

We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God

In a recent quiet time I reflected on the number of Christians who are struggling in their walk with the Lord at this time as well as the challenges that so many Christians are experiencing as they seek to serve the Lord whole heartedly.

So, with this in mind I have put together a message today to help us to fully embrace the abundant life that Jesus spoke of, even at a time when we see so much lawlessness and injustices in our world.

I will begin with three Scriptures that relate to the times that we are now living in and the very real spiritual contest that we are all involved in that would try and prevent us from living a life of true purpose and meaning as believers

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Jesus Himself said in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower, "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble." (Mark 4:16-17)

The Apostle Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

HOWEVER, Jesus also made it clear that He came that we may have life and that we may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

So given the trials and rejection that we so often experience for our faith and especially when we want to serve the Lord wholeheartedly, how do we embrace that abundant life that Jesus spoke of:

I will now just quickly share eight keys to fully embracing the abundant life that Jesus spoke of.

1) Delight yourself in the LORD. Your love for Him has to be your greatest priority in life. He will never leave nor forsake us.

In the book of Hebrews we read, “...For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Hebrew 13:5-6)

Jesus Himself said, “‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:30)

Maintaining intimate fellowship with the Lord helps us to continually maintain our joy because in His presence is fullness of joy. THE JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH.

This is why we must never allow the Devil to steal our joy, especially by getting us too busy to spend quality time with the Lord

King David wrote,

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

With so many important choices to make in life and with so many challenges that we can now experience when living wholeheartedly for the Lord, we need to make prayer and communing with God our greatest priority in life.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” **(Philippians 4:6-7)**

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” **(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)**

God truly is the God of all comfort and all wisdom.

Daily we need God’s encouragement and wisdom to do life well

So given the challenging times that we are now living in we need to make our time alone with the Lord our greatest priority in life

It is our intimacy with the Lord that will help us to remain strong and focused in our Christian walk and help us to fully embrace all that God has planned for our lives, even in the lawless and ungodly times that we are now living in

King David wrote,

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” **(Psalm 63:1-3)**

In the book of Daniel we read,

“... but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” **(Daniel 11:32)**

2) We must refuse to allow the Devil to get us offended with God and other believers

All things work together for good to those who love God, when we are in the will of God for our lives, even the tough times that we go through in life

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,” **(Romans 8:28-29)**

What God allows us to go through is always ultimately for our own good.

God is absolutely faithful, and we can depend upon Him at all times.

It is the Devil that is constantly out to destroy the lives of people and who will always be trying to get us to question the faithfulness of God, especially when we are going through trials and challenges.

We must refuse to get offended with God and other believers.

Jesus Himself said in relation to the times that we are now living in,

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” **(Matthew 24:10-11)**

We must refuse to allow offences to separate us from other believers that God has placed in our life

We cannot do the Christian walk alone. We need one another

3) Staying connected to God's plan for our lives

We are most energized and fulfilled in life when we fully connect with God's plan for our life

Jesus Himself said,

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”
(John 4:34)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”
(Ephesians 3:20)

We will never burn out in the will of God for our life when we stay connected to His plan and purpose for our life

It is in wholeheartedly pursuing God’s plan and purpose for our life that the Christian walk has great purpose and meaning

As Christians we have been saved for a purpose, the “... good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
(Ephesians 2:10)

So, a great key to embracing the abundant life that Jesus spoke of is that we fully invest our lives in what God has called us to do in life

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**

4) Always living our life to please God and not man by always doing things heartily as to the Lord and not to men

We will not always be appreciated by others for what we do, but God honours those who serve Him

Jesus Himself said,

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.”
(John 12:26)

Always doing things unto the Lord helps us to do things with a right motivation even when others do not fully appreciate what we do for them

Our motivation must always be to please God with our lives as we love and serve Him and others with our lives

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” **(Colossians 3:23-24)**

5) Choosing to trust God at all times and in all circumstances

We can depend upon God's faithfulness at ALL times.

We must not be moved away from God's plan for our life because of the temporary trials that we experience in life.

We need to simply allow the Lord to direct our steps at all times

WE MUST SIMPLY TRUST AND OBEY FOR THERE IS NO OTHER WAY

In the book of Jeremiah we read,

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (**Jeremiah 17:7-8**)

King David wrote,

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord**, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.” (**Psalm 37:3-5**)

In the book of Proverbs we read, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” (**Proverbs 3:5-6**)

6) Staying connected in fellowship with other believers

We cannot do the Christian walk alone, especially given the lawless times that we are now living in

In a world becoming more and more secular and with Christian values becoming more and more under attack, it is so important that we have constant encouragement from other believers in our walk with the Lord

We are better together

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” **(Hebrews 10:23-25)**

7) Continually building our life on the firm foundation of the word of God

The bible is full of wisdom and promises to do life well.

It is in applying the word of God to our lives at all times that we will lead an overcoming and victorious life and fully embrace all that God has planned for our lives

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **(Romans 12:2)**

The LORD said to Joshua before he was about to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land,

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” **(Joshua 1:8)**

Jesus Himself said,

“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” **(Matthew 7:24-25)**

And

8) Continually living our life with eternity in mind

One day as believers it will be all good for all eternity

We have one gift of life to store up treasures in heaven and to help plunder hell and to populate heaven

So, with this in mind we need to always keep our focus on the eternal things and not allow the temporary things of this life to take our focus off what God has called us to do in life

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (**Colossians 3:1-4**)

Jesus Himself said,

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (**Matthew 6:19-21**)

Our faith is the most precious thing that we have and it is eternal. As believers to be absent from the body is to be with Jesus

Like the apostle Paul we want to be able to say at the end of our time here on earth

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (**2 Timothy 4:7**)

So, my encouragement to everyone today is to keep your affections on the Lord and your focus on His plan for your life, so that you will truly be salt and light in the world around you.

It is in keeping you passion for the things of God alive that you will embrace the abundant life that Jesus spoke of, irrespective of your temporary trials, and that you will help many others including your family members get to heaven as you choose to continually live wholeheartedly for the greatest cause, the Kingdom Cause.

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