

29 July 2012

A Christian's love to Abound (Pt 5 Abound)

Today is part five of our study on the word *abound* in the Holy Scriptures. In our previous study we covered 3 points:-

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

In this study we will cover a further three (3) points:-

1. A Christian's love is to *abound* in knowledge
2. A Christian's love is to *abound* in judgment
3. A Christian is to *abound* in the work of the Lord

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

1. A Christian's love is to *abound* in knowledge

Php 1:9 *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;*

See also 2Cor 8:7

In our previous study on this word we covered love in a Christian is to *abound* one to another. In this study our first point includes love, but the context of our verse in Philippians is not loving our brethren, but rather the joy of Paul's suffering (see verse 7, 12, 14, 21 & 29), and within that setting Paul reminds the church that he prays that their love may *abound* yet more and more in knowledge. And as we have seen from the meaning of the word *abound* it refers to overflow and to be plentiful. And our verse, adds to the word *abound*, with the phrase, 'more and more', hence it is a double emphasis, it is perhaps suggesting a continuing *abundance*. So a believer's love is to be continually *abounding* in knowledge, which suggests it is a process of gathering knowledge as we journey with the Lord.

But what does it really mean when the Scriptures say, our love is to *abound* in knowledge?

Perhaps it means that our love for God is based on our knowledge of Him, and as a believer we should *abound* in knowledge. Which suggests we cannot love God without knowledge of Him. For example; a person can say, 'I simply love Jesus'. But there is more to being a Christian than simply loving, so let's consider another example; carrying on from our first, where a person could say, 'I love Jesus because He died on the cross at Calvary', and still another person could say, 'I love Jesus because He died on the cross at Calvary and bore my sin on Himself, He washed away my sin through His blood and He has imputed me with His righteousness, and I have been saved from spending an eternity in hell, but will rather spend an eternity in heaven.' Each example shows a little more knowledge being added, and with each step in knowledge comes greater depth of love for God. So as we mature in our Christian journey our knowledge of what Christ Jesus has done *abounds*. Hence why our love is to *abound* in knowledge, our love is to continually grow as we gather knowledge in *abundance*. Wow!

And such knowledge of God, and what He has done in Christ, does not develop, does not grow more and more when we spend every living moment in a casino playing the pokie machines, or gambling, or playing the X-Box. Our love can only *abound* in knowledge of our Saviour and our God, when we spend time with Him, acquiring information on His character and the deep history of His dealings with Israel. And we can only spend time with Him, when we talk with him in prayer and read His Holy Scriptures and fellowship with like minded brethren. When we do these things our knowledge of God will increase and so will our love.

And what is the purpose of our love *abounding* in knowledge?

Verse 10 answers this question for us: (a) *That ye may approve things that are excellent*, (b) *that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ*.

So our love is to *abound* in knowledge to enable us to approve the things that are excellent and to be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Do you struggle to decipher God's will from the devil's?

Do you struggle to understand what your God's wants from you, where or when He wants you to go, such that you are so attuned to His will each day, that your footsteps are ordained by Him, that High and Lofty One, that inhabiteith eternity (Is.57: 15)?

The more time we spend with Him in prayer and in the word and in fellowship with like minded brethren, we enable our love to *abound* more and more in knowledge of Him and therefore know His excellent will for us.

Likewise, the more time we spend with Him in prayer and in the word, enables our love to *abound* more and more in knowledge of Him and therefore be more sincere in our Christian walk and without offence.

How much our love *abounds* in knowledge is directly proportional to the time we spend in prayer and in His word and in fellowship with brethren, getting to know our God and growing in our love for Him, as we learn more and more about Him. And as we have mentioned, the opposite is also the case when we backslide.

Have you ever met a couple who were once head-over-heels in-love and then one day turn around to each other and say, "I don't love you any more, I don't know what happened, I can't put my finger on it, but I don't love you?" It is more than likely, that they did not grow apart, but rather, did not invest the time in the relationship that they needed to, to ensure that their marriage, their love for each other, continued to grow, and not stagnate or deteriorate. And there is no difference between this example and our individual relationships with the Lord.

Does your love *abound* more and more in knowledge, and understanding of God, this Great and Eternal being who is above all, and through all and in you all (see Eph.4: 6)?

If your love is *abounding* and growing and multiplying in knowledge of Him, then be encouraged to think of continuing to *abound* in that love.

If your love is not *abounding*, but on a backward slide, and your knowledge of Him ever decreasing then be encouraged to do something about it. Make a commitment between you and the Lord today, to take one thing out of each month that has nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, and substitute it, for the same amount of time in prayer and reading the Scriptures. And if that seems too much of a struggle, then pray and ask the Lord for help to pray more and read one verse of Scripture a day or a week, and your love will begin to *abound* more and more as your knowledge grows. *Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby* (see 1Pet.2: 2).

A word of warning to those use a corrupt bible, or know Christians that use a counterfeit copy of Holy Scripture: If you desire to love God more then your knowledge of Him will need to *abound*, but if your knowledge is formed by a false bible which says that Jesus is 'a god' and not God Almighty, then your knowledge of God will be false and your love quite fragile. Your love for God has the greatest capacity to grow if you *abound* in knowledge of His perfect preserved Holy Scriptures. So let us encourage those who claim to be Christian, yet have not come to the knowledge of the truth of the 1611 Authorized Bible, that we may help them, through the Holy Spirit, to come to the knowledge of that truth and therefore have access to the perfect preserved knowledge of God the Father, and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And in doing so their love may *abound* more and more in knowledge.

2. A Christian's love is to abound in judgment

Php 1:9 *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;*

Our second point is closely linked to our first in that a Christian's love is to *abound*, but the difference in this point is, our love is to *abound* in judgment. But what does that mean in theory and then how do we put it into practice as believers?

We can begin by saying with all sincerity and truthfulness, that (a) our God loves judgment (see Ps.37: 28 & Is.61: 8); (b) our God wants us to hate evil, love the good and establish judgement (see Amos 5: 15); (c) the Pharisees of Jesus day, had forgotten the important things of the law, they had passed over judgment and the love of God (see Lk.11: 42).

What did the Lord mean when he rebuked the Pharisees (religious leaders of the day) in Lk.11: 42, *Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done...*

What had the Pharisees done to receive such an admonition? Our verse in Luke plus Matt.23: 23 help to answer this question; the Pharisees concerned themselves with every little detail of the law, which only burdened the people, yet they passed over the weightier matters of the law, the first of which was identified as judgment. Perhaps they had done what Isaiah spoke about in chapter 10: 1, 2 (read).

Given what we have learnt about the Pharisees and how they passed over judgment, let us now seek understanding on what it means for a Christian's love to *abound* in judgment.

Judgment in this context is unlikely to mean judging our brothers, because again our context is the joy of our brethren's suffering and we are encouraged not to judge our brother (see Rom.14: 10, 13).

It is more likely that judgment in this context means, making right judgments, unbiased, or deciding/proving what is good and righteous. And we see this from verse 10, where it gives the reason for our love to *abound* in all judgment...*That ye may approve things that are excellent, that we may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.* This

implies that it is only when our love *abounds* in judgment (and knowledge as per our first point), that we can approve things that are excellent, be sincere and without offence.

After our first point, you may be thinking that your love is growing in knowledge, but how do you measure up to your love *abounding* more and more in all judgment?

For me, I have little to do with brethren that are poor, or have suffered wrongly at the hands of the heathen. I have a long way to go before I stand up for the poor, or the wrongly judged brother. But what we can all do is pray for our brethren who are living lives where they struggle financially or have been wrongly judged.

I shear with you some examples from of love *abounding* in judgment, one from the Scriptures and one from our present day:

Our most precious example in the Scriptures is of a person whose perfect love *abounded* in all judgment; *He is the Lord Jesus and as with all His personal illustrations He gives the glory to His Father. In J.5: 30 he said, I can of myself do nothing, as I hear; I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.* From this example we see that to make just judgments we need to seek the will of the Father and not our own will.

Our second example is of a couple who support persecuted believers round the world because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are Michael and Sylvie who as part of their ministry, make the plight of the persecuted more widely known to the churches. They get tracts out with names of those who are suffering in different Muslim countries because of their faith in Christ, they encourage us to pray for them and no doubt they do a lot more. Why do they get involved? They would have sought to approve if this ministry was excellent in God's eyes or not, they would have made a judgment on where they were spending their time. Such judgment *to* get involved and practically support the persecuted Christians would establish them as being sincere Christians. Such judgment *to* get involved with the dilemma of those oppressed believers is without offence, it is similar to the judgment that Moses made *to* get involved when his brethren suffered wrong at the hands of the Egyptians (see Ex. 2: 11 & Acts 7: 24), albeit that Michael and Sylvie do not smite those who slaughter their brethren in the body of Christ. Let me suggest to you that Michael and Sylvie are a good example to us today of believers whose love *abounds* in judgment. That doesn't mean, that one day they woke up and made such a judgment. I suggest to you that they gradually become aware in their own hearts of what they felt the Lord was calling them to do after He laid the desire to be involved, on their heart. And so their love gradually grew in judgment, until it appears to us outside of their ministry, that they *abound* more and more in judgment, for those who are persecuted for their belief in Christ. Let us pray for those who are in the front line of such a ministry, let us encourage them when we meet with them, that through their just judgment we would learn something of what it means to love *abundantly* in all judgment.

3. A Christian is to *abound* in the work of the Lord

1Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

See also Col.1: 10

Christian everywhere support the work of Christ, some pray, some provide money, some give of their time to work around the church buildings (if you worship in such a place), others are full time living each day by faith, then you have teachers and preachers of the word. Each member in the body has his or her work in the Lord. We all have regard for such work compared to the heathen who has no regard for the work of the Lord (see Ps.28: 5 & Is.5: 12). However our point from 1Cor.15: 58 is that each of us is to go beyond regarding the work, to *abounding* in the work of the Lord.

In the wider context of 1Cor.15 Paul has completed 50 odd verses on the resurrection of Christ and concludes with certainty that *the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (see verse 52), and that there is victory over death, through the Lord Jesus Christ, which He giveth to every believer. It is with this certainty of resurrection that Paul encourages the Corinthian church, his beloved brethren, to be unmovable, steadfast, always *abounding* in the work of the Lord. And let us remember that *abound* means to overflow and be plentiful. Hence our work for the Lord is to overflow and be plentiful.

Just before you think this point refers to those in full time ministry, like missionaries, as those who are to *abound* or be plentiful in the work of the Lord, let us have another look at our verse from 1Corinthians. Paul's encouragement is to the church at Corinth and its members not just to the elders or Bishops. So this point is valid for every believer.

Why should every believer, always *abound* in the work of the Lord?

The last part of our verse gives us the answer; *forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain.* Now we know that any labour that is not of the Lord will be spent for nought or in vain (see Is.49: 4) and will bear no reward (see Ps. 127: 1).

When it comes to believers, the quality of our works shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (see 1Cor.3: 13). And if we build any other foundation which is not Christ, then our works will be burnt up, we will receive no reward (see verse 15), whereas if our works abide we shall receive a reward (see verse 14).

But first off, a believer needs to ensure he is *not* building on any other foundation, other than the Lord Jesus Christ. If he does, he can labour night and day, always *abounding* but will never, bear any fruit, will not receive a reward from his heavenly Father for his labour. Hence the warning 1Cor.3: 10 to every believer, that he *take heed how he buildeth thereupon*. Who wants to have given up 10 minutes, or 1 day, let alone his whole life teaching at a bible college where you are actually building on the work of Satan and not the Lord? Everything you had ever done would be for naught, would be in vain. BUT, IF we labour in obedience to the Scriptures, IF we labour in obedience to what the Lord wants from us, and do not build anything else, then our labour will *not* be in vain, but will be rewarded. So having discerned, having judged that what you are doing IS of the Lord, IS in accordance with His Holy Scriptures, then we are required to labour always and *abound* in that work.

There are many examples in the Scriptures of men and women who have laboured *abundantly* in the Lord. There was Moses, David, Stephen, Paul and Timothy. Paul made a point of noting that he laboured *abundantly* for the Lord (see 1Cor.15: 10, 16: 10 & 2Cor.11: 23) more than others of his day (see 1Cor.15: 10). So we have many examples to follow.

I remember listening to a preacher who teaching on missions, encouraged his congregation to **do** something, to 'go'. And he said, if you can't 'go' to the mission field, then give, if you can't give, then pray, but **do** something. He is correct, we are not all called to 'go' into the mission field, some are called to give, and others to pray. But whatever work in the Lord we are called to do, let us do it always, with *abundance*, *forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord* (see 1Cor.15: 58 & Php.2: 16).

Let us pray for each other, let us pray for those who go into the mission field and preach the gospel, let us pray for those who give to the work and let us encourage our brethren to *abound* in the work of the Lord.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our fifth study on the word *abound* we have covered three (3) points:-

1. A Christian's love is to *abound* in knowledge
2. A Christian's love is to *abound* in judgment
3. A Christian is to *abound* in the work of the Lord