

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

April 2008

Living Supernaturally As the Church of Christ



Christian living is supernatural or it is nothing. The church is made of "living stones ... built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5, RSV). "Spiritual" is the opposite of merely "natural." It means being inhabited and guided and empowered by the supernatural Spirit of Christ.

Paul distinguished between a "natural person" and a "spiritual person" (1 Corinthians 2:14-15). He called those who act like natural persons "mere humans" (1 Corinthians 3:4). Christians are not mere humans. They are "spiritual humans." God resides in them (1 Corinthians 6:19). They have new, supernatural life flowing through them. They live with power that is not merely their own.

There is no way we can be the church without this experience. The call to deny ourselves for the sake of love, to return good for evil, to forgive seventy times seven, to endure one another, and to keep on doing this with joy for fifty or sixty or eighty years is not possible to the natural human. It is only possible supernaturally.

To be the church we must live on God. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, RSV). It takes supernatural power to endure patiently in the kind of love that defines us as the church of Christ. So

Paul prays that we might be "strengthened with all power according to the might of [God's] glory for all endurance and patience with joy" (Colossians 1:11, author's translation). It takes power that accords with divine glory to endure joyfully and patiently in love until we die.

So we must seek to live on God. We must seek to experience supernatural power daily in order to be the church. One of the crucial steps in this direction is to be fully persuaded of this. This means we need to meditate on passages of Scripture that stress the supernatural reality of the Christian life. Consider the following.

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"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

John 15:5 KJV

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Every life devoted to godliness will suffer persecution and affliction. "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12, RSV). "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). How is this suffering to be endured? Paul answers: "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, ...but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8, RSV). In God's power, not ours. Christian living is supernatural.

The Christian life is not only punctuated with persecutions and afflictions, it is a life of joyful and meaningful labor in the cause of Christ. "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Where shall we get the energy to persevere and not grow weary in this labor? Again Paul answers: "For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me" (Colossians 1:29, RSV). We exert ourselves and toil, but the energy comes from God when we trust in him and seek his glory. It is a supernatural toil.

Time would fail to unpack all the texts where this is Paul's concern. "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, RSV). "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13, RSV). "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians 6:10, RSV). "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9, RSV). "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10, RSV). "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed" (Romans 15:18, RSV).

Once we are persuaded that normal Christian living is supernatural, if we desire to be Christians, we will be on our knees in obedience to Jesus' command to pray "that you may have strength!" (Luke 21:36).

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The Purpose Statement of American Decency Association - What We Believe:

The American Decency Association is an overtly Christian organization directed by a biblical worldview. We believe that God's desire for His people is that they be not conformed to this world, rather, transformed by the renewing of their minds unto Christ. Being a light in a darkened world does not imply a selfish retreat from that world, but an activism within it proceeding from love for God and our neighbor.

Every life devoted to godliness will suffer persecution and affliction. "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12, RSV). "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). How is this suffering to be endured? Paul answers: "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, ...but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8, RSV). In God's power, not ours. Christian living is supernatural.

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