

The Man Who Is Alive

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the profound theme of life in Christ as the ultimate triumph over death, emphasizing its significance from Genesis to Revelation.

Scripture: John 1:4, John 10:18, Romans 8:18, Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:17-18, Revelation 4:6-8, Revelation 5:5-10, Revelation 22:1-2, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Triumph Over Death"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the central theme of life in the book of Revelation, contrasting the new creation Man, Jesus Christ, with the fallen state of humanity. He illustrates how the narrative from Genesis to Revelation revolves around the tree of life and the significance of living in Christ, who overcame death and offers eternal life to believers. Sparks highlights that the testimony of Jesus is embodied in the church, which faces opposition from death but ultimately will triumph through the life of Christ. He encourages believers to hold onto this life, despite trials, as the ultimate victory belongs to those who are in Christ. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace life and reject the temptations of death.

Transcript

Reading: Revelation 4,5.

When we commenced this series of studies with the first chapter of the book of the Revelation, we said that the book of Genesis and the book of the Revelation bound the whole history of this world: one the beginning, the other the ending. The very first phase of that history is governed by man and the tree of life. The book of the Revelation opens not with that man, but with the MAN -- the new creation Man -- and brings us to the tree of life. These two things underlie the whole of the history from the beginning to the end, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation -- man and the tree of life. In other words, the overruling factor throughout the whole of history is this matter of life in a man, or life in MAN. That is the great issue. Around that, in relation to that, concerning that, everything goes on.

The Dominant Factor of Life

Here, in this book of the Revelation, you can see how this is prominent and dominant. In the first chapter, we have seen the presentation of the Man living, the living Man, the Man of the new creation, the Son of Man, as He is there called, who announces concerning Himself: "I am... the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." That governs all that will follow.

We come to chapter 4, and here the great factor, nearest to the throne, the very centre and heart of the universe, is that which is symbolized in the four cherubim, or "living ones". ("Beasts", in the Authorised Version, and "creatures", in the Revised Version, are misleading. It is simply "living ones", or "living things".) Here, right at the heart of things, next to the throne, is a symbolic embodiment of LIFE, and the ascendant feature of that fourfold symbolism is MAN. We see elsewhere in the Scriptures how, with the cherubim, the man feature dominates the whole.

Passing into chapter 5, we find the creation brought into view in this symbolic representation. The whole creation -- the lion, the ox, the eagle, the man -- creation fourfold is represented there, in a LIVING state. Here it is the whole question of redemption, the redemption of the creation. You will notice that it is again summed up in the matter of LIFE: the whole creation redeemed unto life, found now through redemption in a state of life, in virtue of the work of the Lamb slain.

And later, as the book begins to come to its end and to sum things up, we are introduced to the tree of life, with its universal benefit; and then the "river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1), and everything living where the river of life comes. And the last glorious sound and voice in the book of the Revelation is: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come... And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely" (22:17).

So we see: the first thing in Genesis -- life; the last thing in Revelation -- life. That is a very brief and imperfect summary, in order to indicate how dominating is this matter of life.

"I am He that Liveth"

Let us for a minute go back to the beginning of this book of the Revelation -- because it is the summation of history from beginning to end -- and look at the language used here by the Son of man. "I am... he that liveth", "the Living one" (Rev. 1:17,19). That is a discriminating statement. It quite obviously suggests that He is unique. If I were to say to you, "I am alive!", you would reply, "And so am I! You are not so very different from me!" Ah, but, you see, when the Lord Jesus here makes this announcement, no one can say in the same way, "I am alive." As the beginning, as the first and the last, as the firstborn of the dead, as the representation of God's thought, He stands alone. "I am he that liveth". He is evidently distinguished by a life not elsewhere possessed. "In him was life", says the same writer (John 1:4). "I am he that liveth." How much is contained in that word "liveth"! If you want to see the content of that word as used by John -- what this life means, what its potency is, its tremendous effectiveness, its rich potentialities -- you should go right through the book of the Revelation. This life gets right to the very throne of the universe and is there in the place of government.

"I am he that liveth; ...I became dead." What is the significance of that? Oh, wonder! -- it is this. "When I accepted, yielded to, went into death -- when I 'became dead' -- I did so in order that I might take on, as a wrestler, a boxer, a fighter takes on an opponent, the full force of death, and enter into a mighty conflict with death. It was not just that I passively died, that I was crucified here, but I deliberately BECAME DEAD." In the other words of John: "No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself... This commandment received I from my Father" (John 10:18). "I laid down My life. Deliberately, consciously, knowing exactly what I was doing, with full intelligence and meaning, I became dead, in order to take up this mighty, terrible enemy, to take him on and to rend him, to break his power and subject him entirely to Myself."

"I became dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages." This is a life which will never see death again; this is a life which has no death ending; this is a life which will never, never again come under the power of death. "I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and I have the keys" (the symbols of authority) "of death and of Hades."

"The Firstborn Among Many Brethren"

Well, if that were all, that would be something -- that would be a great deal for us: for all that is truly for us, on our behalf -- not on His own behalf, but on ours -- and all that is gathered into Him for us to possess through faith. But then we come to the next phase, a further phase, of this matter. For He as the new creation Man is not alone. He is "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18), "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). He is the Head of a Body, and so now what has been true in His case has to be made true -- not theoretically and doctrinally, but actually true -- in the whole of this new creation man, collectively and corporately. That is what lies behind these messages to the seven churches. In effect it amounts to this: "Through faith in Me, through faith in the meaning of My death and resurrection, you become possessors of My life -- of that very life which in Me has overcome death. I gave you that life, eternal life, and you, possessing that life, have been subjected, like Me, to the ordeal of testing, the testing out of that life as to its quality, its potency. What has happened to you? What has happened to the testimony of that life in you?"

Well, we find that in the majority of the churches, as representing the whole history of the church, the greater part has not lost its life, but has allowed its life, in differing measures, to succumb to the power, the onslaught of death. It has not been proved, through the faith and the attitude and the stand taken, to be what it is. The testimony of Jesus IS this, but the testimony, in terms of life absolutely, unreservedly triumphant over death, has been in measure lost. For various reasons, on differing grounds, the life has not been made to manifest itself in its mighty qualities of holiness and purity and in its tremendous power and energy.

The risen Christ is saying: "You have been put to the test in the presence of death, as I was." Not, of course, in the sense of redemption, atonement; that does not apply to us. There were other aspects of the meaning of the cross, but its innermost meaning was this, that He met the full force and range of spiritual death in this universe and destroyed it, in Himself -- a Man for man. "Now", He says, "I pass on that life to you, and with it I pass on the testimony, My testimony -- 'the testimony of Jesus'. You are in this world, placed in this world, not guarded, kept, from the assaults of spiritual death, but subjected to it in numerous, almost countless, forms and ways. This force of death is allowed still to remain and to assail you -- whether openly or secretly, manifestly or hiddenly. In every conceivable way, and many inconceivable ways, this one thing is at work, this power of death, and you are there to prove that I became dead and am alive for evermore, that I destroyed death and am henceforth alive in the power of an indissoluble, eternally deathless, life."

The Certainty of the Ultimate Triumph of Life

As we know, the churches, and the church which they represented, largely failed. But then suddenly we leave the failure of earth conditions, all that is going on down here, and the voice calls us up higher. "Come up hither, and I will show thee...", and in the Spirit we are caught right away from the earth. We see a throne; and, immediately encircling the throne, in touch with the throne, we find these living ones -- a representation in the presence of God of life absolutely regnant, triumphant; life reigning. "throne" is the

great word here -- a throne, and thrones -- and that which pre-eminently characterizes them is life. The throne is exercising its great authority and dominion in terms of life, because there is a Lamb there who has abolished death and is alive for evermore.

Because God has that testimony right there in the throne, in His very presence, there is going to be an ultimate triumph, an ultimate glorious triumph. The churches may fail in part, the individuals that make up the churches or the church may lose their testimony, may stumble along the way, may go down before death again and again, but the end of the story is a tree of life and a river of water of life. It is life absolutely triumphant at the end, because it is secured in Him who is the beginning.

Eternal Life the Occasion of Satanic Opposition

What is the value of this? To begin with, it says to us that this life, this eternal life that we have received, is the very occasion of all that we experience of satanic opposition. For it is the saints, it is believers, who know so much more of this than anyone else. All that we are allowed to undergo of opposition, of suffering, of knowing spiritual death -- what is the explanation of it all? Physical death, of course, is universal; but this spiritual hostility in terms of death, to kill you, to kill your testimony, to destroy your note of triumph, to do anything that covers, hides, beclouds or eclipses this life -- the very life itself is the occasion of it.

Do understand that, if you had not got the life, the enemy would not be after you as he is. Our possessing the life is the continuation of the testimony of Jesus that He has conquered death, and it is that testimony that the enemy is after. We compose the church, and it is the church which is His Body, which is the vessel of the testimony of Jesus -- and the testimony of Jesus is that He became dead and is alive for evermore, and all that that means -- it is the church which is the object of terrible hatred, animosity, vindictiveness, on the part of the enemy, to destroy that testimony of Jesus. This is no new truth to many, but may the Lord bring it home to us both as a challenge and as an explanation. It is not that the enemy does not like you or me. It is that life -- the regnancy of that life, and the testimony of its mighty victory -- that he is after. It is the life which is the occasion of all the trouble, the explanation of all our strange experiences.

But then, blessed be God, the message here is also that, though we may fail many times and grievously, our testimony may for a time become eclipsed, we may know the overflowing of death in spirit or in other ways, the end is a picture of complete deliverance from death, the end is the full triumph of life. And that is not something said as of a future thing. Thank God, many have enough proof of this in their spiritual history. There are many who know that they have more than once seemed to "touch bottom". Again and again, in our spiritual history, we have got down so low that it seemed no recovery was possible. We have just come to despair, come to the place of giving it all up: it seems so impossible and hopeless; we are such a failure. But the Lord has given us an experience of life again and again. We have come up, have we not? We have just been amazed that it was ever possible that we should have come up again, but we have. It was not that we struggled out of the mire, it was not that by some tremendous effort of ours we got ourselves clear. No, no effort was possible, but we had the life, and although for the time being we seemed to be crushed, almost buried, and we did not feel that we had any divine life at all, nevertheless the Lord has borne with us and has done this very thing.

Oh, yes, we are responsible very often. If we had been more watchful, if we had stood our ground, if we had laid hold of the Lord more continually, very often it need not have been. But there are experiences

where, in spite of ourselves, we seem to be encompassed and overwhelmed by death. In spite of all our laying hold of the Lord, we have gone into an experience of terrible darkness. Everything seems to have gone. And then, apart from ourselves -- save that, in some weak, very weak way, we have still hoped in the Lord, still looked to the Lord, still feebly trusted the Lord -- the Lord has sovereignly come in and we have been raised up again. And as we look back upon it (apart from those times when it was due to some sin on our part), we look back upon many experiences where we cannot say definitely that it was because of this or that -- it just happened, it came on us, we found ourselves in an awful conflict with death -- and we have to say: Evidently the Lord was allowing us to know death in order that we might know life again, that this thing should not be something we talk about, a theory of ours, a teaching, but that it should become really living in us, that we should be the living embodiment of the truth.

The Embodiment of Life in a Man

This brings us to the very point that we are trying to stress all through: that this testimony has got to be IN man, it has got to be THE MAN HIMSELF -- not merely something to teach. As truly as it was in His case, the Son of man, so it has to be made in our case, as in the Son of man. This matter of life has got to be expressed in man-terms, it has to be a man-way of expression and manifestation. Life is assailed; yet marvellously, and often strangely beyond our understanding and comprehension, causing us to be wonders to ourselves, resurrection has taken place. It will be like that to the end. Many people have the idea that if they have eternal life they are going to have a glorious time. It is all going to be so wonderful -- life, wonderful life, life more abundant -- they are going to be on top always. No, you are not! The very fact that you have that life will mean that it will be tested to the utmost, in order that it may be proved in people, in human beings, that there is One who has conquered death and all that death means.

And it does not stay there. In the beginning, when man sinned and the sentence of death was passed upon him through his sin -- "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die", and he did die, for death is severance of relationship with God -- then the creation was placed under the curse because of the man. But here you have the Man -- the new Man, the new-creation Man -- perfected, established; and then the whole creation is seen to come into redemption of life, as Paul says in Romans 8. But before the creation can come into its life, the sons of life have got to be manifested, and this life has got to be made manifest in them as triumphant over death.

When you come into the realm of resurrection life, of divine fullness, the river flows and flows and flows. We are not just containers given a supply for the day -- we are channels. It begins somewhere else high up in the Man in the glory, and comes flowing down as a river, and it will go on and on. This is life! The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of life. When we really touch the Lord Jesus, we touch life, and if He is present in His Body, the church, in even a small representation, there ought to be a testimony of life. It is not a matter of so much light and truth, but of life, growing life.

The rest of the book of the Revelation, from chapter 6 onwards, deals with all that stands in the way of life. The church having been brought to account on the question of this testimony of life in Christ, the Lord then takes up the judgment of this world, as to that which gives ground for death, and deals with it and progressively passes it out, until it is all judged and put away and a new creation in life is established.

Now, if you have lost heart, take heart! If you have come near to giving up, do not give up yet. HE is not dead yet! Your Lord has gone up, and there is still a testimony up there governing. The throne, that throne, governs, and the end is going to be life. Let us stand for it -- you stand for it! Do not accept death. The

enemy is all the time wanting us to accept death, he is holding it out to us in one form or another and wanting us to take it, whereas the Word says, "Take life!", "Lay hold on life!"

The Lord help us, so that He may have in us an unbroken testimony right to the end.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-man-who-is-alive/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net