

The Divine Resource

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Christian life is supernatural, and Christians are called to be something more than human, with knowledge, understanding, and abilities that no one else can have, relying on the strength and power of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:13, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 2 Timothy 2:1, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Christian Identity", "Divine Strength"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the divine resources available to Christians through the example of Timothy, who, despite his weaknesses and the immense responsibilities placed upon him by Paul, is called to rely on God's supernatural strength. Paul does not demand Timothy to be a super-man in his own strength but encourages him to draw from the divine gift and grace provided by God. The sermon highlights that every Christian is equipped with supernatural resources to face life's challenges, underscoring that true strength comes from Christ. Sparks reassures believers that they are called to a higher purpose and can endure hardships through the power of God. Ultimately, he encourages Christians to recognize their unique identity and capabilities in Christ, which surpass human limitations.

Transcript

In thinking about Timothy as himself a symbol of the need, and of God's method of meeting it, we noted, on the one side, the neediness of Timothy - how he is presented in these letters as one in need in every way - and, on the other side, the urge that the Apostle brought to bear upon him, the tremendous responsibility which the Apostle indicated as resting upon him. We noted all the words of exhortation and command, which seemed to make such great demands upon this young man. "O Timothy...", says the Apostle, "I charge thee in the sight of God... and he appeals to him more than once to "Be strong", "Endure hardship as a good soldier", "Give diligence to show thyself approved unto God", and so on. And all this, as we saw, was in the light of the situation which was developing at that time - the terrible, terrible persecution of Christians that was coming about, to which Paul, so soon after writing this last letter, fell a victim - and Timothy knew all about it. It was indeed putting much upon a weak vessel. It was making tremendous demands upon one who, in himself, speaking quite naturally, was not of great account. Even physically he was apparently at a discount, for the Apostle refers to "thine oft infirmities." Evidently Timothy went down under some malady, repeatedly and often.

Well, what did it all amount to? This is the point; we only need to re-emphasize it. Paul was not calling upon Timothy to be more of a man than he was; he was not calling upon him to be a kind of super-man. If we talked to one another like that when we were a bit down under, it would not get us very far. If in our human language we used such expressions as: 'Well now, buck up!' or: 'Now then, none of that, no giving way!' or: 'Remember you are a man, remember you are a responsible person! You ought to behave better than that!' - I do not know how far that would get us. It might make us feel all the worse, thoroughly ashamed of ourselves; such utterly worthless creatures that we wanted to get out of it altogether. And so might Timothy have felt, if this had been what Paul was doing. He might have said, 'Well, Paul evidently does not think much of me; he has got a very poor opinion of me. I am good for nothing - I had better just give it all up.'

But that was not what Paul was doing. It is important to notice this great feature about his letters; we shall probably enlarge upon it in other connections later. Paul was not telling Timothy to be a super-man - for it wanted a super-man to stand up to this situation, to carry this load, to meet these emergencies - or to be more of a man than he was, IN HIMSELF. Paul was indicating to Timothy all the way through that Timothy's very life and work, his ministry and his position of responsibility, rested upon a Divine and supernatural basis. "The gift of God which is in thee..." Paul refers to that more than once in his letters (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). "God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness" (2 Tim. 1:7). Read them through again and note this. The strength that Timothy was to have, the ability that was to be his for doing and for enduring, was a strength and an ability which would not come from any spring in himself. He could be, and Paul was calling upon him to be, a super-man - but not in himself. "Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1). He was really being called upon to be and to do far more than any human person could measure up to; far more than was possible even for the best of men, the strongest and the wisest of men - let alone a Timothy! But the Lord never lays upon us an impossibility. If He charges, if He calls or demands, He provides: His is the strength, His is the wisdom.

Christians are Super-men in Christ

Now, without taking that any further, I bring it to this focal point. Difficult as it may be for you and for me to believe it, especially at times, it is true that in a sense, and a very real sense, every Christian is a super-man or a super-woman. Every Christian is supposed to be something that no other person in this world, even at their best, can be. Every Christian is supposed to have knowledge and understanding of that which no other person at their wisest can know. Every Christian is supposed to do what no one outside of Christ can possibly do; and every Christian is supposed to go through what no one else can go through, in the way in which a Christian is supposed to go through it. There are imposed upon Christians demands which are super-human. There are given to Christians resources which are super-natural. The Christian life is super-natural, from start to finish.

It is very important for young Christians to recognise this, and for all of us to call it to mind. When the whole story is told, when we know as we are known, when we see all things clearly and no longer through the glass darkly, the one thought that will, I am sure, overwhelm us will be this: 'It took the infinite power of Almighty God to do that, and I didn't know it!' Our salvation demanded that. Salvation is not the simple little thing that I am afraid many people think it is, or make it out to be. However simple may be the turning-point, there are vast immensities of Divine power lying behind the rebirth of any one soul. And to get that soul right through and bring it at last into His presence, glorified, calls for the "exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward". Thank God, that power is available!

Now is that not true, dear Christian? You have been on the way long enough. You know quite well that you could not have got through; you may have said, 'It is no good, I give it all up', and contemplated another course, looked for a way out - the situation was so difficult, so trying. Indeed, it may even have been worse: perhaps you actually broke down, and went all to pieces. Yet, in spite of everything, in spite of yourself, in spite of the Devil and all his forces, you are here! How do you account for it? Well, there is something to account for it that is not in us, and in that sense we have surmounted a tremendous force of opposition and antagonism to our getting through to a glorious end. I have often said that, when we are there, we shall look at one another and say: 'Well, brother, we are here! You did not expect to be, did you? - but you are here!' Yes, even Timothy will be there. With all that he had to face, and all that was put upon him, he could yet "be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." That lifts us above the level of any human possibility.

Let us remember that we are, as Christians, supposed to be something other than, and more wonderful than, any other people in this world, in every way. That wonder may be secret and hidden, not manifest to the world, but it is there. May the Lord help us to lay hold upon that which He has presented to us - for it is miraculous. "Lay hold" says Paul, "on eternal life".

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