

Abundant Life

By Arnaldo Pedrosa

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With the COVID-19 pandemic and Delta variant, we are living through a world crisis, the likes of which has not been seen in a very long time. The vast extent of the crisis and the effect it is having are inherently producing a great deal of fear, insecurity, and apprehension across the world. Mental stress and distress have ensued as the result of social isolation, unsettled work and family schedules, cabin fever and economic instability.

It is particularly difficult to work out what will happen next, with the rules and restrictions constantly changing. This can make people feel helpless, as if we are no longer in control of our own lives. Add to this mix the actions and reactions of other individuals and society as a whole, and it is hard to know how long this state of things will go on and what's in store for the future.

However, in truth, there is a great deal that we can control, even during these trying times. Readdressing our life's priorities will help us deal with this situation.

A viral quote seen on social media reads:

"For people in business, 2020 is really just a year for staying alive. Don't even talk about your dreams or plans. Just make sure you stay alive. If you can stay alive, then you would have made a profit already."

It's not certain who originated that quote, but the truth is, being alive during this pandemic is truly a great blessing.

The Source of Life

Jesus says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Indeed, our Saviour came to give abundant life, not death. The qualities of abundant life are these.

Joy

The joy that comes from God is not reliant on circumstances. Jesus gives us joy in times of trouble and turmoil. Joy marks our lives as His followers, "for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Trust

When we follow Jesus, we can be sure he leads us in the best way. He directs us to the right decisions at the right time.

"O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me" (Psalm 7:1).

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7).

Peace

Peace is a gift from God. There is a deep inner peace that helps us through every storm of life. Christ left His peace on earth.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

“In His discourse to the disciples, Jesus made no mournful allusion to His own sufferings and death. His last legacy to them was a legacy of peace.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“As Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

Strength and Power

Jesus promised his followers that they would receive power. When we begin to follow Jesus, the power of his Spirit indwells us, and we experience power in our words, in our thoughts and in our actions.

“All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, they are replenished with life from the source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain, of life.” *My Life Today*, p. 295.

“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).

“And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand... And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm” (Acts 28:3, 5).

Success

God created a special work just for us.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Now we should participate in that work daily, joining with God in His plan for mankind.

“God desires His people to show by their lives the advantage of Christianity over worldliness. We are to live so that God can use us in His work of converting men and women and leading them to wash their garments of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.” *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 157.

Hope

We should live daily in the ultimate hope of glory! This is a hope that never perishes or fades. In fact, the more we follow, the more potent this hope becomes.

“Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee” (Zechariah 9:12).

“God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless. Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show

an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name." *Prophets and Kings*, p. 260.

Love

Jesus leads us in love. As we follow Him, we experience His love. Not only does He love us, but He also loves through us – a profound and deep life-changing experience!

"In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling His promise. He is eternal truth. Never will He change the covenant He has made with those who love Him. And He will bestow upon His faithful servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands." *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

"God with us"

When we follow Jesus, we experience the evident presence of God! His presence is so real. He never leaves us or forsakes us!

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

"Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them.... But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks--the General of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

Destruction of Life – The Work of Satan

The past two years has seen many people affected with sickness or death, with nearly all facets of life being changed, national and state borders being closed, economies severely depressed, and churches and other venues closed.

"God has not restrained the powers of darkness from carrying forward their deadly work of vitiating the air, one of the sources of life and nutrition, with a deadly miasma. Not only is vegetable life affected, but man suffers from pestilence." *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 391.

Satan is called "the **prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

Inspiration informs us with hope and assurance, "Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 113.

Of course, we must keep in mind that God does not usually intervene with the law of cause and effect. When we make damaging choices, He permits the ensuing damaging consequences. If we live unhealthfully, we should not be surprised if we get sick. If we live immorally, we shouldn't be surprised when we reap the heart-breaking results. However, God is a God of mercy, and He can still restore.

Furthermore, not all suffering and sickness are the results of the bad choices we've made. Some of it is simply the work of our enemy—the destroyer—trying to stop God's work from being accomplished in our lives.

"Those who study and practice the principles of right living will be greatly blessed, both physically and spiritually. An understanding of the philosophy of health is a safeguard against many of the evils that are continually increasing" *Child Guidance*, p. 362.

Obviously, we do not know when He will heal those of us who have physical maladies. It could be right now, gradually over time, or not until the resurrection. Therefore, we must trust His sovereign will and righteousness.

The Custodian of Life

Life is a gift of God and belongs to God, its source. But God has entrusted life to the human race. Of it He requires wise management.

God is the generous Life-giver, who takes pleasure in sharing life with His creatures. The Biblical explanation pulsates with the expression of vibrant, unquenchable life. For example:

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

"And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

"And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth" (Genesis 1:20-22).

Adam became a living soul, or being, after God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." He and Eve were instructed to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Adam's charge of stewardship was to connect with his Creator in generating life and keeping the priceless breath of life in all living creatures.

Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, clearly understood this responsibility, as is implied by the way he responded to God. Because of his failure to safeguard his brother's life, God pronounced a second curse (Genesis 4:10-12). God called Cain to account for rejecting his stewardship of his brother's life. God is surely holding us responsible for the life and well-being of our fellowman.

After the Great Deluge, Noah and his family were taught how they must treasure God's gift of life as responsible stewards. By the solemn declaration of the sacredness of life, God ensures the life of human beings.

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:5, 6).

The sacrificial system, established at the gate of the Garden of Eden, shows the great price that God placed on human life. The value of human redemption, or atonement, is immeasurable. The cross of Calvary is the supreme testimony regarding the value of human life.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

The stewardship of human life is directed in the Ten Commandments. The sixth commandment reads, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

The Levitical law shows God’s concern for life as shown in the rules regarding blood:

“For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off” (Leviticus 17:14).

Another testimony of God’s high appraisal of human life is seen in the divine instructions regarding the cities of refuge (Leviticus 35:11-15; Deuteronomy 19:4-6). Those guilty of unintentional or involuntary manslaughter could flee there and be saved.

The ancient cities of refuge teach us as well an important lesson and give us warning that we may know how to escape the second death and gain eternal life.

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

“The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God’s holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

Furthermore, the Israelites were commanded to love their neighbor as themselves as one of the features of their stewardship responsibility.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:17, 18).

If an enemy will harm His people, He also promised to take care of it and avenge them.

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zechariah 2:8).

And so, with the gift of life, God gives us the power to choose. Right choices can change your life for the better. Therefore, determine to make good choices and live the abundant life God wants you to live.