Living In The Overflow

Col 2:6–7  *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.*

**Thanksgiving**
It’s the Sunday after Thanksgiving and I’m absolutely full.
- My spirit is full of thanks for all of the good gifts of God in my life.
- My heart is full of good fellowship after good times spent with close family and friends.
- My stomach has been full for several days of the abundance of Thanksgiving dinner and my refrigerator is full of leftovers.

I’m beginning to believe that “leftovers” is what really characterizes Thanksgiving.
- Think about it.
- Thanksgiving is all about the abundant blessings of God in our lives.
- The depth and breadth of those blessings is characterized by the tremendous holiday meals that we prepare and consume.
- And the true story of the abundance of God’s blessings in our lives is the overflow;
- it’s the leftovers.

It’s almost as if, in the preparing of the meal, in the abundance of food, we are emphasizing the fact that,
- in good times and in bad, God has always been more than enough for us.
- Nobody that I know of puts out a Thanksgiving spread that is just barely going to be enough to feed the crowd.
- Around my Mom & Dad’s house we always have too much of everything:
  - Too much meat;
  - too many casseroles;
  - too many appetizers;
  - and way too many deserts.
- The truth is that a Thanksgiving meal without leftovers would hardly be a Thanksgiving Meal at all.
- Because it’s in the leftovers where we really see the abundance of God’s blessings in our lives.
- He has not just given us enough, He has given us more than enough!
- We have been abundantly blessed.

**Favorite Words**
That thought leads me to another thought.
- The abundance of God in our lives is a prominent New Testament theme.
- As a matter of fact that idea of abundance of overflowing is one of the Apostle
Paul’s favorite concepts.

- He uses the Greek word that was translated as “abounding” in our text more than 26 times in his writings.
- It is often translated as “abound” but its literal meaning is “overflowing.”
- It conveys the sense of a river that is overflowing its banks.
- There is an abundance, not just here and not just now, but it just keeps coming,
  - it just keeps flowing down,
  - there is no end in sight,
  - there is no projected crest the river has left its banks and my life is inundated with the overflow.

It’s a concept that is quite common in both the Greek and the Hebrew language but it is a relatively rare figurative expression in other languages.

- The actual Greek word that Paul uses repeatedly means to be or exist in abundance, with the implication of being considerably more than what would be expected—
  - ‘to abound, to be in abundance, to be a lot of, to exist in a large quantity, to have left overs.
- It is extremely difficult to find a word in other languages, including ours, that carries the same intensity and breadth of expression.
  - The word expresses and extravagance, and excess, an overflow, it is absolutely more than enough!
- The analogy of the river overflowing its banks is just about as close as we are going to get to the literal meaning of the word.
- It is an uncontainable abundance.
- It is far and away more than we could ask or even imagine, more than we need, more than we understand, more than we could ever consume.
- It is the very nature of God.
- He is the God who fills our cup until it is overflowing. I mean what do you do with the overflow?
- There’s practical use for the leftovers.
- Enough is enough.
- But God is never satisfied with enough.
- He has always desired for his people to live in the abundance to live in the overflow to live in the extravagant real of his divine provision!
- He doesn’t just multiply the fishes and loaves, he does so in such an extravagant manner that there are 12 baskets full of leftovers!

Paul’s understanding, though, is not just that this is the nature of God, his understanding is that this is characteristic of the life of a Child of God.

- That just as the grace of God abounds in our lives, so we should abound in certain things.
- As we live in the overflow, there are some things that should overflow in our lives.

**Abound in Love**
Consider 1 Thessalonians 3:12 “And the Lord make you to increase and **abound in love** one toward another, and toward all men...”

- Paul recognized that, in the social structure of the First Century the church was a completely revolutionary idea.
- In society people tend to be grouped together by common characteristics.
- One of the greatest influencers of societal groupings is financial status.
- People with like social and financial status tend to form social bonds.
- At one end of the spectrum the rich tend to seek out the companionship of others just like themselves, while at the other end, the poor and the destitute seem to gravitate to one another.
- And, so it goes, across the broader spectrum of society, people tend to group together around their social, economic, or educational experiences.
- But it was not so in the church.
- The church, both then and now, is composed of converts that come from across the broad spectrum of society.
- This isn’t just for the rich, nor is just for the poor, this gospel isn’t exclusive to the educated, nor is it exclusive to the working class.
- Jesus came to seek and to save, whosoever will.

This broad group of people that composed the church had little in common other than their common experience with the grace of God

- and Paul knew that, if this revolutionary idea called the church was going to be successful,
- then there needed to be something that would bind the believers together.
- Jesus declared in John 13:34-35
  - “**A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.**”
- Paul recognized what Jesus had been teaching his disciples, that the only thing that could bind such a diverse group of people together was a mutual love, one for another.
- So he tells us that we should “abound in love one toward another.”
- In other words, that same abundant, overflowing love, that we received from God, that same love by which he loved us even unto his death on the cross,
- that love that has overflowed in our lives and covered a multitude of sins and wrongs and faults
- – that same love should overflow in our lives towards our brothers and sisters in Christ!

God’s love overlooked my faults, it went beyond the differences that separated us!

- Gods love, loved me even when I wronged him,
- even when I abused his love, he kept on loving me!
- That’s abundant love.
- But Paul says, just as you’ve received it, you should be willing to give it!
- Let that same love characterize the church!
• Let that same love bind us together!
• Its that love, that sense of belonging, that will overwhelm the social and economic diversity of the church and mold us together into the body of Christ!
• That’s what will hold the church together!
• That’s the fabric that ties the church together, not just a shared experience but a mutual love!
• That’s what separates us from other social groupings, that’s what makes the church unique!

But Paul doesn’t stop there, we are to abound in love one toward another, and toward all men.

• Talk about overflow, talk about abundance, we are to love folks who aren’t in the church, just like we love the folks who are in the church!
• That’s overflow.
• That’s abundance!
• The overflow of love in our lives becomes more than just the thing that ties the church together it becomes the thing that draws outsiders to the church!
• This is how they know you are my disciples, by your love!
• I’m talking about living in the overflow!
• When the old songwriter wrote about that “Old Time Religion” one of the things that he said was, “It makes you love everybody…”
• We need to let love loose in our lives.
• Freely you have received and freely you should give – of love!
• The world has seen enough hate, this world has seen enough division,
• what it needs to see is a church that is bound together by a love with such an abundant quality that it overflows into the lives of those who aren’t even a part of the church!

Abound in Hope

Another thing that should overflow in our lives is hope:

• Romans 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.
• First of all, Paul characterizes God as the God of Hope.
• He’s saying that God is both the source of all hope and the object of all hope.
• The only real hope in this world is in God! He is the God of all hope!
• But Paul also recognized that this Christian lifestyle requires a man or woman to abandon all that they have known before in the pursuit of some greater thing that cannot full be known in this life.
• Leaving behind the old way of living, and striving towards an eternal reward, it is hope that compels the believer forward.

So Paul prays that the “God of Hope” will “fill you with Joy and Peace in believing.”

• As you put your trust in him, as you abandon what you know and understand based only upon your faith in him who you barely know and will never fully understand, God will fill your heart with both Joy and peace.
• Not sadness and sorrow at the things you left on an altar, but joy unspeakable and full of glory in the hope of Jesus Christ.
• Not fear and doubt and confusion about what tomorrow may hold, but a certain peace that passes all understanding that is rooted in your faith in the God of hope!
• This what Paul says: “that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

I don’t know if you’ve noticed but we live in a hopeless world in hopeless times.
• I work with folks that are absolutely obsessed with the perilous condition of our world.
• And it would take much for us, even as believers, to become distraught and downtrodden, as we take in the headlines and follow the things that are happening in our world.
• But that’s not the attitude that characterizes the believer!
• We are characterized by hope, not just sufficient hope, but abundant hope.
• The kind of hope that overflows in our lives!
• When the world isn’t confident about its future, it should see a church that is more than confident about its future!
• When the world doesn’t seem to have a reason for hope, it should see in the church a people who recognize that the God of Hope is more than enough reason for hope!
• There should be an abundance of hope in our lives.
• It should overflow into the world around us.
• Let folks see something different about you, Paul said, by the power of the Holy Ghost in your life, let them see that you have hope when everything around you is hopeless!

Abound in Good Times and Bad
As a matter of fact, Paul believed that the abundance that God placed in our lives abounds in the good times and the bad times.
• Consider Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
• Paul said, I know how to be abased and to abound at the same time.
• I know how to full and to be hungry, I know how to suffer need and still to abound in the overflow.
• It doesn’t seem to make sense to the carnal understanding.
• How can you have the overflow but not have enough? How can you both abound and suffer need?

The answer is in the source of your abundance!
• My hope is not in this world. Neither was Paul’s.
• He says, in the next verse, (4:13) “I can do ALL things through Christ which strengtheneth me!”
• In other words, I have abundance even when it doesn’t seem that I have
abundance!

• My abundance doesn’t come from material things, my sense of abundance doesn’t flow from WHAT I possess, my sense of abundance flows from WHO posses me!
• I am HIS and HE is mine.
• He’s going to take care of me.
• That knowledge IS abundance in the good times and the bad!
• We could learn some lessons from Paul this afternoon.
• Sometimes it seems as if our abundance is dependant on the condition of our lives, when things are going well we rejoice in the Lord, but when things aren’t going so well we don’t feel so much like shouting.
• Paul said “I know how to abound, everywhere and in all things!”
• The source of my abundance isn’t the things of this world! The source of my abundance is Christ. “I can do ALL things through Christ which strengtheneth me!”

Abound in Joy
Consider the church in Macedonia. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8 that the church in Macedonia abounds in Joy in the midst of a great trial of affliction:

2 Corinthians 8:1–2 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

This is the condition of the church in Macedonia:

• They were in deep poverty but they gave of their finances to the work of God, abundantly.
• Why?
• Because in the midst of great trial they had an abundance of Joy.
• Now, without getting bogged down in this text: the church in Macedonia had learned a valuable principle.
• They learned that the more they gave to the work of God the more blessed they were by God.
• So when they found themselves in deep poverty they said, I’m gonna give my way out of it!
• I can’t out give God, so when I find that I don’t have enough,
• I just believe that the key to getting what I need lies in giving what I have!

The point of the passage is that the Macedonians found themselves in great need, in deep poverty,

• but they gave abundantly to the work of God in spite of their deep poverty
• – they did so out of the abundant joy of living for God.
• Even when their pocketbook wasn’t overflowing there was something inside of them that WAS overflowing and it affected everything else.
• They gave like they had plenty even when they didn’t have enough and it triggered the grace of God!
Paul said, let me tell you how the grace of God was bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, in a great trial of affliction two things combined to release the blessings of God.

- On the one hand they had an abundance of Joy.
- On the other hand they had deep poverty.
- The two don’t even go together.
- But the Macedonians combined their abundant Joy with their deep poverty and turned it into a generous spirit of giving
- and God turned loose His abundant grace and provision in their lives!

I’m talking about living in the overflow!

- About living in the abundant life that Paul so adamantly believed should characterize the church in all things.
- No matter where you find yourself, no matter what is going on,
- no matter what condition your world is in,
- your life has been filled with the abundant overflow of the blessings of God and its high time you lived like it!

Abound in Thanksgiving

That brings us back to our text.

- Paul told the Colossians: Col 2:6–7 *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.*

There ought to be abundant thanksgiving in your life!

- You’ve been abundantly blessed, and, in the good times and the bad, your life should be characterized by an abundance of thanksgiving.
- The world sets aside one day a year to celebrate thanksgiving but the life of a Christian should be characterized by the overflow of thanksgiving!

Thankfulness is a good test of your spiritual condition.

- If you don’t have an attitude of thanksgiving it reveals a life that is no longer focused on the God of hope but is, instead, focused on carnal, earthly things.
- We’ve been talking about abundant love, abundant hope, abundant joy, abundant grace and overall abundance that flows from God.
- But when you shift your focus and instead of being focused on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, you become focused on the struggles and trials of this present life, you lose your thankfulness.
- For this reason, a thankful heart is an indicator of spiritual health!

Some folks think it’s hypocritical to come in here and rejoice when your life is in shambles out there.

- Some folks think it’s just wrong to rejoice in the Lord when everything is falling apart around you.
- But the truth is that it demonstrates that the treasures of your life are not laid up in
worldly things.

- And when saint of God lay upon their deathbed and lifts up thanks to God even though life is ending all too soon,
- it demonstrates that eternal truth that my all and all is in God not in the health of this human body.
- When you lift up your voice in thanksgiving unto God, no matter what is going on in your life,
- you demonstrate clearly and decisively that God is the God of your life
- that He is indeed the God of your hope and that you have full placed your faith and trust in Him!

The life that is characterized by thanksgiving will find joy in all things.

- The greatest offering that we can bring to God is an offering of thanksgiving.
- How many times has the answer to an yet unanswered prayer been loosed by a spirit of thankfulness?
- How many times have the miraculous blessings and provision of God been turned loose into the life of a believer that says,
- I’m going to praise you right in the middle of my storm.
- While I have nothing, I’m gonna thank you for being my everything.
- While I am poor I’m going to thank you that I am rich in you.
- While I weak I am going to thank you that you are my strength!
- While the whole world around me is sinking sand,
- I’m going to thank you that its on Christ this solid Rock that I stand!

But we aren’t just talking about living a life of thanksgiving; we are talking living in the overflow.

- When you are thankful in all things it overflows.
- Just like the love of God overflows from the church into the world.
- Just like the hope of the church overflows from the people of God until it impacts the world.
- A lifestyle of thanksgiving, in good times and bad, overflows beyond the boundaries of your life and leaves a lasting impression on the world.
- If we haven’t learned it yet, heaven wants us to realize that our greatest tool of evangelism is the way we live our lives!
- When we give thnks in all things, it overflows into our world.

I want to read 2 Corinthians 4:15, but I’m going to read it from the amplified bible for the sake of clarity.

- It reads this way: “For all [these] things are [taking place] for your sake, so that the more grace (divine favor and spiritual blessing) extends to more and more people and multiplies through the many, the more thanksgiving may increase [and redound] to the glory of God.”
- In other words, as you live in the abundance, as you live in the overflow,
- it causes the grace of God to be multiplied into the world so that more and more people are drawn to the grace of God and join their voice with your voice in
thanksgiving to God!

- That’s what it means to overflow in thanksgiving.
- One thankful voice is soon joined by another and another and another until it redounds, or is amplified, to the glory of God!

**Close**

Two men were walking through a field when suddenly an angry bull chased them. They headed for the fence as fast as they could move.

“Say a prayer,” cried the one to the other. “I don’t know any,” answered his huffing and puffing companion.

“You’ve got to,” said the first, “that bull is getting closer.” “O.K.,” shouted his friend, “I’ll pray the only one I know.”

As the horns of the bull came within striking range, the running man prayed, “For what we are about to receive, Lord please make us truly thankful!”

Thanksgiving needs to be more than just a mindless prayer that we have memorized or the repetition of meaningless clichés.

- It should be the fundamental characteristic of a Christian Life.
- It should be the overflow of a heart that has been abundantly blessed by God!
- And ultimately it is heart of your witness to a lost and dying world.
- From the overflow of your thanksgiving the world is blessed and some lost soul may find their way to Calvary guided by the sound of your praise.
- On this Sunday afternoon, let us give thanks!