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The Living God (1961)

by T. Austin-Sparks

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One of the supreme distinguishing titles by which God is known in the Bible is "The Living God". This title not only distinguishes Him in a general way from the dead gods of the heathen, indeed it does, but it relates Him *in a practical way* to many aspects of human life. There are gods many in this world; philosophic, aesthetic, artistic, idealistic, deistic, etc., which, if they have any value at all, never - at best - reach beyond the psychological, that is, the auto-suggestive effect.

We have only to look at the varied context of the occurrence of the title - The Living God - to see the uniqueness, the difference, and the livingness of the God who is our God, and is the only wise and true God (John 17:3; Rom. 16:27).

1. HE IS THE GOD WHO SPEAKS (Deut. 5:26)

"For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire...?"

This is the most outstanding feature of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Everywhere, in almost every book - the exceptions are *very few* - the God of the Bible is a God who speaks. Indeed, it is largely a record of what God has actually said - "...by divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). Supremely, comprehensively, and finally God has spoken in His Son, and in His Son again and again by His Spirit to this very time, God is known to speak as personally and intimately as any one human person could speak to another, and with greater effect. This God speaks livingly and powerfully, and unnumbered men and women can testify to the fact that He has spoken - actually spoken - to them.

2. HE IS THE GOD WHO GIVES EVIDENCE OF HIS PRESENCE (Joshua 3:10-17).

"And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you..."

In this piece of history, the evidence of the presence of the Living God was His making a dry passage in and through a river inundating all its banks, and a great host of many thousands of people quietly marching through its deep bed at such a time with dry feet. Moreover, five strong and terrible nations were successively and irresistibly subdued and destroyed, not by the natural or trained superiority of this people, but by the presence and power of the Living God enabling them. This is history. But how many impossible situations have been negotiated by the power of God in the lives of His people and the experience of His Church *in all ages* because they trusted in the Living God!

3. HE IS THE GOD WHO CONTROLS THE FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE (Jeremiah 10:10).

"But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God... at His wrath the earth trembleth..."

Here, the context relates to cosmic and terrestrial upheavals and preservations attributed to the Living God, or to the voice of the Living God. God speaks in phenomena. God can be known in tempests and in the quelling of them, whether they be in nature, in nations, or in personal human affairs and experiences. What a record could be written by many, such as missionaries in wild and dangerous places, of the hand of God in both raising 'stormy winds' and quelling them in the interests of His Name and testimony!

4. HE IS THE GOD WHO DELIVERS HIS SERVANTS AT HIS WILL (Daniel 6:26).

"I make a decree, that in all my dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and stedfast for ever..."

This was said, as is seen, when God had closed the mouths of the lions and delivered Daniel from them right in their den.

This Living God is the God who delivers when He chooses, and miraculously so. The people of God have known not a few dens of lions, both in number and variety, and their history is strewn with miracles of deliverance. There are many books written of these deliverances, and the facts are unassailable. "He is the living God, and stedfast for ever", and although that was said by a very fickle and inconsistent king, he at least spoke the truth then.

5. HE IS THE GOD WHO SAVES THEM THAT BELIEVE (1 Timothy 4:10).

"For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

Here the Living God is attested as such by His power and grace to save men, and to save all men, if they will. A library would be required to house the evidence here. While we ourselves live, a vast number of souls are the living proof of this truth, and the final picture is of "a great multitude which no man can number". These have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). They are the evidence that - unto salvation - He is "the Living God".

6. HE IS THE GOD OF RECOMPENSE (Hebrews 10:30,31).

"For we know Him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord

shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

We conclude on a sombre note. The Living God will vindicate His own people and bring to judgment their enemies and persecutors. History again has a long and vivid record of both of these aspects. There have been more than a few who have found that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God". The Bible has many instances of this, but even recent history holds very conspicuous evidences.

It may be a long-term working of recompense in many connections because, on the one side, faith and patience have to be perfected, and on the other side, God is very long-suffering and not willing that any should perish. His 'vengeance' must have an unquestioned ground.

So, both for the comfort of the Lord's own, and for the warning of those who work contrary to Him, we say:

'He cannot fail, for He is God.

He cannot fail, He's pledged His word.

He cannot fail, He'll see us through.

'Tis God with whom we have to do.'

He is the LIVING GOD!