just by the way by the time you get to seven years of the spiritual life you ought to begin to emerge from that infant state of irresponsibility and here they were at that time in their spiritual life he says babe still I have to feed you with milk not with meat you're not able that's a terrible situation terrible situation it's a matter of which of our two the two sides of our makeup is really in the ascendant the natural or the spiritual or in other words whether we are really in the process of being transformed and conformed well the answer will depend entirely as I said before last night upon our reaction to God's dealings with us as children over to Hebrews Hebrews God dealeth with you as with some despise not thou

the chastening of the Lord nor think when thou art reprov'd him whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth your reaction to his dealings with you if it is like Israel in the wilderness murmuring complaining and shirking

and all the time rebelling and wanting to get out of it and say let's go back forgetting forgetting the tyranny of Egypt to go back from under the hand of the one who was seeking to make them in difficulties and adversities discover things about himself what he could do now to bring that right up to date dear friends you and I are really in a school and a very practical school under the hand of God where it is necessary for us to know Christ thy may know him and here is a focal point of the knowledge and the power of his resurrection anyone here tell me they don't need to know

that the power of his resurrection well we are here under his hand to learn that to know that it's a wonderful, wonderful thing to know the power of his resurrection maintaining us enabling us causing us to supersede those things which limit and make impossible our life and our service we are up against this all the time we are in this battle with forces of death to quench put us out and the Lord doesn't put us into situations and circumstances where it's all easy straight sailing doesn't do that he does just the opposite for Christians he puts us down in places where my word we can't go through we really cannot live unless the Lord Almighty sees us through this and that's what we're there for to discover the Lord Almighty power of his resurrection if we say well I'm going to resign I'm

going to quit I'm going to find an easier way than this simpler way than this you take yourself right out of the hands of God and out of the realm of making spiritual discoveries of Jesus Christ you take yourself right out of the hands of God and out of the realm of making spiritual discoveries of Jesus Christ we will leave it there you see this is very true isn't it very practical the spirituality is very practical we are being transformed passed from one order to another the Adam order to the Christ order to the natural from the natural to the spiritual and this is the way a practical way but keep always in mind this there's an image the writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it this way looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of faith remember God has got his pattern his

order in his son he's there and we behold him behold him as in a mirror glory the Lord are changed are transformed into the same image from glory to glory again while we look not at the things which are seen so near and pressing upon our consciousness trying to assess us with themselves but we look through to him who through these things which are very real is seeking to produce something more of Christ Lord help us so to view and interpret his ways with us

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