

1 July 2012

Abound in Charity One to Another (Pt 4 *Abound*)

Today is part four of our teaching on the word *abound* in the Holy Scriptures. There are 19 occurrences of the word *abound*, 5 of *abounded*, 3 of *aboundeth* and three of *abounding*. According to the English Oxford dictionary the word *abound* means "overflow, either of vessel or of liquid. Be plentiful; be rich; team or infested with." In short the word *abound*, means to exist in *abundance*,

In our previous study we covered 3 points which focused on what a Christian is to *abound* in:-

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

In this study we will cover a further three (3) points that a Christian is to *abounds* in,

1. A Christian is to *abound* in love one to another
2. A Christian is to *abound* in grace one to another
3. A Christian is to *abound* in charity one to another

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

1. A Christian is to *abound* in love one to another

1Thes 3:12 *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all [men], even as we [do] toward you:*

2Cor. 2: 4, 8:7 &12: 15.

How were the Israelites to love their brethren? They were to love their neighbour as themselves (see Lev.19: 18 & Matt.5: 43).

How great was Jonathan's love for David? It was passing the love of a woman (see 2Sam.1: 26).

What was the new commandment that Jesus gave to His disciples? That ye love one another (see Jn.13: 34).

How do the heathen know that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? If ye have love one to another (see Jn.13: 35).

What was one of Paul's commandments to the church? *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brother love; in honour preferring one another* (see Rom.12: 10).

And one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God that identifies those who are born of the Spirit that are new creatures in Christ, is "love" (see Gal.5: 22).

So the requirement for the Lord's children to love their brethren spans the whole of His dealings with His people in the Scriptures. The need to love each other is universal to every dispensation or age.

Why? See Rom.13: 10 *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

So Christians today are to *abound* in love for their brethren because, love fulfills the law of Moses (see also Gal.5: 14 & James 2: 8, James suggests that love fulfills the royal law). And why did it fulfill the law? Because love worketh no ill to his neighbour.

How do we *abound* in love, one to another? 'Love' in the Scriptures may mean a lot of things but we can say with certainty, that when we show no ill to our brothers, we love them. And Christians are to *abound* in such love, a love that show no ill to our brother.

Christians today can fulfill the law of Moses by loving their brother. And if you are sitting there wondering about the law of Christ, turn to Gal.6: 2 *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* The word *bear* has several meanings, but one in particular refers to our context; "support; carry the weight of" suggests we are support and carry the weight of our brothers burdens. Perhaps similar to the example of Simon the Cryrenian who carried the Lord's cross that he might bear it (see Lk.23: 26). Whether we support physically or spiritually, we are to help bear one another's burdens, which has similar connotations to - working no ill to your brothers. It also has similar connotation to forbearing one another in love (see Eph.4: 2).

Given that "love worketh no ill to our brother" is a negative, you could suggest that a positive way to love our brother is to bear their burdens, whether that be in prayer or physically helping them through their tribulations with phone calls of encouragement and where practical with physical helps. And that fulfills the law of Christ! Is it any wonder that Christians today are to *abound* in love for their brethren! If everyone in the body of Christ was to *abound* in love for other brethren, I am sure there would be less opportunities for the devil to divide and destroy.

Consider the apostle Paul in the Scriptures, who, in his letter to Philemon when he was old, was reflecting on Onesimus whom he had begotten in his bonds (see Phil.8 - 12). He goes on to say that Onesimus was once *unprofitable, but now profitable*, and when he encourages Philemon to receive him, he says, *receive him, that is, mine own bowels*. From these words, we could assume that Paul felt so close to Onesimus that he spoke of them being one; something like; if you receive him, you receive me. In a similar way perhaps as David and Jonathan's relationship (see 1Sam.18: 1), where the Scriptures record David's soul being knit to Jonathan and Jonathan loving David as his own soul. I suggest to you that both David and Paul *abound* in love for their brethren and are good examples to us today.

Can we say, that we show such abundance of love towards our brethren?

Can we say, that we show such abundance of love when they annoy us, when they do something we don't like or approve of? Or we do allow negative thoughts to enter our mind, and end up speaking ill, or doing ill toward our brother or sister?

Let me suggest that because loving our brother is the fulfilling of the law, it is difficult to do, not just for one day, but for day after day, during the good and the not so good times. If we do not *abound* with love toward our brother, but rather we give up on them in their struggles, do we fulfill the law? No!

If we give up on our brother when they do not understand what we understand, and so we think ill of them, do we fulfill the law? No!

Let us today, work no ill toward our brother, speak no ill of our brother and in a positive way show love in *abundance* towards our brother by bearing their burdens in prayer and support. For in doing so you will fulfill the law of Moses and the law of Christ!

2. A Christian is to *abound* in grace one to another

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.*

See also 2Cor 1:12

Out of this verse we have looked at 'faith' & 'love', but for now we will skip the other aspects of utterance, knowledge and diligence and focus on *abounding* in grace.

We know that God's grace *abounds* to us, much more than sin *abounds*. And our verse, especially the last two parts are to do with our brethren where it says "and in your love to us, see that ye *abound* in this grace also", and so we are to *abound* in this grace, which I suggest is to our brethren. And so, although not implicate from our verse in 2Corinthians 8: 7, I nevertheless make this application from our verse, that a Christian is to *abound* in grace one to another (see 2Cor.1: 12).

So, what does it mean to *abound* in grace one to another?

Well, we know that *abound* means to overflow or be plentiful and we know from previous studies that grace is unmerited favour. In biblical terms, this is usually attributed to God which from our third point in our first teaching on the word *abound*, overflows to us through Christ Jesus (see Rom.5: 15, 20, 2Cor.9: 8 & 1Tim.1: 14). But my application from our verse, is that Christians are to *abound* in grace towards our brethren, we are to *abound* in unmerited favour. This is sounding a lot like loving our brethren in our first point, where we were to bear our brothers burdens. But I think that showing our brethren unmerited favour in *abundance*, is going a little further than bearing their burdens. It goes beyond praying for them or making phone calls when they are under pressure or stress. Showing unmerited favour suggests we are to *abound* in doing something for them that they do not deserve, when they least expect it, and do so in abundance!

I think David is an example of *abounding* in grace to the brethren. When you have a moment sit down and read 1Sam.24-26 inclusive. In these chapters we see Saul pursuing David to smite him, but David would not kill Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, regardless of what he did, regardless of whether the Lord delivered him into his hand or not, David would show him grace, he would show him unmerited favour (1Sam.26: 23). This is an amazing account of what a man will put up with from his brethren and still show him grace. For me, that is *abounding* in grace toward our brethren, regardless of what they do, what they say, showing them favour that they do not deserve.

Is that the sought of grace we show our brethren? When the going gets tough do we show *abounding* unmerited favour or do we turn against our brethren, do we walk away from our brethren?

I know that some of you have been involved in church splits as Karen and I have. And I guess there are always two sides to a story, but some of the stories I have heard, would suggest that if both parties were brothers in Christ, then somewhere along the time line, one or the other did not *abound* in unmerited favour to the other. If you are in a

church that does not consider the Authorized Bible to be the Bible, our final authority on all matters of faith, and you decide to one day to stand your ground, remember there will be consequences for standing for the truth. How do you show unmerited favour in those instances?

With a great deal of prayer and patience, by not seeking to win arguments, but ask questions to allow the truth to be seen for what it is, truth. But if we stay at such a church only to bring division or discord between ourselves and other brethren, by standing for the truth of the Authorized Bible, then our flesh is guiding our direction and we will struggle to show unmerited favour or grace to our brethren.

Let us pray for our each other as we all struggle to *abound* in unmerited favour, in grace to our brethren, that Christ would be glorified.

3. A Christian is to *abound* in charity one to another

2Thes 1:3 *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*

See also 2Pet.1: 7&8.

You think, *abounding* in love and grace toward our brethren is difficult 100% of the time? Consider our third point and it may very well put you on your knees to God as you feel so far out of your depth. I know I do.

In our previous point we touched on those whose fleshly nature is to bring discord or rub others up the wrong way, for others their natural flesh is to be uncharitable, and so this point will be their Mt Everest. But God is good, He is merciful, and gracious and charitable to us, when we acknowledge what we can't do that His Scriptures require of us. When we come to God and ask for His help (see Ps.28: 7) He will hear our cries and help us in our struggles.

So, what does it mean to *abound* in charity one to another?

We know that the meaning of *abound*, is to overflow or be plentiful and for a biblical meaning of charity we consult 1Cor.13. Let us now turn to 1Cor.13 and read the whole chapter as we remember what it means to show charity;

Charity suffereth long;

is kind;

envieth not;

vaunteth no itself;

is not puffed up;

does not behave itself unseemly;

seeketh not her own;

is not easily provoked;

thinketh no evil;

rejoiceth not in iniquity;

rejoiceth in the truth;

beareth all things;

believeth all things;

hopeth all things;

endureth all things.

The only word used in 1Cor.13 that is not common today is *vaunteth*. The on-line Oxford dictionary says that *vaunt* means "boast about or praise (something), especially excessively".

Our list from 1Cor.13 is one that I am sure we all struggle with, whether it be one of the attributes or all of them. In this point we are asked to *abound* in each of them, as we *abound* in charity one to another.

But this should not surprise us, because the Scriptures also teach that we are to have fervent charity among ourselves (see 1Pet.4: 8). And having covered both hope and faith as qualities that we should also *abound* in, we now read the last verse of 1Cor.13 and find that charity is greater than hope and faith (see verse 13).

This teaching is not asking us to *abound* in charity within the confines of our family unit, but in our Christian family, with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. I have put forward two examples from the Scriptures to help us understand further what it means in show charity to our brethren. The two examples include Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moses suffered long with the people of Israel in the wilderness, he even convinced the Lord not to destroy Israel because of their sin (see Ex.32: 10-13). He reminded the Lord of His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and so the Lord repented from His evil which he thought to do (see verse 15). Now that's *abounding* with longsuffering with your brethren, that's putting up with their constant murmurings (as he did, see Ex.15: 24 & 17: 3).

Moses vaunted not himself as we read that he was the opposite of boasting, he was very meek (see Num.12: 3).

Moses *abounded* in charity at least in the two points we have looked at; longsuffering and vaunteth not himself.

Then you have the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest example of one who *abounded* in grace, love and charity. He *abounded* in longsuffering with His countrymen, He suffered so much that He allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross by them. He was humiliated by them, He was reviled by them (see Jn.9: 28). He *abounded* in not being puffed up and not vaunting himself, He was humble. Both Christ and Paul in their teachings record that our Saviour was meek and lowly (see Matt.11: 29 and 2Cor.10: 1). Let us also remember that two characteristics of charity, being - longsuffering and meekness are fruit of the Spirit identified in Gal.5: 22.

When I look into the mirror of 1Cor.13 and see my reflection, I see the opposite. I see times in my life when I *abounded* in boasting and puffing myself up and envying others. As a believer I struggle with pride every day, let alone *abounding* in not vaunting myself or not puffing myself up, and that is just two of the fifteen aspects that make up biblical charity.

But when we come to any part of charity that we struggle with, do we give up, do we say its too hard a doctrine to take on board, or trying to *abound* in it?

NO! We ask for God's help! For our God hears our cries from the heart (see Ps.18: 6).

We could spend months studying the word charity, but let us today, acknowledge our weakness with which ever aspect of charity we struggle most with. For when we come to God in weakness we see His strength, which is made perfect in weakness (2Cor.12: 9). Let us pray that as individuals we would *abound* with charity to our brethren, perhaps focusing on one aspect at a time, and doing so to the glory of God!

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

1. A Christian is to *abound* in love one to another
2. A Christian is to *abound* in grace one to another
3. A Christian is to *abound* in charity one to another. Amen!