Abundant Living

What Is The Abundant Life?

“I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The word “abundant” is actually a word that belongs to the sea. It comes from a Latin word and means something like a wave overflowing. The abundant life is a life that overflows, a life that is exuberant and luxurious.

Jesus’ word is a present promise. The critics of Christianity have been verbose through the centuries to say that Christians are not of much earthly value because they have all of their hope set on heaven. Jesus said, “I will give My followers something right here and now.”

In Matthew 19:29, Jesus said, “And every one who hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (KJV). How much is a hundredfold? A hundredfold would be 10,000 per cent. No bank and no banker would ever think of giving that kind of interest. Imagine putting a dollar in the bank with a promise that before you die you will get ten thousand dollars. If you put ten dollars in, you will get a hundred thousand. If you put a hundred dollars in the bank, you will be guaranteed a million dollars before you die. Jesus is promising “many times as much” (NASV).

The One who possesses the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalms 50:10), the One who owns the heavens and the earth (2 Chronicles 6:26; Psalms 24:1) said, “I will give you in the world to come everlasting life, and I will give you right now a hundredfold or 10,000 per cent.”

The quality that is so needed and the quality that is so absent from many lives is abundance. Christ did not promise us an abundance of things; He did promise an abundant life.

Some would say that the secret of an abundant life is the person you marry. The Scripture says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing” (Proverbs 18:22). More than likely, no person on this earth will add to or detract as much from your happiness as the person you marry. More than likely, no person will have more bearing on whether or not you go to heaven when you die than the person you marry. But your mate alone is not the abundant life.

Others would insist that the abundant life is children. To have healthy, happy children who turn out well is a supreme privilege in life. Twice the Bible says, “A wise son makes a father glad” (Proverbs 10:1; 15:20).

Others would say that the secret of living an abundant life is to be free from pain and chronic dis-
A walk through the corridors of any major hospital will cause you to shout with joy that you are not sick. The psalmist said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases” (Psalms 103:1-3). If you feel good physically, you are blessed beyond the power of anyone to express.

Others would say that “the abundant life is the abundance of things.” They could take you through their houses and show you more things than your mind could absorb. As they go from room to room, they say, “This is where I got this, and this is how much this cost.” A story lies behind all of the items they own. But Jesus said, “…for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

I would not discount the value of a good wife or of good children. I am thankful that we have strong, healthy bodies, and I am glad that we have enough possessions to get through life comfortably, but one can have all of those blessings and have a miserable life. You can be without those blessings, all of them, and have an abundant life.

The apostle Paul had the abundant life. Paul had no wife to whom he could whisper the secrets and sorrows of his life. He had no children. Paul did not have good health. He lived his life with a thorn in his flesh. Paul had no possessions. He said, “I have suffered the loss of all things” (Philippians 3:8). When he died, so far as we know, he owned nothing in this world except a few parchments and a cloak that he begged Timothy to bring to him. But he said, “I have received everything in full.” He had the abundant life.

What is the abundant life? This life has four traits.

**A Father**

I have an abundant life because I have a Father who will never forsake me.

Like some of you, I grew up without a father, and I did not like it. It upset me that other boys, practically all of them, had fathers and I did not. If you have a father, you ought to be glad. It is a wonderful blessing to have an earthly father.

Teen-ager, you may go through a time in your life when your father seems out of touch with the common people, but you will be amazed by the time you are twenty-two at how bright and intelligent your father is. A time may come when you would give anything in the world to pick up a telephone and say, “Hello, Dad. I’m having a problem and would like you to tell me what you think about it.” It is a wonderful blessing to have a father on earth.

I have a Father in heaven—a Father who watches every step I take, who sees me in the night, who is with me when I get up in the morning, a Father who hears every word I speak, a Father in heaven. The apostle Paul said, “I bow my knees before the Father” (Ephesians 3:14). We are taught to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name” (Matthew 6:9). John wrote, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). I have a Father in heaven who will never forsake me.

**A Family**

In the abundant life, I have a family who will not disown me. So long as I desire the Father, the family desires me.

Paul spoke of this family: “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (Ephesians 3:14). God has a family. Part of the family has already gone into Paradise, and part of the family is still in this world. I am part of a worldwide, heavenly family of people.

As a minister, I sometimes meet people only briefly and then am separated from them. They are a part of the family, though, and I have a nearness to them.

I have gotten off the plane thousands of miles away from my home, walked among people of a different culture, color, nationality, and language; and they have rushed up to me, put their arms around my shoulders, and said, “Brother.” I have a family.

All of us need a family. If you are alone, if you are one of the sixty-five million Ameri-
cans who live alone, you have a family, the family of God. Times will come in your life when it will be a great encouragement to know that you are part of the family of God.

Several years ago a plane was hijacked. It was a flight from Miami, Florida, to New York. The hijacker immediately turned the plane around and started toward Havana, Cuba. Amazingly, all through that hijacking people kept laughing or smiling. The hijacker with his gun was running up and down the aisle shouting, and people were laughing. Even when they landed and went into some serious negotiations, people kept laughing. One man on board was not laughing because he knew what was happening was wrong. That was Allen Funt of “Candid Camera.” When people saw Allen Funt on the airplane and saw the hijacking, they were ready for someone to jump out at any moment and say, “This is a joke. Smile. You’re on ‘Candid Camera.’” The fact is, it was a real hijacking. But just to know that he was with them brought happiness to that occasion whether it should have or not.

Times will come when to have a family, to have people call your name in prayer, to have people encourage you, to have people support you, will be more precious than gold.

Forgiveness

I have a forgiveness that knows no bounds (Ephesians 1:7). I have preached long enough to frail, feeble folk, and I have been a frail, feeble person long enough to know that all of us need forgiveness. We read, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

We have memories floating around in our minds that we wish we did not have, memories of sins—wrong words, bad mistakes—but the good news of the gospel is that we can be forgiven.

Throughout the Bible, in the old and new covenants, the story is the same, people sinned greatly and were forgiven wonderfully. We read of Jacob, the displanter, who became Israel, the prince. We read of David, the adulterer, who became David, the man of God. We read of Saul, the opponent, who became Paul, the proponent of the gospel.

Matthew 1 contains the genealogy of Christ. It does not pretend to give all the names of those who had a part in bringing Jesus into the world. It does give the names of forty-two men and four women. Why are just four women given with forty-two men? While no one knows for sure, most of us believe the reason is to emphasize that everybody can be forgiven.

All four women who were mentioned had sordid pasts. Tamar was a harlot. We see Bathsheba. You know about her and her adultery. Rahab is in the list. She is called in the Bible, “Rahab the harlot” (James 2:25). The fourth woman mentioned was Ruth. While Ruth is pictured in a good light, she came out of the most adulterous, pagan people on the earth, the Moabites. All four women are mentioned in Matthew 1 as though to say to us, “Look at these women: a harlot, an adulterer, a harlot, and a Moabite woman.” All of them were so wondrously forgiven that they even had a part in bringing Christ into the world.

I have a forgiveness. The good news of the gospel is that no matter what you have done, forgiveness can be received.

A terrible mistake is hard to unravel. An oil spill which occurred in Alaska will not be unraveled until the end of the century. One lawyer says continual lawsuits will take place over it. It was one of the worst oil spills in the history of America—eleven million gallons of oil were flushed into Prince William’s Sound in Alaska. Over a thousand miles of beaches have been destroyed. The whole sea otter population has been destroyed. The entire fishing industry has been destroyed. It seems that the reason it happened was that one man got drunk. The captain boarded the ship drunk and turned the controls over to an unlicensed third mate who could not even make his way through a ten-mile wide channel on a clear, placid day.

You might do something that is just as astronomical, but here is the good news of the gospel: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Have you ever murdered someone? David did, yet he will be in heaven. Have you ever
committed adultery? David did that, too, and he will be in heaven. Have you ever lied about an innocent person? David did that, too, and he will be in heaven. John said, “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake” (1 John 2:12).

A Future

Jesus has given me a future—a future that knows no end.

Many people in this country would give everything they have just to have a future. They have about them the smell of death. But try as you may, sooner or later, all of us will have that sentence upon us. Some little disease, too tiny to be seen with the naked eye, enters your bloodstream, and you go to your grave. A heart attack in the night, a blood clot, or an accident on the highway, and life is over. When it comes, we need to be able to have a future that knows no end. Try as we may, we cannot avoid death.

About fifty years ago on a Fourth of July, Lou Gehrig made his speech at Yankee Stadium. He was dying at thirty-six years of age. He stood before the crowd in that stadium and spoke these words that will be remembered as long as baseball is played: “I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

When a time comes for us when it looks as if we have no future, the good news of the gospel is that we do have a future that is forever. We are told, “There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day” (2 Timothy 4:8). We have a future that will be everlasting, free from pain and trouble, free from the turbulence, turmoil, cancer, and canker of this earth—a future with God.

Christians do not have a death wish. We ought not go through life wishing we could immediately go into the next world. We ought to live as long as we can and do all the good that we can. But Christians do have a future, a future that has been secured by the blood of the Lamb of God and that is offered to us by the amazing grace of God.

Sir Walter Raleigh fell into disfavor with his king. Though he was one of England’s greatest writers and poets, he was beheaded in the Tower of London. On the night before he was beheaded in 1618, he wrote a poem that was later found in his Bible in his cell. These are the words of his poem:

Here in the dark and silent grave
When we have wandered all our ways,
Is shut up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

“From this earth, this grave, this dust, my God shall raise me up, I trust” is the Christian’s conviction. Paul said, “The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Conclusion

What does it mean to have the abundant life? Jesus said He will give us a life that has a Father who will never leave us, a life that has a family of fellow Christians, a life that has forgiveness of all of our sins, and a life that has an everlasting future in heaven.

If you would like that abundant life, I am in no position to offer it to you. I can have it, but I cannot give it away. Only Jesus can give it. If you are a believer in Christ, you can this day turn from your sins in penitence, and with love in your heart and appreciation in your soul, submit to the grace of God in baptism. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Christ has offered it. Will you receive it?