

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Always Abounding In The Work Of The Lord”

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

This passage is often used by gospel preachers to encourage brethren to abound in faithful work and service for the cause of Christ. The work of a Christian must be a life of work, abounding work! A Christian must be a faithful follower of the Master, a **“stedfast, unmovable, always abounding”** servant firmly ground in the revealed truths found in the Bible. Yet, some brethren are not **“stedfast, unmoveable,”** rather, they are like **“children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”** (Eph. 4:14); lacking the quality of **“always abounding in the work of the Lord.”** W. E. Vine defines the Greek word rendered **“abounding”** (*perisseuo*, Gk) in this passage this way: *“to be abundantly furnished, to abound in a thing...the work of the Lord.”* This word is defined by Strong as: *“From G4053; to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess, be superfluous; also (trans.) to cause to superabound or excel: — (make, more) abound, (have, have more) abundance, (be more) abundant, be the better, enough and to spare, exceed, excel, increase, be left, redound, remain (over and above)”* (Strong’s, G4502). Hence, an overflowing abundance. Consider the account of the Jesus’ instructions to Simon Peter in Luke 5:4-10 saying, **“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught”**; and the result of Peter letting down the net **“at thy word,”** — their catch was such a vast number of fishes that their nets broke and their ships begin to sink! Now, that is ABUNDANCE!

The phrase **“in the work of the Lord”** includes all commandments given of God to man to do. Of this phrase, Albert E. Barnes in his notes on this passage says, *“Always engaged in doing the will of God; in promoting his glory, and advancing his kingdom. This phrase means not only to be engaged in this, but to be engaged diligently, laboriously; excelling in this. The ‘work of the Lord’ here means that which the Lord requires; all the appropriate duties of Christians. Paul exhorts them to practice every Christian virtue, and to do all they could do to further the gospel among men”* (*Barnes Notes*, Vol. 8, p. 324).

Having offered these definitions and comments, let us consider Bible passages that teach us how we are to abound **“in the work of the Lord.”** To abound in the Lord’s work, we must:

Abound in faithful service coupled with thanksgiving! Paul wrote, *“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”* (Col. 2:5-7).

Abound in the sufferings for the cause of Christ! Paul wrote, *“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation”* (2 Cor. 1:5-7).

You will notice that Paul mentions steadfastness here. As workers of the Lord, we must be steadfast even though sever persecutions may arise. Christ warned his disciples that persecutions must be endured and would come to those working for the Lord (Matt. 10:16-28). Paul suffered persecutions himself and warned in his writings of persecutions that would come to the faithful (2 Cor. 11:24-28; 12:10; 2 Tim. 3:11, 12). Hence we must be willing to suffer and should not think it strange when we are called to suffer persecutions for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:12-16; Rev. 2:10).

Abound in hope! Paul wrote to Roman brethren and said, *“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. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:13, 14). Hope is basically desire with expectation. The hope of a Christian should be to receive the *“inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away”* (1 Pet. 1:4; 5:4). Our hope for heaven must be based on the truths revealed in the scriptures. Not some false hope created by false teachers and their error. Sadly some have laid down the sword of truth, have not finished the race, resulting in a *“faith”* that is made *“shipwreck”* (1 Tim. 1:19). Notice Paul’s confidence in receiving the eternal crown expressed in his letter to young Timothy based on his own steadfastness to the faith – *“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Abound in knowledge and judgment! Paul wrote, *“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ”* (Phil. 1:9, 10). Christians are to abound and grow in the knowledge of God’s word. We are commanded and exhorted to study God’s word (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-14; Eph. 3:3, 4; 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:17, 18). Steadfastness in the faith of Christ requires knowledge of His word, will and way! And, we must make judgments based on the revealed word. We must, *“judge righteous judgment.”* Jesus commanded, *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”* (Jn. 7:24). Our judgments must not be based on our own personal standards but on Bible principles of truth (Matt. 7:1-5). Righteous judgment requires making correct application of the truths of the Bible. The teaching of James, that we are to be *“doers of the word, and not hearers only,”* rings loud and clear regarding this point (Jas. 2:22-25).

Abound in love! Paul wrote, *“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love ne toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”* (1 Thess. 3:12, 13). The love Paul mentions here is the *agape* type of love. Preachers who boldly teach the truth are sometimes accused by some liberal minded brethren of not *“speaking the truth in love”* (Eph. 4:15) or being *“unloving,” “caustic,” “abrasive”* or *“abusive.”* Some brethren accuse other preachers who boldly *“reprove, rebuke and exhort,”* of knowing only how to *“preach on an issue dividing brethren,”* or *“blasting the denominations”* or *“nailing”* or *“clobbering the members for some shortcoming.”* Brethren who make such charges really don’t know the true Bible meaning of love! Remember, Paul said, *“speaking the TRUTH in LOVE”* (Eph. 4:15, my emp., tgm). The *agape* love is the type of love that *“does not always run with natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself upon those for whom a natural affinity is discovered – love seeks the welfare of all”* (*Vine*). We can see the nature of *agape* love by considering the words of Jesus when he commanded, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”* (Matt. 5:44-48). I recently read a bulletin which had the statement, *“Faults are thick were love is thin. (Read 1 Cor. 13 and John 13:34-35).”* How true that statement is! Godly love (*agape* love) involves a love for: **1) God** – Obedience to His word, sacrifice, a right attitude toward His word, and service to Him. **2) Christ** – Submission to, appreciation for the sacrifice He made for us, diligent service and respect for His authority, His name, His church and His doctrine. **3) The Holy Spirit** – Respect for the revealed word, diligent study of it, teaching it and earnestly contending for it and defending it when attacked! **4) Alien sinners** – Being *“an example of the believers”* (1 Tim. 4:12), working to teach and save those who are willing to hear the gospel of Christ. **5) Faithful brethren** – Encouraging, commending, edifying and helping them in the work of the Lord. **6) Unfaithful brethren** – Warning, rebuking, exhorting, restoring and withdrawing fellowship from the impenitent. **7) Enemies** – Praying for, blessing, doing good to, feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty. These are involvements of Godly love which we must abound in! Abound in partaking of the *“divine nature”*! Peter wrote, *“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (1 Pet. 2:3, 4). To do this we must add the character traits Peter lists in verses 5 through 7 to an obedient faith, which is the foundation of what we believe, teach and practice. We must add: *“Virtue”* (manliness, strength, courage, moral excellence); *“Knowledge”* (knowledge of God’s word); *“Temperance”* (self-control); *“Patience”* (endurance, persistence, perseverance, long suffering); *“Godliness”* (an attitude and actions that result in an acceptable relationship with God);

“Brotherly kindness” (love [phileo - Gk] of the brethren); **“Charity”** (love [agape – Gk]). The result – **“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”** (2 Pet. 1:8-10).

Abound in giving as we have been prospered! Paul commanded, **“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”** (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). The Macedonians, mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, are examples of abundant givers. Note that Paul said they **“first gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God”** (vs. 5). Those who find it difficult to give on the **“first day of the week”** (which means every week) have not truly given themselves first to the Lord! They are not willing givers. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to be of such a mind in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as the Macedonians, to abound in giving, to sow bountifully, writing, **“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”** (2 Cor. 9:6-8). Note the repeated use of the word abound in these verses.

Abound in “every good work”! As we have noted, the phrase, **“the work of the Lord”** is all inclusive of all works God has commanded us to do! Jesus, during His personal ministry, did His Father's work. He said, **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”** (Jn. 9:4). Likewise, we must be obedient to all things commanded of Christ (works) as Christ was obedient to His Father. Paul commanded when he wrote to the Colossian brethren, **“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”** (Col. 1:9, 10; cf. Mk. 14:6-9; 2 Cor. 9:8; Phil. 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:21; Heb. 13:21).

Conclusion: Other points could be considered but time and space do not allow. Let us strive to walk as Paul exhorted the Corinthians to walk, always steadfastly and abundantly serving the Lord without wavering. We seldom find it difficult to abound in our own interests but may we remember that regarding the work of God, **“that your (our) labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Cor. 15:58). – **tgmc** ■



WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

By A.C. Grider

I didn't join the church of Christ. I didn't select the church of Christ as “my choice” from among many churches. It never occurred to me that I had a choice nor that I desired to make a choice of churches. I started thinking about my spiritual condition down in Tennessee some years ago — several years ago and made up my mind that I should do something about it.

I began to consider what the Lord wanted me to do. I started to study my Bible. I found that I was a sinner and that Christ was THE savior. I found that if I were ever saved it would only be by Christ. I considered His word relative to what to do to be saved. He said I should repent, Luke 13:3. I did. He said I should confess Him, Matthew 10:32. I did. He said I should be baptized, Mark 16:16. I did. He said if I would do these things I would BE SAVED. I was. But the BIBLE taught when I was saved the Lord added me to the church, Acts 2:47. He did. Now, WHICH CHURCH did He add me to? HIS, Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16.

Thus, I am a member of the church of Christ because I had NO CHOICE and wanted none. I just wanted to be saved. And I was! ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250