



On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

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All Scripture presented is from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted. Comments and notations by this author within Scripture text will appear in brackets.

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The Abundant Life

Life is full of obstacles and always will be. Life is not about a rose garden, life is about overcoming. Overcoming is what we need to do, you can never expect life to be “smooth sailing.”

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There will always be rough patches and rough roads. There will always be challenges.

But, when you rise to meet a challenge, you develop a work ethic, an ethos of life so to speak.

When a challenge arises, you look for a solution. You don't give up, you don't give in.

John 10:10

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life [*zoe*], and that they might have it more abundantly.

The above verse has been misunderstood by some and consequently the greatness of its declaration overlooked.

People have taken this statement by the Lord Jesus Christ to mean that their lives should be free from problems and materially speaking rich and full.

This is not to say that a Christian's life couldn't be as such. Clearly

God has taken care of His people throughout the ages. Abraham for instance was not simply rich, he was VERY rich. However, one should note that there is a difference between being rich and being wealthy.

Abraham was wealthy because he lived what Jesus Christ was talking about. A man could have every material advantage possible and still not be wealthy. Rich maybe, but not wealthy.

A wealthy person not only has their needs met but they also enjoy a true and vital spiritual relationship with God.

This is understood and explained by the Greek word translated as *life* in John 10:10.

Zoe means the absolute fullness of a life which is active, vigorous and devoted to God. Much, much more than simple existence. One could say life with a capital L. I. F. E. Life in all its effulgence, in all its fullness.

There are other words in Koine Greek that define life. Such words as *Bios* and *Psuche*. We could say that *Bios*, *Psuche*, and *Zoe* are like body, soul, and spirit.

The body is our earthly vessel with the soul being our breath life and the spirit our real relationship with the Father.

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Some people however, have taken the phrase “more abundantly” to mean material gain and a life void of trouble. That is to say, a utopian existence free from persecution.

The Greek word *bios* is the root of our English word biology, which is the study of living organisms. It is quite clear that those to whom our Lord was speaking had life, that is to say *bios*, breath life.

Jesus wasn’t talking about breath life, he was speaking of something that wasn’t there before, i.e., *zoe*.

It is this *zoe* kind of life that is abundant. Your life is not abundant due to the acquisition of material goods. It is abundant when you have that true and vital spiritual relationship with God. Only then can your life be truly abundant.

You can have material gain in the extreme and still be most miserable and unhappy. Or, you can have little in the way of possessions and be blessed beyond measure. But, only if you have that spiritual connection to the Father that the Lord Jesus Christ made available will your life be abundant.

Consider the following:

Luke 12:15

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The Lord further elaborated as recorded in the balance of this passage by virtue of a parable.

Luke 12:16-21

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The way to true wealth is in being rich toward God.

As for being challenged in life, I am reminded of how we once thought of problems. We viewed problems not as such but as opportunities. Opportunities to trust God, not to enjoy or revel in the problem. To see Him work and bring to pass deliverance.

This is what the abundant life is about. It’s about having a true and vital relationship with Almighty God. It’s the practical realization

of being His child, of being under His loving care.

The fullness of such a reality was not available prior to the life, and completed works of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His accomplishments, not ours, have made this remarkable abundant life a reality.

He lived perfectly in full harmony and accordance with the Word of God and Mosaic Law. He fulfilled perfectly every jot and tittle and then gave his life a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

God then raised him from the dead providing for all mankind proof that those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will also, at the proper day and time, be raised or made immortal.

This is the life that’s abundant. It’s not a new car, truck, home or job. It’s the promise of eternity!

As appealing as material gain may seem, you can take none of it with you when you die.

I Timothy 6:7-8

For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

If we are healthy, have food in our bellies, clothes on our backs and a roof over our heads we have substantial cause for celebration.

Of course God can meet your every need which includes the material. But what happens when things get rough? What happens when life isn't going so smoothly, as surely it will? This is what constitutes the greater reality.

Be advised, there is no automatic protection for the Christian. We know that Ephesians speaks of the Armor of God, but it is clear that WE must put it on. That action is our obligation, not His.

Those who think that simply being a Christian guarantees them safety will find out the hard way that reality does not bear this out. Sadly, this leads some to blame God and lose faith.

II Timothy 3:1

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

God is speaking to Timothy by way of Paul's ministry and in an extended way to every one who has ever read this verse.

Perilous times! Sound serious, as well it should.

Verses 2-5

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Sounds a lot like our time, doesn't it?

This could have been written today, it's that relevant. Wouldn't you agree?

Apparently God ranks "disobedient to parents" right up there with unthankful and unholy. That should grab our attention.

Ephesians 6:2-3

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

God takes this VERY seriously as should we.

Children who are chronically disobedient to parents might well become lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, unthankful and unholy.

This will no doubt lead to the possibility of being without natural affection, truce breaking false accusing finger pointers who exercise no control over their own behavior. Who behave fiercely while despising good people, they themselves being traitorous and reckless, high minded lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Parents take heed. Children of this sort have the capacity to change the culture of any nation and that not for the better but for the worse.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

A common theme found in western culture these days is to surrender self-control. It is put forth as being an exciting way to have fun. This dear reader, is a preposterous lie. There is nothing to be had from incontinence other than negative consequence and heart ache.

Being the master of one's own tabernacle is the best pursuit and has great promise of personal reward. The truth is, you cannot even recreate without some measure of discipline.

This is why you should never relinquish your perception.

Inebriation never profited anyone.

Proverbs 23:29-32

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.

At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

When your perception is altered you are beginning to lose control.

It matters not what they say, reality is not perception. Reality is reality, how you perceive it might be something else, But that doesn't change reality. Have you ever heard of hallucination?

Having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof . . . means it looks real good but it isn't. How you dress doesn't change who you are. Going to a church doesn't make you a Christian. Your obedience to God and His Word does.

There are many today who claim to be something they are not. The Bible tells us, "from such turn away."

II Timothy 3:10-12

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Paul suffered persecutions and afflictions. Let's face it, if anyone would have been "automatically protected" it would have been him. And yet, he wasn't. He, like the rest of us, Christian or not, was subject to the effects of living in this world.

Furthermore, it is clearly stated that "all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Where then did we ever get the idea that becoming a Christian guarantees us a life free from negative afflictions? Where ever did we get the idea that the abundant life of which Jesus spoke was one free from turmoil?

If that's what we think, then it would behoove us to change our thinking and discover the real meaning and benefit of having a life which is more than abundant.

What we have seen from God's Word thus far is the value of a true and vital relationship with our Heavenly Father. Nothing else measures up or will satisfy our yearnings.

The good news is, Jesus Christ has come that we might have such a relationship with God that is truly abundant. Might I say, above and beyond any material pluralities we might contemplate. Or, for that matter, conceive of.

Ephesians 3:20,21

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen

What constitutes exceeding abundance? Let's start with the utterly unwarranted or deserved gift of salvation. This is something

we could never have gained on our own. Not individually and not collectively. Salvation was completely out of our reach.

That is until . . .

Ephesians 2:1-9

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Even when we were dead in sins, *hath quickened us together with Christ*, (by grace ye are saved;)

And *hath raised us up together*, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

We were all dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world orchestrated by the prince of the power of the air. We were children of wrath. We deserved judgement, not grace. That dear reader exceeds abundance.

And as if that weren't enough, God placed us in His family. He made us heirs along with our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:15-17

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Honestly, prior to being saved, did you ever (even in your wildest dreams) think you would be a child of Almighty God and joint heir with Christ? Of course not, none of us did.

The reality of what we've been given is certainly exceeding abundantly above anything we

could have imagined, much less asked for.

We have all asked God for material things, some essential some not. Some of us are bold, as we should be, in our approach to Him. Some of us are not. But who among us, prior to being saved, would have ever dreamed to ask for what has been freely given?

Consider again, where we were and what God did for us:

Romans 5:6-11

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

I dare say, those who are ungodly and sinners, the very enemies of God, have no reasonable

expectations for anything. And yet, God being rich in mercy and grace loves in spite of all that. That is abundant! And having access to this (and so much more) is what the abundant life is all about. With or without material substance, we have the privilege of a loving relationship with our God.

Philippians 4:12,13

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Paul had learned the secret to radiant living. He took his focus off his situation and focused instead on God and His Son.

If things were going well for Paul, he moved on with God. If things were going poorly for Paul he moved on with God.

The circumstances of Paul's life did not dictate nor undermine his relationship with God. He would not permit it.

Many miss the greater truth of this passage. Some think it means they can set a goal and attain it through the strength of Christ. You often see athletes celebrating that concept. While it is true that the strength of Christ in you is invaluable and applicable in all situations, the greater reality is that of moving on in pursuit of godliness regardless of circumstance.

For instance; there are some who pursue godliness with great vigor when life is smooth. Others, and I'm talking about Christian believers, get distracted when things are good and spend less time with fellowship and the Word.

Still others, often referred to as crisis Christians, run to God only when things are bad. In similar situations there are those who will blame God for their situation and return to the very things they were delivered from.

This passage shows how neither good times nor bad changed Paul's behavior or prevented him from pursuing his calling. Why? He understood the how of it all.

He did not measure his spirituality by the success or failure he experienced in the material world. He knew that his victory in any given situation was solely due to the strength God infused him with in his inner man. Being a "have" or a "have not" is not how we measure the abundant life. No, not at all.

We should also not be led to think that the lack of persecution determines our spiritual success.

Matthew 5:10-12

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in

heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Obviously, you can be persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

Acts 14:19-22

And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Tribulation is a squeezing, mental pressure at its worst.

I Thessalonians 3:1-4

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

The truth is, we all suffer mental pressure [tribulation]. Nobody in this life is free from it. However, with God's help we can stand and withstand while continuing to live the more abundant life.

II Corinthians 1:3-10

Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

But we had the sentence of death [the answer to death, i.e., the resurrection] in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*;

I would like to cover one final point regarding the abundant life and situations that we might feel affect us. Namely, recognizing the difference between wrath and tribulation.

This is important as many well meaning Christians are led to think wrath and tribulation are one and the same. They are not.

Note the wonderful way God by way of Paul's ministry addresses the saints of Thessalonica.

I Thessalonians 1:3-ff

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye

know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

The last verse of this passage is quite clear in that Jesus delivers us from the coming wrath.

Simply put, wrath is God's righteous judgement. Jesus delivers us from this because in him we are already judged righteous in the eyes of God.

I Thessalonians 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Not wrath but rather salvation and that by way of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now that's abundant!

Tribulation however, is quite different. Tribulation is mental pressure, something we all must deal with from time to time.

Once again the record from Thessalonians is where Paul makes this very clear.

I Thessalonians 3:4

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

The Thessalonians knew it, Paul told them it would be so. Therefore, we should know it.

That being said, nothing can ever stand in the way of or prevent us from the abundant life. This life is most evident in God's love for us and ours for Him.

Romans 8:38, 39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul was persuaded, I am persuaded, how about you?
