

## Sinking into God—the Wondrous Secret

- 1 I have learned the wondrous secret  
Of abiding in the Lord;  
I have tasted life's pure fountain,  
I am drinking of His word;  
I have found the strength and sweetness  
Of abiding 'neath the blood;  
I have lost myself in Jesus,  
I am sinking into God.  
  
I'm abiding in the Lord  
And confiding in His word;  
I am hiding in the bosom of His love.  
Yes, abiding in the Lord  
And confiding in His word,  
I am hiding in the bosom of His love.
- 2 I am crucified with Jesus,  
And He lives and dwells with me;  
I have ceased from all my struggling,  
'Tis no longer I, but He.  
All my will is yielding to Him,  
And His Spirit reigns within;  
And His precious blood each moment  
Keeps me cleansed and free from sin.
- 3 All my sicknesses I bring Him,  
And He bears them all away;  
All my fears and griefs I tell Him,  
All my cares from day to day,  
All my strength I draw from Jesus,  
By His breath I live and move;  
E'en His very mind He gives me,  
And His faith, and life, and love.
- 4 For my words I take His wisdom,  
For my works His Spirit's power;  
For my ways His ceaseless presence  
Guards and guides me every hour.  
Of my heart, He is the portion,  
Of my joy the boundless spring;  
Savior, Sanctifier, Healer,  
Glorious Lord, and coming King. (*Hymns*, #564)

**T**his hymn by A. B. Simpson is the joyful praise of one who has been ushered into a realm of life and light where he rejoices in the full realization that everything God wills has already been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. Before his great discovery, he lived with the agony of the failure to please God.

Like many other Christians, he was powerless in his efforts to achieve victory over sin and death, but when he wrote this hymn, he was full of rejoicing because he had seen that there is no need to struggle to enter into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:12-13); he had already received a divine transfer! In this wonderful realm, he enjoyed Christ's full victory and learned the wondrous secret of living as a branch abiding in the vine.

### The Wondrous Secret

The hymn breaks forth jubilantly, "I have learned the wondrous secret of abiding in the Lord"; it is the delighted testimony of a believer who has been captured by a life of living in oneness with Christ. It conveys the unfettered sense of freedom of one who counts all the enemies of the soul—the flesh, the self, sin, Satan, and the world—as being under his feet because of the redeeming blood and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

**W**hen A. B. Simpson penned the words of this hymn, he had heard the speaking of the Son through the Spirit in the Word: "I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). These simple words revealed to him a profound, humanly inconceivable secret: a genuine believer in the Son is, under the cultivating hand of the Father God, organically one with Christ. This wondrous secret was a living reality to him, and he overflowed with joy, having seen from the incredible transformation that is the result of God being joined to redeemed humanity and redeemed humanity being joined to Him.

On the eve of His crucifixion, the Lord revealed that the disciples were branches organically attached to Him as the vine of God. This mystical joining of God and redeemed humanity produced one organic entity. He is the vine, and we are the branches of this divine-human entity. Many consider that Christ, as the vine, is the root and the trunk and that we, as the branches, are somehow separate from Him. Seeking believers living under this common misconception suffer repeated failures in their efforts to live a "proper" Christian life, often to the point of despairing of all hope.

Hudson Taylor, the well-known founder of the China Inland Mission, exemplified this kind of living before he

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found the wondrous secret. In September of 1869, he detailed in a letter to his sister that after years of striving and failure, he had been set free through faith to comprehend the fact that he was a branch in the vine and could freely enjoy the all-inclusive riches of the vine. He first disclosed his bitter struggle with sin and failure through many years of seeking for victory without success:

I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for meditation—but all without avail. Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me...

All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was—how to get it *out*. He was rich truly, but I was poor; He was strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness, but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually light dawned, I saw that faith was the only requisite—was the hand to lay hold on His fulness and make it mine. But I had not this faith. (160, 162)

Then he shared how the light began to shine upon him and connect him directly to the Lord whom he so desperately sought. Hudson Taylor saw that he was a branch in the vine:

As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in wishing to get the sap, the fulness *out* of Him! I saw not only that Jesus will never leave me, but that I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine is not the root merely, but *all*—root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit...Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! (163-164)

Mr. Simpson may have had a similar struggle leading up to the writing of his jubilant hymn. It might have been that as he mused over the mystifying words of the Lord, “Abide in Me and I in you” (John 15:4), he was struck with a deep impression of learning the wondrous secret of abiding in the Lord. Through the word of the Lord who said, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me” (v. 4), he may have seen the vision and lost himself in Jesus, allowing himself to sink into God, to become one with Christ.

The secret that the author discovered is simple to grasp doctrinally but more difficult to embrace experientially. The phrases *tasted life's pure fountain* and *drinking of His word* are easily understood. We taste and drink of physical elements several times each day. Similarly, we need to taste and drink of the spiritual reality of the indwelling Christ by receiving Him as our portion moment by moment. This is a life in faith, a life of being mingled with Christ in all that He is, has, and has accomplished through His incarnation, human living, redeeming death, life-giving resurrection,

and all-transcending ascension (cf. Eph. 1:17-23). It is a life of rich enjoyment partaken of through uncomplicated and effortless believing. The result is finding the strength and sweetness of abiding beneath the blood of Jesus.

Such a simple life of faith is unobtainable if we live under the doubts and complications caused by our outer circumstances and inner conflicts. We are also unconsciously imprisoned by human concepts concerning right and wrong, good and evil, intellectual correctness and incorrectness. Our thoughts concerning spiritual principles are warped by traditional ideas, half-truths, and utter lies developed by the cunning enemy of God as “every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error” (4:14). In other words, we often are held captive by confused, irrelevant, and erroneous opinions and teachings that make it nearly impossible to hear what the Spirit is speaking. It is a great blessing from the Lord to have eyes that see and ears that hear (Matt. 13:16-17).

### The Vision Expanded

After the opening stanza, the hymn expands upon the writer’s vision concerning the wondrous secret of living in oneness with Christ. The writer touches at least three aspects of his experience of abiding in Christ. First, it is a crucified life—Christ has set us free from the vain efforts of our natural life. We are crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), which frees us from all our useless struggling to live a life that is well pleasing to God (2 Cor. 5:9). Second, it is a grafted life (Rom. 11:17). Although our life is free from its past hopeless toil, it is not a passive life of waiting for God to move in us. We have been joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), and now we live together with Christ as one person. Third, living in oneness with Christ involves a serving life. In all our service we are not toiling apart from Christ, but we are taking Him as our wisdom, power, and guidance in everything. We need not to ask Him to give us wisdom, power, and guidance—we can receive Him directly as our wisdom, power, and guidance under the gracious provision of God.

### A Crucified Life

Stanza 2 speaks of the crucified life, beginning with, “I am crucified with Jesus, / And He lives and dwells with me; / I have ceased from all my struggling, / ’Tis no longer I, but He.” When Christ was crucified, we were crucified together with Him. Paul declares, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). When He died, we died; when He resurrected, we resurrected together with Him. “Even when we were dead in offenses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been

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saved) and raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6). We must receive this wondrous secret. May the Lord have mercy to open our eyes to see this great fact of the divine economy.

### *A Grafted Life*

Stanza 3 speaks of the grafted life, saying in the latter half of the stanza, “All my strength I draw from Jesus, / By His breath I live and move; / E’en His very mind He gives me, And His faith, and life, and love.” The wondrous secret includes a grafted life, a life of being joined to Christ. He is our very life and content; we are His container and expression. We possess Christ as our life and our all in all (Col. 3:4, 10-11) when we relinquish our mind, emotion, will, sicknesses, fears and griefs, cares, sorrows, and anxieties to Him and allow Him to make His home in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). We must develop such an intimate fellowship with Him. This intimate fellowship with the living God and with His Son is the heritage of every believer (1 John 1:3), yet few of us receive it in faith. When we believe and enter into this fellowship, we experience His mind and His faith and life and love. It is only through a grafted life that the Lord can give us His very mind and His faith, life, and love. Only by being joined to Christ can we partake of Christ’s various communicable attributes. This joining is not an imitation of Christ or an exchange of His glorious and rich life for our poor and impoverished existence; rather, God infuses His life into us by filling us as a vessel with Himself as the content:

We are “gloves” in the likeness of the divine hand. This means that we do not have the thumb, but the form of the thumb; not the fingers, but the likeness of the fingers. For example, our gentleness is a container for God’s gentleness. Our gentleness is only the form, whereas God’s gentleness is the substance, the reality...

We have seen that when the divine life enters into the human life, the divine life becomes the content and the human life becomes the container and the expression. But there is no exchange, or trade, of lives. This means that we do not exchange the human life for the divine life. Instead of exchange, there is a dispensation. The empty glove is filled with the hand. Using another figure of speech, we may say that man is like a tire that needs to be filled with air. The air is dispensed into the tire and fills it, but the air is not exchanged for the tire. In like manner, the divine air, the heavenly *pneuma*, is dispensed into us, but it is not exchanged for our human life. (Lee, *Life-study* 657-658)

**W**hen we, in faith, receive the Lord Jesus, He comes into us and fills us with Himself in every aspect—His mind, His faith, life, and love now become ours.

Therefore, Paul could declare, “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). The aspiration of the apostle was that he be found always in Christ (3:9). To be found in Him indicates that we are mingled with Him. We can do nothing apart from Him, and He does nothing on the earth apart from us, His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people.

### *A Serving Life*

Stanza 4 speaks of a serving life, saying, “For my words I take His wisdom, / For my works His Spirit’s power; / For my ways His ceaseless presence / Guards and guides me every hour.” Not only is the Lord our portion for our daily living; He is also the words of wisdom, the works of power, and the ceaseless guidance in all our service. There is no need to ask Him to be our wisdom; we should simply allow Him to be wisdom in us by enjoying Him moment by moment. Similarly, we do not seek the power to do great works; we simply are one with Him in whatever He wants to do. He is the strength in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10). We do not seek to be powerful; He is the powerful One in us. We follow the pattern of Paul in Colossians 1:28-29: “That we may present every man full-grown in Christ; for which also I labor, struggling *according to His operation which operates in me in power*” (emphasis added). We struggle according to His powerful operation in us, not according to our self-effort.

### *Christ as Our Portion and Boundless Spring*

Stanza 4 concludes with a testimony of the person and work of Christ, saying, “Of my heart, He is the portion, / Of my joy the boundless spring; / Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, / Glorious Lord, and coming King.” *Of my heart, He is the portion* indicates an intimate fellowship and loving relationship with the Lord. For us to be released from the bondage of our fallen nature and our religious practices, we need to know the Lord in a thorough and familiar way. The psalmist declares, “Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth. / My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever” (Psa. 73:25-26). The word *portion* affirms that

God’s intention with His seekers is that they may find everything in Him and not be distracted from the absolute enjoyment of Himself. It is not a matter of keeping the law, as in Psa. 1, or of being right or wrong, but of gaining God and keeping God as everything. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 26, note 1)

God should have the preeminence in everything we are, do, say, and think. He must be the motivating and energizing source in all our living and ministry.

*Of my joy the boundless spring* is in contrast to the natural

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“water” that satisfies our natural thirst for a limited time. The water of the world always runs out quickly and leaves an addictive thirst for more things to try to satiate a terrible inner dryness. How marvelous that Christ Himself becomes a fountain of water in us gushing up into eternal life (John 4:13-14)!

**T**he wonderful Christ is our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, glorious Lord, and coming King. He is all-inclusive. He meets our every need. He saves us, sanctifies us, heals us physically, psychologically, and spiritually; as our glorious Lord, He is the One who is now seated on the throne of administration over the entire universe to carry out the eternal purpose of God by gathering His chosen people to Himself so that He might head up all things (Eph. 1:9-10). He is also the One who is coming again to deal with all rebellion, including Satan and his accomplices—whether angelic, demonic, or human—to terminate the unrighteous governments of the earth, and to bring in the righteous and glorious kingdom of God. This is the Christ into whom we are called to abide. What an incredible calling!

### Drinking In His Word to Abide in the Lord

The hymn speaks of the rich experience of abiding in the Lord, and it points to the intimate source of that abiding—Christ through His death and resurrection with His cleansing blood imparting into us His mind, faith, life, and love. However, the practical means of entering into this wondrous secret may still not be clearly seen. Nevertheless, there are some hints in this hymn that can help a genuine seeker enter into the rich practice of abiding in the Lord. For example, “tasted life’s pure fountain” and “drinking of His word” point to the rich source of abiding—God Himself embodied in His word. The chorus attests to this, saying, “I’m abiding in the Lord / And confiding in His word.” We need to consider these words to help see how to receive the Lord, enjoy the Lord, and live in oneness with Him.

The Bible is a unique book. It is not merely a collection of teachings; it is the direct speaking of God. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that His words are “spirit and are life” (John 6:63). This indicates that His words are His very embodiment. Second Timothy 3:16 affirms that “all Scripture is God-breathed.” The word of God is the breathing out of God. Because the Bible is the speaking of God, we need to fix our attention on it as the living and abiding word of God.

The Spirit of God has also been joined to our spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). He is witnessing within us and teaching us all things related to God and His purpose (Rom. 8:15-16; John 16:12-15; 1 John 2:27). We need to practice listening to both the indwelling Spirit and the written word. These are the two means by which God speaks to us. We must learn to listen to and then to cooperate with His

speaking. This is the most effective means for God to work Himself into us. With our inner ears we must hear what the Spirit is speaking and allow Him to operate in us to carry out His speaking. This requires the exercise of our human spirit together with our reading of the Bible.

**W**hen we gaze upon Him in His Word through the eyes of faith, absorbing Him as the substance and reality of the Scriptures, we are brought into an experience of our union with Him. The divine reality in Him is communicated into us word by word so that we are saved in His faith, buried with Him in His death, made alive and raised together with Him in His resurrection, and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:1-6; Rom. 6:1-6).

As we experientially lose ourselves in the person and work of Jesus, we sink into God. We not only experience the divine life of Christ permeating us but also are uplifted into His victorious and elevated human life. We are thus brought into the realization that we are divine-human creatures whose real identity is that of God-men. We are genuinely human, or, more precisely, “Jesusly” human, yet we have also become divine—born of God with the very life of God by the Spirit of God (John 1:12-13; 3:6).

We must learn to read the Bible, muse on the Bible, and pray the Bible before the Lord. Sinking into God indicates that we allow God to saturate and permeate us with His own reality. Apart from Him we are hollow, empty, unreal, and even nothingness itself. The more we are out of ourselves, the more we are able to sink into God. The more we pray over and muse upon the word of God, the more we are exposed to our nothingness when we are apart from Him. Praying the words of the Bible back to God, we are divinely enlivened and brought into God; we sink into Him—we abandon all our independent living and depend entirely on His loving care and supply in us through His indwelling presence. The inner revelation that frees us from sin and from ourselves can be apprehended and enjoyed only when we abandon our concepts and methods and receive God’s life and love through His living word. It is God who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure, but we can cooperate with Him by turning our heart to the word of God and beholding and reflecting the glorious Christ in the word (2 Cor. 3:18).

by Gary Kaiser

### Works Cited

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