

The Supernatural Body

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in the supernatural body, receiving the physical life of Christ in our mortal bodies, and anticipating the resurrection in our material form.

Scripture: John 11:25, Romans 8:11

Topics: "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit", "Supernatural Life"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the concept of the supernatural body, asserting that the Holy Spirit not only promises future resurrection but also empowers believers in their mortal bodies now. He contrasts the belief that redemption is solely a future event with the understanding that Christians can experience a foretaste of divine life and strength in the present. Simpson illustrates this through biblical examples, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, who all exemplified reliance on God's supernatural provision. He encourages believers to claim the present blessings of resurrection life, rather than postponing them to the future, and to recognize the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper experience of divine life that enhances both personal strength and the effectiveness of service in the world.

Transcript

"If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you." (Rom. 8: 11.)

The redemption of the body is an accepted truth of Christianity. The chief difference among Christians is with respect to the extent of its application. Many believe that this part of our redemption is only to be realized at the close of the present age in the translation and resurrection at the coming of our Lord. Others of us have been led to believe that we anticipate in the present life to a certain extent the power of our future resurrection, and that we have a foretaste of this part of our salvation here even as we have a foretaste of heaven.

This, we believe, is what is meant by the use of the word "earnest" or "first fruits" applied in several instances in relation to the work of the Holy Ghost in our bodies. An earnest is a first installment, a pledge in kind of the thing which is afterward to be given in full. As the earnest of our spiritual future He gives us in our spirit the foretaste of the heavenly glory, but as the earnest of the resurrection of the body He gives us the physical life of Christ in our mortal body and anticipates in our material form now, as far as we are able to receive it, that which we shall enjoy in boundless fullness in the body of glory in the ages to come.

An earnest is the very same in kind but less in degree than that of which it is the pledge. Therefore if the Holy Ghost is to be the earnest of our physical resurrection it must be through some physical operation in our being now.

We believe that we shall have a supernatural body in the heavenly world, but we also believe that we begin to receive the elements of that body now, if not its form at least its vital element and the hidden power which is to animate it then.

We are always putting forward God's blessings to some future time instead of accepting them now. We are like poor Martha who, when our Lord had said to her, "Your brother shall rise again," timidly pushed it forward to the distant future and answered, "I know that he shall rise again . . . at the last day." Jesus gently reproved her error and answered quickly, "I am the resurrection, and the life." It was as if He had said, Martha, do not postpone the blessing your faith would claim but take Me for it now. The resurrection when it comes will come through Me and where I am there is the power of the resurrection. I am speaking to you in the present tense; I have for you a present blessing. Then He proceeded to expand the thought in every direction that we have been explaining. "He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

He seems clearly to teach us that believing in Him we receive the life which passes through death to us, or, rather rises above it and lives on forever tunnelling the dark of the tomb and passing on in unbroken, uninterrupted being into the larger life beyond.

This then is the truth which we desire to unfold from the Holy Scriptures, that we may possess even now, through the Lord Jesus Christ, a measure of supernatural life and strength in our mortal frame sufficient to enable us for all the pressures and duties of this life and sustain us until our life work is done.

We see some foreshadows of this great truth in the story of the fall. In consequence of sin man was instantly debarred from the tree of life which was the symbol and source of his physical immortality. But while this supply of perpetual physical life was withdrawn it was not forever precluded, for God erected at the gate of Eden a glorious medium of approach to His presence described as the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. This symbolical figure of the cherubim and the sword we do not believe are emblems of divine judgment so much as of divine mercy. The Hebrew verb here is Shekinah, literally He shekinahed the cherubim and flaming sword. We know that the Shekinah and the cherubim as they reappear in the later symbols of the tabernacle were tokens of the divine mercy and Jehovah's covenant with Israel, and we cannot but think that the fiery sword was some supernatural light, perhaps the Shekinah itself, which indicated the presence of God and the blessing on the worship.

That which we have associated with terror and repulsion was the first gate of mercy open for fallen man and the sense in which it was to keep the way of the tree of life might more properly be expressed by using the word guard. It was to guard the way and to guide the way to the tree of life. From that tree sinful man was debarred on the natural plane, but he could now approach it on the higher plane of grace. His physical life was forfeited by his fall, but it could be won back again by the great redemption of which that cherubic sign was the glorious symbol.

We get back our lost strength now, not through nature but through the supernatural, not through the toil of Eden or the efforts of the flesh but through the Lord Jesus Christ, our redeeming Lord and our living Head.

Coming down the line of divine revelation we next meet with a distinct recognition of the supernatural life of God in our bodies in the story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. Here the strength of nature was allowed to fail before the seed of promise could be born. It was something like a foreshadowing of the birth of the Son of God which was not in a natural but in a supernatural way. Isaac, the seed of promise and the first type of the coming One, could not come into life until the natural life of his parents had withered and by a directly supernatural touch God had given new life even to their bodies.

This is what Paul meant in his description of Abraham's faith. We are told that he considered his body as good as dead without being discouraged, for he was strong in faith giving glory to God and looking directly to Him, by supernatural means, to make good that for which nature had no resources. Could there be a more signal and emphatic object lesson of the fact that God would lift the hearts of His people to a divine source even for the strength of our mortal frame? Could there be a more striking foreshadowing of the supernatural body which Christ has been preparing for the members of His mystical body?

The story of Israel was a significant illustration of the supernatural physical life which God can give His children. All through the wilderness they were physically sustained by directly divine agencies. The very symbol of their life was a burning bush that burned and was not consumed. This great sign which preceded Israel's call out of Egypt embodied in itself the idea of tremendous pressure overcome by infinite strength and divine protection. This was the story of the chosen people all the way through.

Indeed, Moses himself in reviewing it tells us that the very object of God in leading them as He did along that pilgrim way was to show them and teach them that man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It was an illustration of a supernatural physical life while walking with God and drawing life directly from Him.

As this was true of the nation as a whole so it was also true of the most prominent individuals in the nation. Therefore we see that Moses' own life was distinctly supernatural. He began his great work at the age of eighty when most men would be writing their will and preparing for their funeral, and at the age of one hundred and twenty, we are told that his eye was not dimmed nor his natural force abated but he calmly climbed a lofty mountain and in his full maturity stepped into the chariot of God and passed in victorious strength and voluntary surrender into the glory.

The life of Caleb was also supernatural. Surely he had enough to break his heart and wear out his life in the striving of a gainsaying people who kept him nearly half a century out of the promised land. But, when an old man of eighty-five, we behold him standing before Joshua and asking as the choicest privilege of his life the opportunity of leading an assault upon the stronghold of the Canaanites, the old citadel of Hebron, and declaring, "I wholly followed the Lord my God. . . . And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive. . . . As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." He attributed his whole physical strength to the blessing of God and the blessed results of obedience and fidelity.

But God has given us a still more distinct object lesson of this great principle of the supernatural body in the wonderful story of Samson. The one purpose of his life seems to have been to illustrate the connection between physical strength and rightness with God. When true to his Nazarite vow of separation and filled with the Spirit of God he was a giant of unequaled muscular might. But when he broke his sacred vow of separation and lost the Holy Ghost he became as weak as tow and sank helpless in the hands of his foes. Probably he did not lose an ounce of weight but he lost the secret of his strength, the life of the Holy

Ghost. It is not the size of a wire that constitutes its strength. A little hair wire filled with an electric current is mightier than one of the cedars of Lebanon. It is the fluid that sweeps through it that makes it strong.

And so the supernatural life in which God is leading those who are willing to learn and to follow is not the result of physical culture but is the unfolding of the divine life and the anticipation of the unseen forces of the world to come.

The same great principle is illustrated in the story of David who constantly recognized his military prowess, his courage and the strength of his victorious arm as due to the touch of God. He was clothed with a supernatural body and he could say of Jehovah, "He teaches my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms." "Who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; . . . who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

But as we turn to the New Testament the very first view we obtain of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Teacher and Example, is in this very connection. We see Him standing in the wilderness going through His first conflict with Satan and living out for us that great object lesson of our own life. The first of these temptations was a physical one, the temptation to secure His bodily strength from human sources. And how did he meet it? -- by the very passage we have already quoted from Deuteronomy, by the very lesson he had learned from the story of Israel in the wilderness. The devil was trying to persuade him that He must get out of this strait by some means and that He must resort to earthly measures of relief. He replied by telling Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." He did not deny the place of the human and the earthly in supporting the life of man, but He did protest against being dependent upon the human and the earthly.

Bread has its true place but it is not "bread alone." There is something more for a man to say than "I must live." The true thing to say is, "I must meet God in my trial, I must learn my lesson, I must accomplish the purpose for which He has brought me here, and the purpose for which He has brought me here is to show that He is all sufficient even for my body. I must stand there until this purpose is fulfilled. I must throw myself upon Him until He gives me relief and deliverance."

And so He refused the devil's prescription and waited in reliance upon the life that comes from the mouth of God. In a little while we see the angels ministering to Him. First the Father ministered the divine life and then the angels ministered the natural bread.

It is very significant that in this quotation Christ does not say the Son of Man but He says "man." It is very plain that He means the lesson for all His disciples. It is for us as well as Him.

It is true there is the danger of extremes. All truth has its possibility of extravagance. There is a reckless disregard of the natural. God does not mean to teach us that. There is a place for food and sleep but we have not learned to enjoy that rightly until we have also learned that God can strengthen us when need be even without them.

Beloved, is not our trouble this, that in the hour of testing we are more anxious to be delivered than to meet God's thought and glorify God's grace. What Christ was concerned for in that conflict was not so much to get bread as to show the all-sufficiency of God and stand obedient to His Father's will, trusting implicitly His Father's love.

Our blessed Lord has taught us this deep spiritual truth in one of His most profound discourses and left for our guidance through the Christian age the great principle on which He Himself built His own life and overcame the assault of the enemy in His body. That discourse was so marked in its teachings, so deep and heart-searching in its scope that most of His disciples were unable to accept it and, indeed, with the exception of the twelve the whole of His Galilean flock grew tired of such deep teaching and utterly deserted Him on account of it. "This is a hard saying," they replied, "who can hear it?"

That sermon was the wonderful discourse given about the living Bread in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. The one thought that pervades it is that we are to draw our lives both spiritually and physically directly from the Lord Jesus even as He draws His strength from the Father. Its one keynote is the profound verse, "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me."

By eating Him He explains explicitly that He means taking His flesh and blood as the source of life and strength, and He tells us that this will give us an eternal life, life that will flow on even until the resurrection, for He adds in connection with it, that He will raise him up at the last day. As the babe lives upon its mother's life, the believer lives on Jesus' and the profound words become more true than any language can express, "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

But this profound truth receives its deepest, largest unfolding in the later teachings of the Holy Ghost through the ministry and example of the Apostle Paul. It runs like a golden pipe from the heavenly fountain through all his teachings and experience.

With great vividness he unfolds the doctrine of our union with Jesus Christ, our living Head. "We are members," he says, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The Lord is for our body and the body is for the Lord. Our bodies are the members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit that dwells within us quickens our mortal bodies. This certainly cannot mean our future body as it shall be raised from the tomb. It is the "death doomed body" as Rotherham happily translates it, the body in which the Spirit is now dwelling, liable to death, but not yet dead; and divinely equipped, exhilarated, renewed by the indwelling life of the Holy Ghost.

In the fourth chapter of Second Corinthians he unfolds this doctrine of the supernatural body more fully than anywhere else. There he tells us that his natural life is constantly exposed to death in order that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his mortal flesh.

This life of Jesus is something more distinct from and far transcending his own natural life. When they dragged him through the streets of Lystra and hurled him on the pavements as one dead the life of Paul was about gone, but it was then that the "life also of Jesus" came to his relief and as the disciples stood around him in prayer and his own sinking heart was lifted up to heaven, there came a touch of divine quickening and he rose upon his feet and went forth again to his work on the borrowed strength of heaven.

So he went through life, not strong in himself, but saying that we have the "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." And so, quoting from the fine translation of Rotherham, he adds, "On every side we are pressed hard but not hemmed in; without a way but not without a by-way; pursued but not abandoned; thrown down but not destroyed, at all times the putting to death of Jesus in the body bearing about; that the life also of Jesus in our body might be made manifest."

Space and time will not permit us to follow at greater length this sublime thought. We will only add one other illustration of it in his reference to the thorn in the flesh which is perplexing so many inquirers and expounders.

Now the principle we have been unfolding supplies the very solution of this difficult case. Supposing for the time that Paul's thorn was a physical disease, which we gravely doubt, and was not literally removed in answer to his prayer, still the fact would remain that something was given to Paul in exchange which was better for him than if it had been removed, something in kind which really supplied the place of its removal. He calls it the power of Christ. It was not the comfort and consolation of Christ's love. It was not patience to bear it, but it was actually power through which he was enabled to do more than if the thorn had been taken away, so that he could say a little later, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12: 12.) He actually affirmed while this thorn was still remaining "when I am weak, then am I strong."

Assuming then that it was a physical infirmity and that it was not taken away, yet it was perfectly certain that something was given to him that constituted real strength, ample strength, superior strength to even his own perfect soundness and health.

This is the very thing of which we have been speaking. It was an invisible life. It was a supernatural source of vitality. It was not a bigger wire, but a stronger current through the wire. It was the life of Jesus instead of the life of Paul.

Now this will explain many a perplexing experience with divine healing. Your actual physical condition is not always taken away, but if you would only keep looking to Jesus you would find an inner strength given to you, a supernatural spring in the depths of your being, a vigor and vitality that made you superior to the drain upon you of that depressing symptom and carried you in spite of it with winged feet through all the pressures of your physical life.

God is thus trying to teach us to live in the unseen realm, to walk upon the waters of the spiritual sphere, to tread the seeming void by faith and find a rock beneath.

And so he sums up his sublime argument for the supernatural body in the fourth chapter of Second Corinthians by that passage which apart from this principle would be obscure, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." As this whole discussion is about the physical life he must mean the natural and material sources of our spiritual strength failing but the hidden and divine source within our being renewed and strengthened. But he tells us that this is only while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. It is only while we dwell on the experience of faith in the immaterial realm, in the unseen region where God lives and we live with Him, having meat to eat that the world knows not of, appropriating our very life from the heart of the risen Son of God.

In conclusion this great truth of the supernatural body is an intensely practical and present truth for answering unbelief. It is an answer to the unbelief of the age. Professor Tyndale challenged the disciples of Christ to produce an actual physical miracle. No wise man was rash enough to take up that challenge so presumptuously made but God took it up. From that day there have been literally thousands of cases of divine healing as remarkable in many respects as those of the apostolic records.

God wants us today to show the unbelieving world that His presence and power are real on every plane of human life and experience, and although He will not give us signs when we tempt Him by asking for them, yet He will make us signs to the unbelieving world and confirm His Word with signs following if we are faithful to the testimony and claim by faith the fulfillment of His own promise.

The experience of a supernatural body is a blessed auxiliary to the deeper life of the soul. The body is a conducting or a non-conducting medium of the Holy Ghost in His communications to the spirit, according as it is in harmony with God or out of actual touch with Him. Someone has used the phrase "a converted body." There are bodies that are divinely touched and there are others that are as cold and gross as the clods of clay beneath our feet. When God has to pass through the medium of a coarse physical organism to get into the heart there is obviously a distinct hindrance. There is a great difference between taking your dinner on a hot plate or a cold plate; a cold plate chills the best dinner ever served. And so the Holy Spirit wants the medium through which He ministers to our spirit to be itself spiritual. When our whole physical being is permeated with the presence of God and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are in more distinct touch with God's thoughts, influence and suggestions. Our very environment is holy and heavenly and the walls of the city are protected from the incursions of the enemy as well as the citadel itself.

Merely natural health and material and organs have about them an inborn tendency to selfish and even sensual gratification, but when Christ fills our hearts the very desire for unholy things is removed and we are saved from innumerable suggestions of evil that spring from the strong sensuous life of those who have never felt the touch of God in their mortal frame.

Divine healing in its deepest and highest sense saves from a thousand liabilities to self-indulgence and earthliness of thought, feeling and act. Our whole being becomes a well-tuned instrument on which God can play, and we learn to glorify Him in our body which is His while the spirit sympathizes with the divine touch in all the lower realms of nature and every avenue of our being is thrown open to the unfolding presence of God, so that we cannot tell where the body ends and the spirit begins, but "Holiness to the Lord" is written on every fiber of our being.

The experience of this supernatural life greatly enhances our efficiency for service. Not only does it save us from innumerable physical hindrances and sources of selfish misery, murmuring and depression, not merely does it give us increased vigor and ability for arduous service and long endurance, but the quality of the service given by a body that is divinely touched is much higher. The voice that speaks and sings for God has more power in its tone and ministers grace more directly than if we were merely using an instrument of clay. The feet that are divinely touched not only go faster to bear the messages of God, but they accomplish more directly spiritual results. The grip of the hand is different. The grip of the hand communicates something which could never be expressed without this added touch of heaven.

It is not only the divine message and a divine messenger but the very medium through which it goes has been spiritualized and made sacred by being itself steeped in the fountains of heavenly life and power.

Finally the church of God needs especially today a new touch of supernatural power in the confirmation of her testimony to the world and especially to the heathen world.

While, as we have said in a former chapter, this truth is liable to extravagance, yet there is even a greater danger of overlooking it and sinking to the low plane of naturalism and rationalism in giving our testimony to mankind. In every age it ought still to be true, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will. If the Christ of

Christianity is the same yesterday, today and forever the Christianity of Christ ought also to be the same yesterday, today and forever.

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