

# The Spiritual & Natural Man - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the transformation from the natural to the spiritual man through the significance of baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 48:37

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:49, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 6:4-6

**Topics:** "Natural Man"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the transformative power of encountering Jesus Christ. He highlights the distinction between the natural man and the spiritual man, stating that true Christians should experience a significant change in their lives. The speaker refers to the Apostle Paul's writings in the first letter to the Corinthians, where he discusses the process of transformation from the natural to the spiritual. The sermon also mentions the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers and discerning right from wrong. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to reflect on their own transformation and relationship with Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

We have got far enough to make it unnecessary for me to let you know what it is we are concerned with at this time, other than to remind you again of the second chapter of the first chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, the first and the second chapter really, of that letter in which for very necessary purposes and very good reasons, because of the situation at Corinth, the Apostle begins his letter with this great discrimination between two kinds of people, that Christians can be what he terms the natural man, the natural man and the spiritual man, and that in his second letter he says just quite precisely that a transformation is supposed to be going on in Christians, passing from the one type called the natural to the other called the spiritual. Now, this morning we were occupied with the birth of the Lord Jesus, because we had said that Christ is Christianity, and Christianity is only truly known and understood by a spiritual knowledge of Christ. And so we went to his birth in order to see one thing in particular, that it was not natural.

It was not natural. That's where of course all the intellectuals have stumbled, and all the rationalists have fallen down. It was not natural.

It was decidedly spiritual, for the archangel said to Mary, the Holy Spirit shall overshadow you, therefore that which is born shall be the Son of God. But you shall call his name Jesus, severely and strictly the earthly human name. The two link together, God and man, in this person.

That's a spiritual man, or a spiritual woman. In the inception, that is, in the very beginning, the linking of God with man, man with God. So we saw that by this supernatural, I'm just going to say unnatural, but this above and other than the natural birth of Jesus, a new type, kind of humanity came into this world.

And as I have said, forgive repetitions, because it is very necessary for these things to make an impression on us, that we see something, recognize. So I repeat, that the whole of the New Testament, following the birth of the Lord Jesus, has to do with the transition, transformation and conformity from the one, the natural, to the other, the spiritual. We understand that our new birth is not a natural thing.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is by no means a natural thing, even at its beginning. And this difference, everyone, every true Christian, and I'm sure it is true of all here this afternoon, this little company, everyone ought to be able to say quite, quite truly, quite definitely, I'm not the same as I was. I am different.

I am different. There is that now about me which has made me a different kind of person. Well, that's a simple way of putting it, isn't it? But that's, you see, going right to the heart of it, the beginning.

Something has happened to me that I'm not the same kind of person. And it is upon that beginning, that beginning, that change, that difference, that distinction and discrimination that all the Christian life is built on, for its development and progress and what here the Apostle calls being transformed into the same image. Well, that's largely repetition.

We are passing now this afternoon into the next thing which we come to with the Lord Jesus. Of course, it is the acknowledged and admitted regret of everybody that we know so little about the thirty years of his life in Nazareth. We know practically nothing about those thirty years.

There's one break at the age of twelve which is very, very enlightening. It's an open window into the thirty years. But for reasons which we'll not stay to explore just now, the Holy Spirit has not found it in the scheme of things to give us a detailed account of his life during those first thirty years.

You leave it and leave it with the Holy Spirit's wisdom in doing that and accept it and come to where he does definitely take up the story and the history that is at the baptism of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus. What we have to see is that it is just a part of this one inclusive thing, this new order of humanity which has come in with the Lord Jesus.

A great deal, of course, about baptism. That's not my subject. But the baptism of the Lord Jesus is something that we must really understand.

I very often feel that we Christians and people who are baptized do lack an understanding of this matter of baptism, which is necessary to make this great difference as a really fundamental thing to this tremendous difference in the kind of people. The kind of people. Baptism is so often taken now as something that you have to do if you're going to obey the scriptures and if you're going to imitate the Lord Jesus.

If you don't like that word, you prefer to say follow the Lord Jesus, but it's imitating the Lord Jesus, you know, very often. He did it and he commanded it, therefore we do it in obedience to a command. We may

have a little more light upon the matter as to what it means, but as I have watched this in my own life and in the life of so many, it has come to me more and more strongly that even yet there's light which we need upon this matter.

I was baptized when I knew very little indeed about the meaning of baptism. I was told that it was a command, I was told that it was the way the Lord went, and the Lord wanted us to follow him in this way, and so we sang follow, follow Jesus, for I will follow on and so on as we went into the water. And it was external very largely like that, you see, an act of obedience, an act of devotion, we meant it, but with how little understanding.

And ever since we've been learning the meaning of this. Now when we come to the baptism of the Lord Jesus, we have the standard thing. We do have the standard baptism.

We have the meaning of it to the full in his own case. It had to be like that. Not that I'm going to try to give you the full meaning in Christ, but I do want to put my finger upon one or two aspects or details which constitute this whole matter of the absolute difference in the human type which baptism is intended to set forth, and his baptism as basic, the basic baptism for all baptisms.

First of all then, let us remind ourselves of the universal nature of his baptism. How can I put it most impressively? Do we, have we who have gone this way, and do Christians who accept this matter of baptism, realize that we were all drowned. Drowned in the depth of the flood.

People who have been drowned. Now you think that's language or that's impressive or whatever it is, and what your thought about it is, your feeling when I say it like that. But I'm keeping the scripture.

Do you know what Peter says in his letter about this? He's speaking about the flood. The flood that then was. You read the account of the flood.

What happened? Well all, all but eight people were drowned, literally drowned. The flood overwhelmed them. They lost their lives.

They went down into the depths, and they were drowned corpses after the flood. And it was universal for that world, with the exception of these eight, the world was a drowned world. Peter says that.

The light figure, he says, speaking of the flood, the light figure well unto baptism, does now save earth. The universal engulfment of the world, of the race, is represented by the baptism of the Lord Jesus. It is not necessary, I think, at this point for me to remind you that baptism is a figure of the cross, being united with Christ in his death and his burial.

You know that. The whole of the following New Testament says so, explicitly, positively. You say then, why, if this represents the cross, why was it necessary for him to go to the cross afterwards? Why a space of three and a half years between his baptism and his crucifixion? And the answer is quite simple, quite clear.

At this point of his baptism, Jesus stepped out of what was a private life into a public life. Out from an unofficial into an official life. Out from a waiting probationary period under the eye of God into the open on his world mission.

At this point, he took up the mission for which he had come. It's official. It's public.

It's before heaven, earth and hell. And therefore, because of all those features and factors, he must put the cross in figure and type right there as the basis of his mission, of his teaching, of his working, of his living, and of all that went to make up the fulfillment of his world mission. He must put the cross there.

All the elements of the cross are found in his baptism. These are statements which, of course, I cannot say to analyze. But it's there, and the point is that he's putting all the meaning of the cross right at the very commencement of his official public life and mission, and basing it upon the cross.

We understand. Now, that being the case, his baptism does foreshadow the meaning of the cross, and it is universal. John the Baptist, when Jesus came to be baptized, pointed and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, or rightly, who beareth the sin of the world.

Bearth the sin of the world. It's universal. He is, in this sense and aspect, related to the universality of humanity.

God's inclusiveness of all men in this death, in this death, in this drowning, because of sin. The sin. Not sure how many people being baptized are aware of that, of that, that they are supposed to have been drowned people, who, mark you, in the relationship which they held to the human race before that point, in that relationship, they have ceased to exist, ceased to have a being.

Before the flood, in Noah's time, all those, all those who succumbed to the flood, had no more existence in relation to that race, that people, after the flood. That's something finished. This is tremendously searching, isn't it? No, this is what the New Testament teaches.

We have got to grasp about the Lord Jesus, that in his death, he has carried us all the way under the flood of God's judgment, because of sin. And when we take this position and this step, we are supposed, in our, in the reality of our spiritual life, not to exist any longer in that old natural type. So, the trouble at Corinth was, they hadn't grasped the significance of what really they had come into through baptism, or they had forgotten it, or let it go, and had gotten back to the other side of the flood.

There are some of the strongest things in the New Testament are said in this connection, read in this very letter, about the people who came out of Egypt and perished in the wilderness, although they had been baptized, it says, into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, perished in the wilderness. Because they had not maintained the ground which that baptism signified. And you go into the letter to the Hebrews, and you know the almost terrifying things that are said there about going back upon these foundation things, going back upon them, it's impossible to restore them again to repentance, they crucify to themselves afresh.

Well, that's a dark side of things, we're not going to get upon it, but what I am emphasizing is this, that on the one side of the baptism of the Lord Jesus, there is this universal engulfment of all, the children of Adam, in an act of God which winds up that race so far as his acceptance is concerned. The race goes on, but it's not accepted. It's out of court with God, is this race.

That is what the baptism and cross of the Lord Jesus meant. Well, that's one thing. But notice, there is this discriminatory factor in baptism.

It's a dividing thing. Eight people went through the flood, survived, but they were not on dry land all the time, that is, they were in the flood, if the flood was not in them, they were in it. They passed through it.

We are told that they were, they survived and came out on the other side because of faith, through faith, through faith, through faith. And so, there is this discrimination between the natural and the spiritual, that those who survive are believers, and believing in the New Testament is not a mental thing. It is not a mental ascent, saying, well, yes, I accept that truth.

I acknowledge that to be truth. That is not believing in the New Testament. Believing is something more drastic than that.

In the Glasgow Billy Graham campaign, I was sitting on the platform immediately behind Billy Graham. And it was a big platform, and it had to take a good deal of responsibility. And Billy Graham just said this, when he spoke about believing, according to the meaning of the New Testament, the word believing means this, he said, I came along that passage, I went up these steps, and I walked onto this platform, and in so doing, I believed that this platform would bear me.

I committed myself to it. If it had collapsed, you know what would have happened. If I had stood back and said, I'm not so sure that they've constructed that platform sufficiently well to bear my weight, I wouldn't have come onto it.

But I believed, I believed that this platform could carry me. And seeming through all these meetings, there was strength enough in it, so I just simply committed myself in faith. That's the meaning of the New Testament word believing on the Lord Jesus.

It's not mental, just, it's an act of complete committal. If I sink, I sink, but I shan't sink, I believe I shall survive. That's believing.

That's very simple, isn't it? But you see, that is just it. Those that went into the ark believed that that ark could see them through what was coming. Would carry them through the flood, through faith.

They survived. It is discriminatory in this way, and it discriminates between a race that does not commit itself and those who do. A different order, entirely a different order of being.

The baptism declares that you and I, all who go this way, have recognized that we have been drowned in the great deluge of God's judgment on sin, universal. There is not one, no, not one, says the apostle, not one righteous. It's universal.

All have sinned. So the spiritual people are those who survive the judgment, come out on the other side by recognition of how utter this division is, how complete, how pleasant this division is. I can make this show a much more impressive if I like to do so, if I chose to do so, or if you've seen drowned people, you know what I'm talking about.

I've seen people as I have taken out of the water after being drowned, being there long enough, you know what I'm talking about. There's not much hope there. No, they've ceased to exist as organic parts of a certain order of creation.

We are of a new order entirely, of men and women, of people, of mankind, of humanity, a new order in Christ. There is in Christ a new creation, and put circles around that word new, new, new, new. What is this newness? Think about that.

It is discriminatory, divides between two races. It's the baptism of the Lord Jesus. And that is why in figure and in type he went to the Jordan and demanded that as representing the human race in the inclusive universal terms of his title, Son of Man.

Inclusive title. That is why going there he demanded this, because he knew how great, how tremendous his cross was going to be in this one thing, a different type of humanity to be born, to be born. And you can see how that from that moment of his baptism coming up, he is so different from other men.

It is occupied minds for these 2,000 years trying to define that something about him, that something about him which was inscrutable that leads us, you see, into this new phase. But before we can go on, we have to come to the thing so immediately associated with his baptism. No gap between coming up out of the water, immediately the heavens woke, and the spirit lighted upon him in the form of a dove, the anointing, concerning which he began his ministry in Nazareth, immediately with the spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me.

These are two parts of a whole. Death, the resurrection, and the anointing. And what does the anointing mean? And I have said, Mark you, these are two parts of one thing.

I don't believe that the anointing should be delayed till some time after either conversion or baptism. I don't think that is a thing that lies somewhere further on along the road. In his case, in his case, it was immediate.

And it's intended to be that this new order to which those belong who have recognized the meaning of his baptism and have stepped out onto it themselves and committed. This new order is characterized by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It's a Holy Spirit order.

It is the new birth, that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. The spiritual man emerges from the baptism, or should we rightly understand. I believe that is why the apostles always, immediately after they had baptized people, prayed for them that they might receive the spirit.

They put the two things together. But this is a new order, and this new order is characteristic of the Holy Spirit. When we've said that, we haven't said enough.

One's explaining. Well, if you move back again to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, you get some idea of what the anointing means, at any rate, basically, if not entirely. In that chapter where the apostle is speaking about the spiritual man, the spiritual man, which the Christian is supposed to be, intended and meant to be, if rightly apprehending what has happened, the meaning of this baptism, spiritual man is characterized by certain quite elementary things.

The anointing just means that that spiritual man has capacities that no other human order has. This is searching, isn't it? This is testing. Now the natural man receiveth not.

The things are the spirit of God. Neither can he know them, and his reaction to them is their foolishness. What does that spell? What does that declare? The natural man is without certain essential capacities as to the things of God.

The things of God. Well, we've come into the things of God, haven't we? The realm of the things of God. Hotter realm, inexhaustible, inexhaustible, take us all eternity to learn the things of God that our whole Christian life should be.

Inexhaustible, take us all eternity to learn the things of God that our whole Christian life should be. Just this learning the things of God all the way along, learning the things of God, the things of the spirit of God. The natural man hasn't the capacity for doing so.

He cannot know, he cannot receive. His attitude is one of skepticism, cynicism, all these things that you Christians think so much of. They're nonsense.

They're just nonsense to the natural man. And he acts accordingly if the Corinthians are the example. It's an awful, awful thing for the Corinthian Christians, isn't it, to say this? But he that is spiritual.

And you'll notice in the different translations that the translators have really come up against the difficulty here. They found themselves floundering here to translate into English the real meaning and sense of the original word. He that is spiritual judges all things, discerneth all things, examineth all things.

These are words that the translators have introduced either into the text or into the margin, revised or authorized or margin. They're juggling with a word. What does it mean? What is the meaning? Well, if they're beaten, I am, of course.

It's not for me to say I can do better. But what the apostle is saying is the natural man hasn't the capacity for grasping grasping the meaning and the sense, the implication of the things of the spirit. But the spiritual man has capacity, has capacity for this.

By his new birth and by the anointing, a capacity is produced which no other species of humanity possesses, he or she possesses. Capacity may be in its infancy to begin with and have to grow and grow until, well, we end this life however long and then even then come to say, well, wasn't I a fool? Why didn't I see that before? I think that's, we can't talk like that, use that language in heaven, I suppose. They don't use the language like that in heaven.

But I'm quite sure that with all our study and all our experience, when we get to heaven, we say, why didn't I see that? Really, didn't I see that? I think probably we'll be spending all eternity with this remarkable, wonderful sense of, oh, I have, was blind. This and this and this. If only I could have seen it.

However, there's a beginning here of this thing, a capacity for spiritual things, spiritual perception, spiritual discernment, spiritual understanding, spiritual apprehension, a capacity for it. That's the work of the anointing. It is the work of the anointing.

And, oh, dear friends, what a lot it does mean. What a lot it does mean. I remember so well when I came up against this truth many years ago.

I'll say this to try and help out what I'm wrestling with this afternoon. I came to the realization of this fact, that what I was really after, really after, both as for my own knowledge and understanding and value and good and ability and for my ministry, what I was really after could never possibly be realized along the line of any natural capacity. I read, oh how I read, and studied.

I can see myself now, before I was married, in my own lodgings, alone with my book set up before me while I had my meal. And I remember studying such things as Edward Caird's History of Religion in the Greek Philosophers, a volume like a family Bible, and having to get up from my meal and take a walk around the block to get my head steady, dizzy with it all. And that's the sort of thing I was doing, trying to find out God, trying to find something for my own spiritual good.

And at last I had to say, I'm not getting there. I'm not after. I'm not finding what I'm after.

I'm not finding what I'm after. It's eluding me. And then of course I turned to the scripture, and I came to 1 Corinthians 2. A natural man cannot, cannot, cannot, with all his effort, he cannot, he doesn't get through, there's a barrier.

But oh, what a tremendous thing it was to me when at that time I saw the Holy Spirit is for us, is given, and the Holy Spirit has all the capacity for knowing his own things, and everything about God, the deep things of God. And if only I had the Holy Spirit, all that ever God wants me to know, I can know. I tell you from that day to this, there has been a real, real boon in my life.

For life, for ministry, the Holy Spirit, the anointing, the capacity for seeing what no eye has seen, the heart can see, what has never entered into the heart of man. That's what's here. The Holy Spirit is the capacity for all that ever God wants where we are concerned.

Jesus being anointed, went out into his ministry, and two sides. What the apostle says here about the spiritual man who, who discerneth, discerneth, perceiveth, examineth, whatever word you're going to choose, all things, he, he examineth all things, but he is examined of nobody. I don't like the word examined, it doesn't help us.

What the apostle is saying is, this anointed kind of humanity is inscrutable to the world. The world just does not understand him. And the temptation of a young Christian is to try and make the world understand him, without being born again.

And it's so difficult, isn't it, young Christians, so difficult, have to take this position, they don't understand me, but I must accept it. They don't, they don't know, and I must just accept that, and not try by argument and discussion to make them know until they're born again. My business is to bring them face to face with their necessity to be born again.

That's Nicodemus, isn't it? How the Lord tackles the situation of a very intellectual man. I'm not going to argue with you, I'm not coming down onto your level, try and explain things to you. No, we're in two different worlds, you're of one order, and I'm of another.

In order to come where I am, know what I know, you've got to come the same way, be born from above. This is all perhaps too simple for you Christians, but what I am getting at is this, the anointing of Jesus, the anointing of Jesus was his capacity for his life mission. His capacity for his life mission, and capacity in his case, meant apprehending the mind of the Father.

You see, it was the spirit of sonship that had come upon him. Heaven and the Father declared through the rent heaven, this is my beloved son, the attestation of sonship sealed by the Holy Spirit in his spirit, sonship. And from that time onward, by the anointing on the basis of sonship, he could understand his Father, he could hear his Father, he knew his Father.

It was a relationship of Father and Son, Son and Father in communion. And everything that he said, and everything that he did, and everywhere that he went, everything through the next three and a half years until he went away, was on this basis of the close relatedness of a new order, another heavenly order, the Father, Son, Son, Father relationship. We have only the beginnings of that kind of knowledge where we have it.

If we are really born anew from above, and anointed of the Holy Spirit, we do have the beginnings of that. I'm quite sure you know very well when the Holy Spirit in you agrees or disagrees with anything that you are said to do, or have said. Don't you? Don't you? You have many ways of putting it.

I don't feel comfortable about that. Some people have the language, I haven't any life about that. Well, however you put it, you know what you mean.

We know what we mean. The Holy Spirit within does not corroborate, agree, and go with us. But we are to learn a lot of lessons in that way.

Or he does. With life and peace he bears witness, that's all right. It's a wonderful education, is the education of the anointing.

But it's the difference between two kinds of people, those who are living in the natural, and trying to get through on everything by natural abilities and resources and capacities, and finding deadlock and impasse, go up a cul-de-sac and have to come back again because there's no way through, all the time, the natural, and the Christian, and the others, are walking in the Spirit. Spiritual people who have at least this capacity of knowing, or having the beginnings of spiritual knowledge. Well, I think the afternoon time has gone for that, and we'll just leave it there.

How helpful it is to you, I don't know, but I'm sure that there's something that we have yet to move into, at least more fully, of this matter of the different order of people to which we as Christians belong, who are the Christ people, are taking their character, and taking their capacities from Christ. That is true Christianity. May be true in ever-growing measure, in the case of each one of us.

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