

# **The Abundant Life**

by James H. McConkey

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# The Abundant Life

*"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it **more abundantly**"*  
(John 10:10).

As the west-bound traveler speeds over the Alleghenies, his watchful gaze can hardly fail to note the gleaming surface of a little artificial lake whose azure-tinted waters mirroring the skies above, add much to the beauty of the great railroad system which spans our native state. This lakelet, embosomed in the depths of the mountains, is the reservoir which furnishes water to a busy neighboring city, and is fed by a mountain stream of modest supply. In the drought of last summer infilling streams dwindled to a tiny thread; the waters of the reservoir sank to their lowest limits; and all the ills of a protracted water famine, with its constant menace to health and home, beset the city. The most rigid economy was urged by the authorities; the water was cut off save for a few hours per day; and the scant supply of precious fluid was carefully husbanded against emergencies. Not a hundred miles from this city lies a smaller one nestling also among the mountains. In its very center bursts forth a natural fountain unlimited abundance and marvelous beauty. In the same summer of disastrous drought this famous spring without abating one jot of its

wondrous flow or sinking one inch below the lip of its encircling embankment, furnished the thirsty city with fullest supply and then still out-flowed over its waste-weir a sparkling, leaping stream of unstinted copiousness, earning right royally the privilege not only of refreshing with its waters, but of christening with its own name the city of "The Beautiful Fountain." The larger city, in truth had water. But the smaller one had it "more abundantly." The scanty rivulet that trickled into the reservoir was barely enough to save from keen thirst. But the living bubbling fountain, pouring out its liquid wealth in prodigal flow for its native town, had left still enough to slake the thirst of a city many times the size of its greater neighbor.

Even so is it with the life of the Holy Spirit in God's children. Some have His indwelling life only as the trickling stream with scarce enough to keep and refresh them at times of test and stress, and never knowing what His fulness means. Others there are in who the words of Jesus are joyously fulfilled; "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (more abundantly). Not only are they filled with the Spirit in their own inner life, but they overflow in abundant, outgiving blessing to the hungry and thirsty lives about them that seek to know the secret of their refreshing. Sorrow comes, but it cannot rob them of their great peace. Dark grow the days, but their child-like faith abounds more and

more. Heavily fall the afflictive blows but like the oil well which, under the blow of the explosive, gives forth a more abundant flow because of the very shattering of its rocky reservoir, so their lives only pour out an ever increasing and enriching volume of blessing upon those about them. An unceasing stream of prayer flows from their hearts. Praise leaps as instinctively and artlessly from their lips as glad song bursts from the soaring skylark. Trust has become a second nature; joy is its natural outcome; and ceaseless service springs not from the bondage duty but as the gracious response of love. They are not like dry pumps, needing to be aided by others through impoured draughts of exhortation and stimulation ere they will give forth their scant supply. They are rather deep-driven artesian wells, spontaneous, constant, spirit-flowing. In them the Master's words have been fulfilled: "The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Such were the lives of the apostles after the eventful day of Pentecost; transformed from timid, self-seeking, hesitating followers to bold, sacrificing, heroic messengers of Jesus Christ; preaching His gospel with wondrous power, joy, and effectiveness. Such was Stephen "full of faith and the Holy Ghost;" and Barnabas "full of faith and the Holy Ghost and of faith." The men chosen to wait on tables were "full of the the Holy Ghost."

Paul swept to and fro in his great missionary journeys "filled with the Holy Ghost." Such was Charles Finney preaching the word of life with fiery earnestness born of a mighty fullness of the Spirit. Such were Edwards, and Moody, and multitudes of others; and such an abundant life as this does God hold out to all His children as their birthright, their lawful inheritance. In His picture of its precious fruitage (Gal. 5:22, 23), we see it to be a life of

### **Abundant Love**

See the apostles filled with burning zeal to give the gospel of Christ's love to all. Mark Stephen's intense love to all. Mark Stephen's intense love for souls. Behold Peter's glowing heart and fervent testimonies now well attesting his earnest assertion, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Mark the man of Tarsus, consumed with such a love for dying men as naught but God could inspire, and none but God could surpass. His great throbbing heart is too small a fountain to contain; his thrilling, burning words too weak a bridge to convey; his weak, toil-spent body too feeble a tabernacle to incarnate all the fullness of his passionate love for souls. So too Brainerd toils, fasts, weeps and dies for his Indians, because of the divine Love within him. Judson is driven from the land of his choice; is baffled again and again in his effort to obtain a foothold in Burmah,

languishes in prison amid unspeakable horrors and sufferings, yet the flame of Love never abates. Livingstone travels through a pathless wilderness; endures untold hardships; is broken hearted by the vision of the infamy and anguish of the slave traffic; yet, dying upon his knees in holy prayer Love burns more intensely than in the days of his youth. Paton exiles himself among cannibals; faces difficulties that would daunt the most daring; labors with patience, prays with mighty faith; suffers with uncomplaining fortitude, reaps with joy unspeakable; and then girdles the earth in his travels, his heart all the while pulsating with the Spirit's own mighty Love.

Whose heart has not thrilled at the story of Delia, the sin-marred queen of a Mulberry street dive, and of her rescue from a life of shame? Yet it was the burning love of Christ in her heart which led Mrs. Whittemore to seek to save this lost one. It was love that breathed out the earnest prayer over the spotless rose and offered it to the erring one. It was love that drew the poor girl to the Door of Hope in the hour of her conviction. It was love that welcomed her, wept over her, and melted her heart with contrition and repentance. And then Love begat Love. For saved to the uttermost, this rescued one broke the alabaster box of her redeemed life as an offering of sweetest savor at the feet of Him whose Love had saved her, and went forth to tell the story of that Love to others.

In prisons, in the slums, in street meetings, wherever this ransomed one told the story of Him who loved us and gave himself for us, the kindling love of the holy Ghost so fired her soul that strong, sin-hardened men, bowing and sobbing under her thrilling, impassioned words, were swept by scores into the kingdom of God. For one brief year the love-life of God streamed, brimful through the open channel of her surrendered being; quickening, thrilling and inspiring all with whom she came in touch, and then she went to Him who was the fountain of her life of Abounding Love.

In an interior city dwells a friend "grappled to our souls with hooks of steel" in the precious bonds of the kinship that is in Christ Jesus. By the grace of God he has been wonderfully saved from a life of scoffing, derisive, soul-destroying infidelity. For days and weeks at a time he will be engaged in the busy, loving ministrations of a secular profession. Then, without warning the Holy Ghost will suddenly lay upon him the burden of lost souls. Driven by the Spirit to the seclusion of his own chamber, the love of God for the lost will so flood his being that for hours at a time he will lie upon his face sobbing out his broken petitions to God for their salvation. Then, going forth into the surrounding country with mighty, convicting messages, from a heart overflowing with the abundant Love-life of his Master, he preaches the gospel of Christ in the needy



places. In the few short years since his conversion God has given to this devoted servant over six hundred souls as the fruitage of the life of Abundant Love. Beloved, are we walking in this Abounding Love-life? Do we know its power, joy and fullness? If not, we are falling short of the high calling of Him who came that we might have love not meagerly, but have it Abundantly.

Again it is a life of

### **Abundant Peace.**

*"The fruit of the Spirit is peace" (Gal. 5:22). "The peace of God ... shall keep your hearts and minds" (Phil. 4:7). "My peace I leave with you" (John 14:27).*

There rises up here the vision of a lovely midsummer forenoon. As we lay quietly resting, the inside shutters of the window under the puff of a passing breeze suddenly opened. Straight-way there lay before our gaze a beautiful picture of a sky of cloudless blue; green hills stretching away in the dim distance; and noble river smiling and tossing its sparkling waves in the broad path of the sunlight. A moment the vision lingered and then, under the fitful gust of a contrary breeze, the shutters suddenly slammed shut. at once all the glory and beauty of the scene vanished, and stayed hidden until another flow of wind again disclosed its loveliness, only to be followed anew by its disappear-

ance. Even thus, we thought, is the peace of the natural heart. For awhile, when all goes well and plans prosper, our hearts are content and at peace. But let a gust of adverse fortune, a baffling of some favorite purpose befall us, and at once peace vanishes and anxious care broods in its place. Peace indeed we have, but its manifestation is inconstant and fickle, filling us one day with rest, leaving us the next in darkness and hopelessness. What a contrast with this the peace of the Abundant Spirit-life! For there is a peace which "passeth all understanding," and,—as one has well said—"all misunderstanding;" a peace which keeps us, not we it; a peace of which it is said "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee;" a peace which, because born not of an outer calm, but an inner Christ, cannot be disturbed by sting or storm. It is the peace of the fullness of the Spirit. The sea has a surface which tosses, and frets foams and spumes, rises, staggers, and falls under every passing wind that assails its unstable life. But it has also deeps which have lain in motionless peace for ages, unswept by wind, unswayed by billow. So there are for the timorous heart moveless deeps of peace whose unbroken rest can be pictured only by that "wonderful phrase—"the peace of God." The peace of God! Think of it for a moment. How wondrous must be God's peace! With Him there is no frailty, no error, no sin." With Him there is no past to lament, no

future to dread; no blunders to deplore, no mistakes to fear; no plans to be thwarted, no purposes to be unmet. No death can overcome, no suffering weaken, no ideal be unfulfilled, no perfection unattained. Past, present or future; vanishing time or endless eternity; life or death, hope or fear, storm or calm-naught of these, and naught else within the bounds of the universe can disturb the peace of Him who calls himself the God of Peace. And it is this peace that is ours to possess. "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Not a human peace attained by self-struggle or self-discipline, but Divine peace—the very peace which God Himself has, yea, is. This is why Jesus Himself says, "My peace I give unto you." Human manmade peace, which rises and falls with the vicissitudes of life, is worthless; but the peace of Christ, what a gift is this! Mark the surroundings when Christ spake these words, and how wonderful this peace appears! It was just before His death. Before Him is the kiss of the traitor; the hiss of the scourge; the weary blood-stained way to death; the hiding of His Father's face; the thorn-crowned, purple-robed mockery of His kingship; and the awful torture-climax of the cross. If ever a man's soul ought to be torn with agony, burdened with horror, surely this is the hour. But instead of gloom, and fear, and shuddering anticipation, hear His wondrous words, "*My peace I leave with you!*" Surely a peace like this is worth

having! Surely a peace which does not take flight before such a hideous vision of betrayal, agony, and death is an *abundant peace*; is one of which He can well say, *I leave it with you*; it will stay; it is the God-peace which abides forever. My children, behold my hour of crisis, darker than shall ever come to any of you, yet my peace abides without a tremor. *My peace has stood the supremest test*; therefore it can never fail; I pass it on to you."

Some years ago a friend narrated to us an experience of the Johnstown flood which we have never forgotten. His home was below that ill-fated city, and when the flood burst he, with others, hurried out upon the bridge, rope in hand, to rescue if possible any unfortunates who might be borne down the river. Presently, as he waited, his attention was attracted by the approach of a half submerged house which the rushing torrent was bearing swiftly toward him, and upon the roof of which he saw the recumbent form of a woman. With heart thrilling with sympathy and earnest desire to compass her rescue, he quickly made ready, and as the strange craft neared the bridge he cast the rope with eager expectancy, but it fell short of the mark. Rushing to the lower side of the bridge, as the house swept under the arching span, he again cast the rope with feverish haste and intensity, but again it failed of its merciful purpose. "And then," said our friend, "as the last hope of rescue faded with

the second failure to reach her, and death became her inevitable doom, the occupant of the roof, who had been reclining on its steep slope with her head resting upon her hand, turned, and a sweet womanly face looked up into mine. Until my dying day I shall never forget the expression upon that upturned countenance! Instead of the fear, horror, and agony with which I expected to see it distorted, it was quiet and calm, with an unspeakable, serene, abiding Peace, and with a kindly nod of recognition of my poor effort to save her, as she swept on to certain death that Peace kindled into a glory that 'ne'er was seen on land or sea,' whose radiance was unshadowed even by the awful roar and strife of the elements about." "Ah, friend," thought I, as the tears leaped unbidden to my eyes under this touching story, "she must have been a child of the Lord; she knew *Him*; and this that kept her was the *Peace of God*."

Then too it is a life of

### **Abundant Power for Service.**

"Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you," said Christ to His disciples. And their lives straightway became a never-ceasing record of mighty deeds done in the power of the Spirit. "Stephen," we are told, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8). Charles G.

Finney, entering a mill, was so filled with the power of the Spirit that the operatives fell upon their knees in tears before the mere presence of the evangelist, ere he had uttered a word. At a camp-meeting where the most learned and eloquent sermons had utterly failed to move men to repentance, the whole congregation broke down in tears of conviction and penitence under the quiet words of an unassuming man who spoke manifestly filled with the Spirit. A word, a prayer, an earnest appeal, a song that would fall otherwise unheeded, goes home to the heart, filled with some subtle power when issuing from a Spirit-filled life. Moody testifies that never until he knew the fullness of the Spirit did he know the fullness of God's power in his preaching, but after that his preached words never failed of some fruitage. Neither is the power of the abundant life confined to the preaching of God's word. God gives to some power in prayer; to others power in testimony; to others power in song; to others power in suffering and affliction. Every soul that knows the Spirit's abounding life is touching other lives with power whose full scope and intensity he will never know until the Lord comes to reward.

Nor is the fullness of the Spirit limited to abundant love, peace, and power. It is a life too of abundant joy; "the joy of the Lord is our strength;" of abundant *long-suffering* girding us with patience under trials that we never could otherwise endure; of abundant

gentleness, as Christ's own gentleness takes possession of us; of abundant *goodness*, abundant *faith*, abundant *meekness*, abundant *self-control*. That it is not meant for apostles, or ministers, or missionaries, or teachers only, but for all of God's children is clear, for:—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to *all that are afar off*."

### What Is Its Secret?

The above is the first chapter of Mr. McConkey's book "The Three-Fold Secret of the Holy Spirit." We shall be glad to send you a copy if you will request it.

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