

17 June 2012

A Christian *Abounds* in faith, hope and thankfulness (Pt 3 Abound)

Today is part three of our teaching on the word *abound* in the Holy Scriptures. In our previous study we covered 3 points that focused on what God *abounded* in, where we concluded with God's *abounding* grace, which is much more than sin that *abounds*. Our three points were:-

1. God *abounds* in forgiveness
2. God's truth *abounds*
3. God *abounds* to us in all wisdom and prudence

In this study we will cover three (3) points that focus on what a believer is to *abound* in and includes:-

1. A Christian is to *abound* in faith.
2. A Christian is to *abound* in hope
3. A Christian *abound* in thanksgiving

Let us add a little more detail to each of our points:-

1. A Christian should *abound* in faith,

2Cor 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every [thing, in] faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and [in] all diligence, and [in] your love to us, [see] that ye abound in this grace also.

For a person to know God they must have faith, and when a person believes the gospel, when a person places their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, then they become a child of God, they are new creature in Christ. As that babe in Christ develops and grows in the knowledge of God so will his faith grow. The Scriptures teach that our faith is to grow exceedingly (see 2Thes.1: 3) and if it does then it is reasonable to suggest that you would *abound* in faith, which is the message of our point; Christians are to *abound* in faith. So, given that our faith is to grow exceedingly and we are to *abound* in faith, it would also be reasonable to suggest that a Christian's faith does not stand still, it does not stagnate.

It would appear from the Scriptures of truth that the Patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David *abounded* in faith. They all had faith in God. Abraham must have had an abundance of faith, because his faith was accounted unto him for righteousness (see Rom.4: 9), such that God imputed righteousness unto him because he believed and obeyed what God said. And we today who walk in faith, who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham are also imputed with the righteousness (see Rom.4: 12) of Christ and are therefore known as the children of Abraham (see Gal3: 7). A man is saved by faith, that is might be by grace (see Rom.4: 16), it is NOT of works (Eph.2: 8 & Tit.3: 5) lest any man should boast. When the Lord gives you an opportunity to talk to a RC be mindful that although the person you are speaking to uses similar words, like; Jesus, virgin birth, resurrection, God and the Holy Spirit, their fundamental belief about salvation, is works and not faith, which has not changed since Martin Luther point this out in his 95 Theses of 1517.

I remember talking to a customer of mine in Sydney and he had spoken about the church and what he does in the church and then one day he admitted being a Catholic. He went on to tell me all the work in the church he was doing, in the hope that such work would help his standing before God. He pointed out the need to tip the scales of our sin on one side with our good works on the other. I mentioned Eph.2: 8 *For by grace ye are saved through faith*, but I don't think he heard me and then it back was onto business.

Remember, all the great Patriarchs had faith, Paul had faith and the church today are to have faith. For this period, for this dispensation, we are to place our faith, our trust in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and as we grow in faith we are to wear it each day as part of our armour, the shield of faith (see Eph.6: 16). It is our faith, the strength of our faith, the abundance of our faith in Christ, that quenches all the fiery darts of the evil one.

So if you are not growing in your faith toward God, if you do not feel right now that you have an abundance of faith, then ask yourself how much time are you spending with the Lord in pray and in the Holy Scriptures? How much time are giving to nurture your faith? And remember that just when you feel your faith is growing don't be surprised if God proves your faith, maybe not as he did Abrahams, (where God asked him to place his own son on the altar and slay him, and when God proved that Abraham was prepared to follow through [see Gen.22: 10]. He provided a ram for the offering [see verse 13]), but in a way that demonstrates to you the substance of faith in God.

Let us encourage each other in our faith, and not put a stumbling block in our brothers way, but pray that their faith would grow and *abound*, to the glory of God.

2. A Christian is to *abound* in hope

Rom 15:13 *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1Cor.15: 19) and we learn of Christ through the Holy Scriptures and so our ultimate hope is in the text of Holy Scripture.

Whereas our faith is to grow exceedingly to the point of *abounding*, our hope does not have associated with it, such an adjective, except as with our verse from Rom.15: 13 and it is in this verse that we see God's involvement in our capacity to hope. The verse says, *the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope*. So when God, who is also known as the God of hope, fills us with joy and peace in believing (which is faith), then our hope *abounds* through the power of His Holy Spirit. So our hope *abounds* through the power of God's holy Spirit. Isn't that amazing!

It was Paul's hope in the promises of God that were given to the twelve tribes, which were fulfilled in Christ, that were the basis for the Jews accusations against him (see Acts.26: 6 & 7). And such hope was known to all Israel but not believed, not all received, not all rejoiced in the better hope that was in Christ (see Heb.7: 19). But when Paul believed, he rejoiced in the hope that was fulfilled in Christ, and do believers today.

So how do we acquire more hope, how do we *abound* in hope? Not by our own doing, not by our own works, it is a work of God, through the power of His Holy spirit (Rom.15: 13).

We *abound* in hope by God filling us with all joy and peace in our believing. Hence there is a link between joy and hope which is also evident in Rom.5: 2, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God* (see also Rom.12: 12, 1Thes.2: 9 & Ps.146: 5).

Do you have joy and peace in your believing? Because if you do not then now would be a good time to ask God to fill you with all joy, with all rejoicing and peace, through His Holy Spirit, and then our heart will respond with *abounding* hope in Him!

We also see in 2Cor.10: 15 that our hope is increases when our faith increases, and hence their is link made in the Scriptures between hope and faith).

What do we hope for, or in?

The promises made to the Jewish nation (see Acts 26: 6)

The Lord God (see Ps.31: 24, 146: 5, Co.1: 5, 1Thes.1: 3 & 1Pet.1: 21)

Christ (see 1Cor.15: 19)

His mercy (see Ps.33: 18, 147: 11)

His word (see Ps.119: 74, 82, 114, 147, 43, 130: 5)

Our death (see Prov.13: 42)

The resurrection (Acts 23: 6 & 1Pet.3: 2-3)

Eternal life (Tit.1: 2)

Imagine if we were to focus all of our hope on these things and not the things of the world, how much abundance of hope we would have in the things of God! Now compare the hope of a Christian believer to that of a cult like the Jehovah Witness; tge JW, as we found out in a previous teaching on the word resurrection, have no hope of eternal life in heaven and have no hope of being raised from the dead and spending eternity with the Lord in heaven. But hope in cessation of life until they are raised to live on earth again. So when we talk with people who claim to be Christian, yet are Jehovah Witness, Mormon or others that do not believe the Authorized Bible, let us remember that they place their hope in something different to the Bible believing Christian. And while we are touching on the cults, how can you hope in His word, the Bible, if the text you claim to be the bible (like the NWT of the Holy Scriptures) has errors? For me, if there is one error in the text then that mistake or contradiction identifies the text as being inspired by man and *not* God.

I remember a discussion with a JW that went for over 5 years where we debated the Scriptures and corresponding doctrines and the only point he would concede as an issue for him as a JW, was the errors in his bible, his text. But he was prepared to accept those errors because they were only small. I pray that God would cause him to be unsettled and concerned about the errors in his counterfeit, man inspired text, such that it would destroy his hope, his faith and belief, not because I do not like him, but because I desire for him to know the truth, for the truth will make us free (see Jn.8: 32).

How did Elijah challenge the hope of the Israelites who trusted in Baal?

He demonstrated that Baal was no god, that he does not speak, does not hear and could not put fire onto the wood, nor consume the sacrifice that was put on the altar (see 1Kgs.18: 25-29). And then he demonstrated that the Lord God, he is God, the Lord he is the God (see 1Kgs.18: 39), and He heard Elijah His servant, He put fire on the wood and consumed the sacrifice (see 1Kgs. 18: 38). And the people that stood by, witnessed the difference between Baal who was deaf, dumb and was no god and the God of Israel who heard, saw and proved His servant not to be a liar. God has done the same for the believer today in the Holy Scriptures; He has kept His promises and preserved His words in a text and we can place our hope in, which stands above all others.

The God of the Bible, the God who created the heavens and the earth, He wants us to *abound* in hope;
in the promises made to the fathers,
in Him,
in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ,
in His mercy,
in His word,
in our death,
in our resurrection and eternal life.

Think of each of these eight things that we are to hope in, and ask yourself if you smiled, or felt joyful at the thought of any one of them, or all of them as a whole?

Now think about, if God were to fill you afresh today with even more joy and peace, how much more your hope would *abound* to His glory!

Let us ask the God of hope, the giver of every good gift to His children, let us ask Him for joy and peace in believing His word, that we may *abound* in hope!

3. A Christian is to *abound* with thanksgiving

Col 2:7 *Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding there in with thanksgiving.*

See also 2Cor.9: 11

Israel offered sacrifices of thanksgiving (see Lev.7: 13 & Ps.116: 17) and other sacrifices were offered with the objective of giving thanks to God (see Lev.7: 14). Such offerings were to be given of their own free will (see Lev.22: 29). David magnified the name of the Lord with thanksgiving (see Ps.69: 30) and acknowledged that when we come into the Lord's presence we are to do so with thanksgiving (see Ps.95: 2). Today, we in the church age are to *abound* in thanksgiving.

There are two areas of our life where we can show God thanks, where we can give God our sacrifice of thanksgiving. They include our prayers (see Phil.4: 6, Col.4: 2) and our giving (see 2Cor. 9: 7-12).

Do you *abound* in thankfulness to God in prayer and in your giving, whether of works (your time) or your tithes and offerings? Because that is how God measures, that is how God proves, that is how the Lord sees how thankful we are for what He has done, for His unspeakable gift (see Thes.9: 15).

When our mother and father give us earthly gifts how do respond? From an early age we teach our children to give thanks, in both words and in their actions. The same is at work, how do we respond when a boss gives us a pay rise? We give thanks in both words and actions (often trying harder, working longer hours and generally putting in more effort, all to show our boss our thankfulness). There was a movie on TV a couple of months ago where a man and his family were held up in their home and the bad guys had taped them up and set on fire the house. In the midst of all the action a policeman entered the house and dealt with the bad guys and then saved the life of the man and his wife who almost died. The man and his wife said thanks with their words, and promised if he ever needed anything to ask. Well, later on in the movie when the policeman needed help to assist another person who was in danger the man whom he saved from the fire, said thanks by his action, he put his life on the line to help the policeman, he was prepared to die in his effort to show how thankful he was for the policeman saving his life.

God loves us so much that he gave us Only Begotten Son, His unspeakable gift, a gift that, when we believe, we receive His righteousness and inherit eternal life. A gift far greater than any man can give another, and He requires us, He desires us to *abound* with thanksgiving. We show Him our deep our appreciation with words of thankfulness in prayer and when we respond to His calling with joyfulness. When we respond with a cheerful heart (see 2Cor.9: 7) we give God our sacrifice of praise, our sacrifice of thanksgiving and so we have an opportunity to show God our *abounding* thankfulness.

Let us today, rejoice, let us come before our God in pray at every opportunity, with all thankfulness and praise (see Neh.12: 46) and respond when He calls us for a task, with a joyful heart, that we as individual believers and as the body of Christ would *abound* in thanksgiving to His glory!

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our third teaching on the word *abound*, we have covered 3 points which include:-

1. A Christian is to *abound* in faith.
2. A Christian is to *abound* in hope
3. A Christian *abound* in thanksgiving! Amen, amen and amen!